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BEYOND YOUR PERCEPTION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF BLACK

PARENT-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS AND HIP HOP INFLUENCES ON

ADOLESCENT GIRLS

by

Sherell A. McArthur

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Social Foundations

in

the Department of Educational Policy Studies

in

the College of Education

Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA

2014

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, BEYOND YOUR PERCEPTION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF BLACK PARENT-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS AND HIP HOP INFLUENCES ON ADOLESCENT GIRLS, by SHERELL A. McARTHUR, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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ABSTRACT

BEYOND YOUR PERCEPTION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF BLACK
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by
Sherell A. McArthur

This study is situated at the nexus of three bodies of literature and research and sought to

contribute to all three: the socialization of Black girls, hip hop as a pedagogical tool and

critical media literacy. My research explored how might the Black parent-daughter

relationship serve as a vehicle by which the girls come to understand, submit to, and/or

resist the stereotypical images prevalent in the hip-hop culture? I co-created a critical

media literacy collective with high school, African American girls where we explored

personal identity development in relationship to representations of African-American

women in the media. It was through my interactions with the girls in this collective,

named Beyond Your Perception (BYP). Through this collective, the primary data

sources were qualitative interviews, focus groups, and documents. A thematic analysis

revealed Black girls represent the dominant narratives within the cultural movement of

hip hop by ascribing to cultural mores like fashion trends, hairstyles and language. They

also consciously choose to resist the stereotypical imagery (e.g., loud, angry, sexually

loose, etc.) and are able to compose powerful counter-narratives to the monolithic

depictions of Black women in the media. By examining the data it was evident that

parents engage with hip hop media by listening to the music and watching television

shows and music videos, however the ways in which they engage their daughters in

dialogue pertaining to the messages within hip hop media is sporadic and suggests the

need for parents to become media literate. The implications of this study suggest the

need for the creation of collaborative and emancipatory spaces for Black girls, media

literacy education for parents, and culturally relevant pedagogy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Now imagine there's a shorty, maybe five maybe four. Ridin' 'round with his mama listening to the radio. And a song comes on and a not far off from being born, doesn't know the difference between right and wrong. Now I ain't trying to make it too complex, but let's just say shorty has an undeveloped context about the perception of women these days. His mama sings along and this what she says, "Niggas, I'm a bad bitch, and I'm bad bitch. Something that's far above average" and maybe other rhyming words like cabbage and savage and baby carriage and other things that match it. Couple of things are happenin' here, first he's relatin' the word "bitch" with his mama-comma, and because she's relatin' to herself, his most important source of help and mental health, he may skew respect for dishonor.

–Lupe Fiasco "Bitch Bad" 2012[1]

Problem

This description of the problem addresses the socialization messages African American female adolescents receive, the hip hop cultural movement as an educative site, and the role of parents and educators in countering the dominant scripts and facilitating media literacy among African American adolescent females. Those born between 1965 and 1984, the first hip hop generation, have entered adulthood and middle age and now have children impacted by the same musical content and imagery that also influenced them (Kitwana, 2002). Further, while young people all over the world today identify with and use popular culture to define themselves, this is so for hip hop's second generation of African American youth as well as their the parents.

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[1] Waco, J., Jordan, D., Giannos,J. and Boyd, J. (2012). "Bitch Bad". [Recorded by Lupe Fiasco]. On *Food & Liquor II: The Great American Rap Album Pt. 1*. New York: Atlantic Records.

Hip hop is now intergenerational. For many of the millennial generation their parents, and possibly their grandparents, listen to the music. Further, these parents engage with hip hop media through viewing television shows and films. Hip hop is becoming more pervasive. Attention must be called to the ways in which our youth create authentic selves, especially since the cultural movement of hip hop has been appropriated and endorses monolithic representations of Black women and men. Research must examine how Black women and girls move beyond the limited imagery of them presented in the media. It also needs to explore how young Black women, involved in the cultural movement of hip hop, create and sustain positive self-identity while consuming monolithic and misogynistic messages in hip hop media. Examples of these monolithic messages include: sexually immoral, overly aggressive, angry, loud, and on welfare.

Brown (1993) states that socialization messages African American female adolescents receive is "of critical importance because African American girls are bombarded early with negative messages about their worth, intelligence, and beauty" (p. 301). Research shows the impact parental involvement has on socializing children (Updegraff, Delgado, & Wheeler, 2009; Elmore & Gaylord-Harden, 2013; McHale, Crouter, & Whiteman, 2003), so what is the role of parents in mediating the impact of objectifying lyrics and imagery that can be found within hip hop media? "Youth's examination of rap music is not without contradictions and confusion because the messages that rap music transmits are monolithic images of the Black experience" (Bynoe, 2004, p.34). Therefore, the role of parents and educators is vital in mediating the messages, facilitating the understanding of critical consumption, and aiding the construction of self-identity for African American adolescent females. "If we as

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educators, community leaders, parents and policy makers," according to Love (2012), "are going to counter the corporate-manipulated space of Black popular culture, we must teach our youth how to be media literate…Media literacy and Hip Hop pedagogy have to become a part of Black girls' lives as well as the lives of all youth" (p. 108).

Since media culture provides material by which many youth construct their sense of self there is a greater risk that they will live out the messages they consume (Emerson, 2002; Stephens & Few, 2007; Stephens & Phillips, 2005; Ward, 2004; Ward, Hansbrough & Walker, 2005). Youth's consumption of rap music is problematic, especially when they lack pedagogy that is critical of popular culture. Research indicates some of the ways that parents are an influential socializing agent and thereby should be able to serve to aid their children in becoming more media literate (Boykin & Ellison, 1995; Bennett, 2006; Thomas & King, 2007). According to Love (2012):

> "Young girls need a space where they feel comfortable resisting demeaning notions of womanhood. They also need teachers who expose popular culture for its contrived messages built on stereotypes but do not demoralize youth choices to consume Hip Hop or any form of popular culture; this is hard pedagogical technique but is needed, according to the experiences of girls." (p. 95)

Consistent with Love, Dimitriadis (2001) asserts that educators dismiss or ignore the idea that Black youth come to understand "notions of self and community outside of school" (p. x). Much of how Black youth construct identity is forged through their engagement with popular culture, specifically hip hop.

Hip hop media serves as a critical educational site because it informs Black youth and becomes their "common culture" (Willis, 1990, p. 30). Educators must find ways to forge meaningful relationships with students while also, according to Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) "helping these students develop academic skills and the skills

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needed to become critical citizens in a multicultural democracy" (p. 88). Hip hop media, which includes rap music, acts as an influential bridge between teacher and student. Willis (1990) wrote that the "common culture" youth created stems from "the omnipresent cultural media of the electronic age," which "provide a wide range of symbolic resources for, and are a powerful stimulant of, the symbolic work and creativity of young people" (p. 30). By creating their own forms of entertainment, youth have subsequently invented and negotiated identities. Students' sense of self, how they relate to others and the world around them is critical to the site of education.

While I initially conceptualized this study around the consumption of music, I decided later to open the study to include television, influenced by hip hop media, as well. Love (2008) states "rap music has become boundless and transcends race, class, and gender" (p. 8). A revolution in youth culture was launched through the evolution of hip hop and effects youth's multiple identities. Television, another form of popular culture, has nudged its way into this space as well. Aisha Durham (2010) refers to the music in hip hop and its imagery as hip hop media. There are several television shows, on a variety of networks, in which hip-hop is the basis. Vh1's "Love & Hip Hop-New York," with spin-off, "Chrissy & Mr. Jones," as well as "Love & Hip Hop-Atlanta," with a spin-off in the making based on a controversial couple, Stevie J and Joseline Hernandez. Additionally, several hip-hop artists have created television shows: rap mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs' "Making the Band" and "Who Wants to Work for Diddy," William "Flavor Flav" Drayton's "Flavor of Love" and subsequent spin-off shows "I Love New York" and "Real Chance of Love," RunDMC artist Reverend Joseph "Run" Simmons'

"Run's House," rapper Clifford "T.I." Harris' "Family Hustle," rapper Jayceon "The Game" Taylor's "Marrying the Game" and Bravo channel's "The Real Housewives of Atlanta". Hip-hop continues its reach into film. Three films, "8 Mile," "Hustle and Flow," and "Get Rich or Die Tryin'," all received academy award nominations. "8 Mile," starring White rapper Eminem, received the Academy Award for Best Original Song for "Lose Yourself" from the movie soundtrack. The song was also nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Original Song. "Hustle and Flow" won an Academy Award for Best Original Song for "It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp" by rap group Three 6 Mafia. Additionally, rapper 50 Cent's "Get Rich or Die Tryin'," based on his life, earned him a Best New Artist nomination at the Grammy Awards. The cultural movement of hip hop has expanded to include not only music, but television and film as well. Therefore, while the contention could be made that parents are not listening to hip hop music the overall assertion that parents are not consuming hip hop media is problematic.

Research Questions

My overarching research question is how may the Black parent-daughter relationship serve as a vehicle by which the girls come to know, submit to, and/or resist the stereotypical images prevalent in hip hop media? The following additional questions guide my research:

1. How do Black adolescent girls experience, embody and/or resist hegemony in the media?

2. What is the role of parents in mediating the socialization influences of media on their daughters?

3. What implications might the racialized-gender identities the girls represent have for pedagogical intervention?

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to understand to what extent and, if they do, how African American adolescent girls construct their racialized-gender identity through hip hop. This study further seeks to explore the role of parents as mediating influences as insiders within the cultural movement of hip hop. Adolescence is a period when youth construct their identity, but is usually more complex for African American girls as they must also develop an understanding of the meaning of both their gendered and racialized selves (Lindsay-Dennis, 2010).

Research shows the impact parental involvement has on socializing children and Black parents' roles has also been documented (Updegraff, Delgado, & Wheeler, 2009; Elmore & Gaylord-Harden, 2013; McHale, Crouter, & Whiteman, 2003). However, there is little research that specifically focuses on parents' gender socialization, though Black parents, concerned about the safety of Black boys have ways to prepare them. This research asks: What is the role of parents (or other family members) in mediating the impact of objectifying lyrics and imagery on Black adolescent girls that can be found within the cultural movement of hip hop? In order to explore this topic, I situate this case study in Womanism (Phillips, 2006; Maparyan, 2012), while also using ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Both allow the study to explore the multiple contexts that may shape the educative experiences of African American girls.

Significance

Yeah, now imagine a group of little girls nine through twelve. On the internet watchin' videos listenin' to songs by themselves. It doesn't really matter if they have parental clearance. They understand the internet better than their parents. Now being the internet, the content's probably uncensored. They're young, so they're malleable and probably unmentored. A complicated combination, with no relevance, until that intelligence meets their favorite singer's preference. 'Bad bitches, bad bitches, bad bitches. That's all I want all I like in life is bad bitches, bad bitches'. Now let's say that they less concerned with him and more concerned with the video girl acquiescent to his whims. Ah, the plot thickens. High heels, long hair, fat booty, slim. Reality check, I'm not trippin', they don't see a paid actress, just what makes a bad bitch.

–Lupe Fiasco "Bitch bad" 2012

The significance of this study is its effort to provide empirical data that can support the use of hip hop—its music and imagery (or what Aisha Durham (2010) refers to as "hip hop media")—as a pedagogical tool. Researchers must consider the social context in which African American youth, specifically girls, are socialized and educated. When parents and schools condemn hip hop as a cultural movement, these two socializing agents fail to equip students with the knowledge that they can, and should, be critical consumers. "Teaching through a Hip Hop-inspired pedagogical and media literacy approach is culturally responsive pedagogy with possibilities for social action in that teaching through a culturally relevant framework is restructuring classroom politics" (Love, 2012, p. 103).

The schooling experience of Black pupils focuses almost exclusively on the disproportionate number of Black males excluded from school. While the academic needs of boys of color is a valid concern, examination of government data indicates that they ought to also extend to Black girls, who are approximately twice as likely to be permanently excluded from school compared with the total school population and their

white female peers (Rollock, 2007). The problem is a structural one. Since much emphasis has been placed on Black boys in schools, because of their trouble-maker status, Black girls are frequently left out of the black educational narrative. A review of the literature shows that when examining gender in schools, researchers usually study white females. Thus, Black girls are also left out of the discourse on the schooling of girls. So in the investigation of studies conducted on youth, illuminating their race or gender, Black girls are most normally excluded. Being excluded from research and the Black educational narrative also leaves these young women on the outside of initiatives to help them develop positive gender-racial identity.

Hip hop as a pedagogical tool offers the opportunity to bridge the gap between teacher and student especially for youth who engage with the culture. Love (2008) states:

> "Perhaps, there is no other sound that resonates with our youth like rap music (Ginwright, 2004). Alridge (2005) contended that 'For many youth, Hip Hop reflects the social, economic, political, and cultural realities and conditions of their lives; speaking to them in a language and manner they understand'. Alridge implied that Hip Hop is a powerful force in shaping the lives of youth, for Hip Hop not only reflects youth reality, it helps create it." (p. 180)

Raps crossover appeal then impacts television. This broad commercialization of Black popular culture in the form of hip hop has then affected all that traditionally matters to youth including, their music, slang, and fashion sense.

Kellner (1995) has suggested that "the ways in which urban youth engage with Black popular culture is important to education because youth learn about themselves and others through Black popular culture" (p. 10). Students' ability to learn does not start when they enter school; they are engaged outside of the classroom walls by many factors before they ever enter a classroom (Newman, 2006). These influences can be, but are not

limited to students, family, friends, and popular culture, which is of primary concern regarding the significance of this study (Giroux & Simon, 1988; Newman, 2006). A review of the literature shows that African American parents deliver gendered racial socialization messages primarily to African American boys (Fiese & Skillman, 2000; Hill, 2001; Varner & Mandara, 2013). Little research has examined gender socialization specifically for girls in African American families (Hill 2001; 2002; Lewis, 1975). Research has not explored gender socialization delivered by African American parents through, within, and in light of the influence of hip hop media.

Key Terms

It is necessary to define key terms that will be used throughout the dissertation. It is first important to note that over the course of this study, I will use the word "Black" interchangeably with the word "African American." During data collection, I will use the term(s) utilized by the participants.

Since this study is explores the influence of popular culture, specifically Black popular culture and hip hop media, I define those terms next. Popular culture is defined like Storey (1998), who suggests that popular culture is a site of education that is filled with "contradictory meanings" (p. 1) about our multiple identities including race, class, gender, body image, and sexual orientation. I additionally use Alverman's (2012) definition of popular culture which "connects a group of people to each other in particular times and places" (p. 1)/ Many define themselves through the mores of popular culture allowing the power of popular culture to make representations, authentic or defamatory, about groups of people. The repetition of these images from "music, literature, art forms, movies, foods, news sources, games, TV shows, clothing, communication tools, and

lifestyles" (Alvermann, 2012, p. 1) seeps into society's psyche and can create conflict in

the ways we are perceived by others or in how we represent ourselves. This is especially

controversial in cases by which the dominant culture is unaware of—or has limited

contact with—marginalized groups and their perception of them from popular culture

mediates how they will treat others. An example of this can be found in the 2012 case of

Trayvon Martin, a young, Black male who was walking home from the store in a hoodie

and was followed and gunned down by a neighborhood watchman. It is quite possible

that the watchman's idea about Black, male youth was shaped—or rather misshaped—by

popular culture. Black popular culture is derived from Stuart Hall (1983) in his classic

piece, "What is this "Black" in Black Popular Culture." Hall (1983) defines Black

popular culture as:

> "Popular culture, commodified and stereotyped as it often is, is not at all,
> as we sometimes think of it, the arena where we find who we really are,
> the truth of our experiences…It is where we discover and play with the
> identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are
> represented, not only to the audiences out there who do not get the
> message, but to ourselves for the first time." (p. 28)

It is important that a discussion on the commodification of Black popular culture is

incorporated in the curriculum so that teachers are able to instruct students about these

dynamics in order to explore the politics of power and, in the case of hip hop, the

contrived representations of Black and Brown bodies.

Another significant term is hip hop, and its differentiation from rap. Hip hop is

defined as cultural self-expression that includes graffiti art, DJing, MCing and break

dancing. In this study, however, when "hip hop" is used, it refers to rap music and

media—which includes television inspired by hip hop, music videos, and social media—

and does not include the additional mediums of hip hop. On the other hand, rap music is

situated within the space of popular culture, and more specifically, Black popular culture known as hip hop. Rap music has become a place where Black youth search for their identities, which is due in large part to Black popular culture representations of Black youth as the most accessible cultural representation of the Black youth everyday life. A brief history of rap and its current state will be explored within the review of the literature.

While this study will explore the impact of hip hop media on adolescent females, which includes radio, music videos, rap press, television, and social media. Additionally, while not often stated explicitly, the implication of scripts on the adolescents is inferred. A script, according to Stephens and Phillips (2003), is a "schema used to…create norms regarding behavior that are expressed and maintained through their usage (p. 143). It is important to recognize the representations in hip hop media as more than merely providing a mental picture. Hip hop media influences public opinion about Black women and also influences the way Black women and girls view themselves.

Lastly, critical media literacy is defined by Alvermann (2000) as "engaging students in the analysis of textual images (both print and nonprint), the study of audiences, and the mapping of subject positions such that differences become cause for celebration rather than distrust" (p. 194).

Assumptions & Limitations

This study makes some assumptions about urban, Black girls, presuming that they engage in or with hip hop and that their parents engage in or with hip hop. Additionally, I assume that the participants' parents have some ability to decode meanings and messages from the media, or are critically engaged with hip hop media as well. There

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are also some important limitations to this study. First, I focus primarily on high school

aged girls and do not explore the experiences adolescent, or young adult women, have

with hip hop music and their parental influence. Second, I will not be able to consider the

impact of hip hop on Black female youth as a whole, but solely on its influence on the

urban, Black high school aged girls in this study. Further, I specifically explore the

relationship between parent and daughter so the perspective on how urban Black males

(sons) interact with hip hop will not be included.

Additionally, girls participating in this study are a part of a program for high

school students to earn college credit before entering a university. That the girls will be

in a setting which has the potential for them to feel uncomfortable, that these discussions

are not being conducted in their own element, is a limitation of this study. Moreover how

one engages with hip hop media can, and, or will vary depending on the girl. The

participants will not be a representative sample of the population. I do, however, want

my study to get at how parents and daughters interact to help craft possible answers to

questions on the influence of popular culture and family socialization on youth.

Back Story

Sure enough, in this little world the little boy meets one of those little girls. And he thinks she a bad bitch and she thinks she a bad bitch. He thinks disrespectfully, she thinks of that sexually. She got the wrong idea, he don't wanna fuck her. He think she's bad at bein' a bitch, like his mother; Momma never dressed like that, come out the house hot mess like that. Ass, titties, dressed like that, all out to impress like that. Just like that, you see the fruit of confusion? He caught in a reality, she caught in an illusion. Bad mean good to her, she really nice and smart. But bad mean bad to him, bitch don't play a part. But bitch still bad to her if you say it the wrong way. But she think she a bitch, what a double entendre.
–Lupe Fiasco "Bitch bad" 2012

One day I was sitting with a colleague discussing media representations of Black

women juxtaposed against the multifaceted nature of Black womanhood. As an example

of the multidimensionality of Black women I began ruminating on myself and I realized

that my attitude and actions is outside of the prescriptive boxes that have been labelled

for Black women. In essence, I am beyond your perception. And there in the name of this

collective was born. I needed these girls to understand that who they are is not created by

anyone else and can be beyond the perception of others. The inscription of stereotypes

from the media onto the bodies of Black girls can obstruct them from developing

authentic selves, so who they are has the potential to be beyond their own perception if

they are stuck posturing what Black womanhood looks like based on the representations

available. I needed these young ladies to know that they have the right to decide for

themselves who it is that they were and wanted to be. They could ascribe to the dominant

narrative of Black womanhood or they could create a counter-narrative. Who they are is

a decision they can consciously make. It is negligent in the face of the inundation of hip

hop media to ignore these forms of socialization and education. Hip hop, according to

Baszile (2009), has "not only found its way across various urban landscapes" but it has

also found its way "into the homes of white suburban youth and across the borders of the

U.S. with multiple manifestations in Africa, Asia, and Europe" (p.7). Therefore, to

ignore the vast range of influence these media have on youth is irresponsible.

In 2012, I was invited by my academic advisor to participate in a middle school

program that she and other graduate students created. The "Songhoy Club" was an after-

school program that provided middle-school students with an Afrocentric curriculum. I

chose to teach the youth on the historical treatment of Black women from "Hottentot to

Hip Hop." Months later, my advisor wanted to conduct parent workshops. She invited the

Songhoy Club's participants' parents to participate in "critical collaborative discussions

about Afrocentric curriculum and pedagogy" (King, Goss & McArthur, 2014, p. 3). I conducted a similar lesson with the parents as I did with their children in order to explore the standards and values parents instill within their homes and how that is reinforced or undermined by the messages in hip hop media. It is my experiences with the parents during these parent workshops that prompted me to want to explore the role of parents as mediators of hip hop media influences on youth because these parents were up-to-date on rap music, artists, and hip hop gossip. These parents were critical of hip hop media, although they engaged with the cultural movement, and reported having analytical dialogue with their children about their collective engagement with hip hop media.

According to Kitwana (2002) "as many among the so-called hip hop generation (those born between 1965 and 1984) enter early adulthood and middle age, hip hop is no longer solely a youth culture" (p. 23). Hip hop, Dimitriadis (2009) continues, "has all but defined our contemporary cultural landscape in the United States and around the world" (p. xi). Rap music is more than just a musical genre in which youth engage, it is also a form of persuasive, influential rhetoric that has the ability to educate, inspire, or dehumanize youth in countless different directions.

The song lyrics throughout this introduction represent the ways that youth can misconstrue the messages that are received both within the lyrical content of rap music, the imagery in its videos, and the way their parents model their "acceptance" of the messages. As the song's beginning, Lupe Fiasco talks about how the word "bitch" can have different meanings and can, therefore, be interpreted differently based on the listener or viewer. In one instance, as example, he illuminates how a young woman may refer to herself as a "bad bitch" based on the accoutrements and material possessions she

has acquired, while a young man may be referring to the woman as a "bitch" based on the way that she acts. Also, while the young man develops and hears his mother call herself a "bad bitch" he then relates the term "bitch" to all women. The refrain of this song, "Bitch bad," which I have used throughout this introductory chapter, is sung "Bitch bad, woman good, lady better, they misunderstood" where "bitch bad" portrays the problematic nature of utilizing the term "bitch" to refer to oneself or others, while "woman good" speaks to one's ability to show self-respect and respect for others through their regard of them. "Lady better," to use this song as a metaphor, would be the goal of my work; to influence and re-invite the relationship between Black parents and their daughters to become stronger, as well as, to aid Black girls in constructing, or maintaining, positive self-identity. Sections of this introduction have opened with a verse of Lupe Fiasco's song to better illustrate the argument that youth are socialized by both media and parental influences simultaneously.

Young people today are using popular culture to define themselves and to chart their daily lives. Hip hop has created a global youth culture that began in the United States and has been mass produced by the media. Hip hop is "as pervasive today, it seems, as the air we breathe" (Dimitriadis, 2009, p. xi). Hip hop media can superimpose stereotypical scripts on those a part of the culture, especially African American women and girls. Scripts have been designed to control Black women, and while Black women are not the only people who are objectified by scripts, the personification of these women is conducted in very specific ways that attack Black womanhood. In the culture at large, including popular culture, white women do not have the ongoing historical constructions of themselves as worthless, subhuman, promiscuous, predatory, and hypersexual.

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Inimical labelling has been the burden of Black women since slavery and hip hop music is imbued with these stereotypical depictions of Black girls and women.

As a participant in hip hop myself (I enjoy listening to and I purchase the music, I go to see the artists live, etc.), in no way is it my belief, nor am I implying, that all of the messages—as defined by lyrical content, video imagery, and artist behavior—within hip hop are negative. However, according to Durham (2010), "Hip hop media can [also] recall dominant relations of power by reproducing racist stereotypes about Black female hypersexuality and by reproducing the logic of capitalism through its familiar trope of the pimp and ho" (p. 125-126). This "logic of capitalism" is evident when record labels encourage artists to create music that will receive the most radio airplay, and in the southern region of the United States, where this study takes place, a Strip Club subculture of music has now been established. Many rap artists test out new music in strip clubs. Based on how enthusiastic the dancers are to perform to their music enables the artists to determine if they have a song which will be widely accepted by their fans. The essence of hip hop has, in many ways, been bought out through capitalistic notions of success, and this study will investigate the extent to which this corporate controlled version of hip hop can instill derogatory and dehumanizing impressions on its listeners.

Overview

This dissertation is composed of five chapters, including this introductory chapter. In Chapter 2, I present of a review of literature on the socialization of Black girls, critical media literacy, and hip hop to provide a context for framing Black girls' experiences with hip hop media and parents' role in mediating the influence of hip hop media. In Chapter 3, I present the conceptual framework and research methods for this qualitative study. My

research findings are presented in Chapter 4, and my final chapter includes a discussion of the major findings of the research study, and implications for education policy and future research.

  To this end, this study serves to fill the gap in the literature on the impacts of hip hop media. The purpose of my dissertation is to understand to what extent, and if they do, how Black girls construct their racialized-gender identity through hip hop media and the role of parents as mediators of that influence.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to explore how the Black parent-daughter relationship may serve as a vehicle by which the girls experience, embody and or resist the stereotypical imagery in hip hop media, three bodies of literature must be examined: the socialization of Black girls, critical media literacy, and hip hop. I conclude with a discussion on the necessity of employing hip hop pedagogy that utilizes critical media literacy in an effort to broaden discussion and connections with Black girls.

Socialization

Researchers have given considerable attention to how race and class-based constraints limit the educational pathways of African American adolescents from low-income backgrounds (O'Connor, 1999). For African American girls, gender also contributes to unique social and academic risks, which can pose significant threats to academic achievement (Sanders & Bradley, 2005). Lindsay-Dennis (2009) explains, "African American adolescent girls are considered to be "at risk" due to racial and gender discrimination, exposure to pejorative one-dimensional images of Black womanhood, poverty, early sexual encounters, teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, increased adult responsibilities, and other forms of victimization" (p 53). Despite these risks, many African American adolescent girls are academically resilient while others succumb to environmental stressors. African American girls' educative experiences must not be framed as isolated events. These experiences must be assessed in relation to the world around them. In order to discuss the socialization of Black girls, I provide an overview of the history of objectification of Black women to highlight the unique gender dynamics

that Black women's racialized-gender include. I follow that synopsis with a review of the

literature of family socialization on Black girls. I conclude this section on socialization

with an overview of media socialization on youth, specifically Black girls.

Stereotypical Scripts of Black Women

Intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality could not

continue without powerful ideological justifications for their existence (Collins,

2000). Since this study explores hip hop media influences on Black girls, I

highlight the four dominant stereotypical images (Jezebel, Mammy, Matriarch,

and Welfare Mother) and how those images have developed into contemporary

controlling images. Stereotypical images throughout history have set African

American women up to be sexually victimized over time. Therefore, she is always

defending her name and her honor. According to hooks (1984) ideas about race

have placed African American females in a complex dual relationship to both

Black culture and the dominant culture. That means that Black women have to

negotiate their racialized-gender in their daily interactions. The double-jeopardy

of being both Black and female in society has continued to create, and reinforce,

an American culture sated with derogatory representations of Black women.

The United States system of slavery was a dehumanizing institution which

left assaults on the bodies and minds of the enslaved. Not only were female

slaves used to toil as assiduously as male slaves, they were also used as breeders.

Williams (1991) stated that "under such a system in which the control of property

is fundamental, enslaved African women were valuable commodities" (p. 51).

Slave owners governed Black women's labor and converted Black women's

bodies into an economic good as units of capital. Additionally, as mothers, Black

women's fertility produced the children who increased their owner's property and

labor force (Davis, 1981). Slave owners wanted enslaved Africans to breed

because each slave child represented a "valuable unit of property, another unit of

labor, and, if female, the prospects of more slaves" (Collins, 2000, p.78). The

image of breeder claimed that Black women were able to produce children as

easily as animals. An example of the pervasiveness of breeding is found in the

fictional novel, "NightJohn," which portrays American slavery in the 1850s

through the eyes of the enslaved on a Georgia plantation. Its narrator is Sarny, a

twelve-year-old girl, who relates events that follow the arrival of Nightjohn, an

enslaved adult male, at the plantation of Clel Waller. In this story, Sarny, though

young, is aware of her impending role as that of a breeder. She describes how

"breeding" comes after the enslaved girls' "time for the troubles," or their

menstrual cycle (Paulsen, 1995, p. 6). The portrayal of enslaved African women

as breeders provided justification for the governance of enslaved Africans'

reproductive behavior. White (1985) wrote "slave masters wanted adolescent girls

to have children, and to this end they practiced a passive, though insidious kind of

breeding" (p. 101). Black women were a commodity as breeders, and in order to

justify this system she was deemed by White slave owners to be oversexed and

sexually promiscuous. However, slave owners treated the breeding of African

men and women as no different from breeding animals, as enslaved Africans were

treated inhumanely. For example, Sally Heming's was owned by former President

Thomas Jefferson, bore six of his children yet remained on his plantation as his

property. So whether African American women's sexual exploitation took the form of coercion, rape, or consent, the power slave owners, such as Jefferson, possessed allowed White men access to Black women's body. The United States system of slavery was dehumanizing and disparaging, and was also used as a tool for sexual gratification by White men.

Enslaved men and women were both assigned field jobs—toiling the soil, picking cotton, cutting cane, and harvesting tobacco—so in some sense, Davis (1981) argues, "the oppression of women was identical to the oppression of men" (p. 6). Davis (1981) continues, "but women suffered in different ways as well, for they were victims of sexual abuse and other barbarous mistreatment that could only be inflected on women" (p. 6). Within the institution of slavery, the rape and sexual exploitation of powerless Black women by powerful White men was the corollary to dominant controlling images of Black women; as a justification for the heinous actions carried out against them. Further, the sexual assaults Black women experienced during slavery and as domestic workers brought justifying image created by White men in an effort to rationalize their unscrupulous actions. The following synopsis of the four foundational stereotypes—Jezebel, Mammy, Matriarch, Welfare mother—will include examples of their contemporary manifestations.

Jezebel. While historically White women have been portrayed as models of self-respect, self-control, and even sexual purity Black women have been portrayed as innately promiscuous, even predatory. This depiction of Black women is signified by the name Jezebel. The belief that Blacks' sexuality is

animalistic precedes the institution of slavery in America to when European explorers traveled to Africa and found natives in tribal attire which the travelers misinterpreted as carnal, lewd, and erotic. White Europeans, locked into the racial ethnocentrism of the 17th century, saw tribal attire, dances, and other aspects of African culture as proof of the African's uncontrolled sexual lust and were thereby fascinated by African sexuality. The Jezebel stereotype was used as a rationalization for sexual relations between White men and Black women, especially during sexual unions involving slavers and slaves. The Jezebel was depicted as a Black woman with an insatiable appetite for sex, which excused the slave owners' assault on her. An example of the stereotype of Jezebel can be found in the story of Saartje, or Sarah, Baartman. While on display, she was referred to as the "Hottentot Venus." Many dehumanizing stereotypes of the Black female body can be traced back to the "Hottentot Venus" as her body was seen as "animal like" and "primitive" in the early eighteenth-century while on display in Europe (Gilman, 1985).

In 1810, Giddings (1995) reports that Saartje Baartman left her tribal home with European William Dunlop. Researchers are not clear if she was forced, coerced or persuaded but she, nonetheless, was an exhibit of fascination for Europeans, excited by the "tales of the exotic, animalistic body of African women" (p. x). While on exhibit she was presented with a skin colored loincloth as her only coverage (Gould, 1985) and for an additional fee, viewers could touch her body. Baartman's body was one of the first representations to become the "embodiment of difference" and "otherness" to biologically distinguish the Black

and White body (Hall, 1997, p. 265). Cuvier, a French scientist, made interpretations of Baartman's anatomy which became the basis of sexual scripts for women of African descent—primitive, wild, sexually uninhibited, and exotic (Fausto-Sterling, 1995). Not only did control over her body not belong to her, her named was changed from Saartjie to Sarah. Renaming was also a power play of White plantation owners in the United States, to minimize familiarity with their culture. Our names are a narrative as they are the first introduction we give to the world. Our names have meaning and a story behind them. Today, much media renames Black women as "bitch," "hoe," "angry," and "violent." In order to redefine, dehumanize and control a people, oppressors first usually attack how those people have named themselves.

The dehumanization of Black women's bodies has not stopped with Baartman, in more contemporary times, various researchers have argued that present-day examples of the Black female body in popular culture, like hip hop videos, encourages viewers to focus on the buttocks of Black women, like Baartman, which suggests that White patriarchy of the Black female body is still accessible. A modern day example of Baartman is Buffie "the Body" Carruth. Buffie the Body became a video "model" in 2005 accompanying rap artist Tony Yayo in his video "So Seductive." She earned her moniker from the size of her buttocks. Also new female rap artist Nikki Minaj has much public discussion surrounding her buttocks as well, and how "unreal" they look. So the awe over the buttocks and the Black female anatomy that may have begun with Saartje Baartman still exists today.

Mammy. The labor niche for Black women of domestic worker, during and post-slavery, spawned the mammy image. She is viewed as asexual, nurturing, and willing to put the White family's needs above the needs of her own family. One caricature of mammy is Aunt Jemima, "overweight, dark-skinned…with typical African features" (Stephens and Phillips, 2003, p. 8). According to Stephens and Phillips (2003) "the Mammy image preserved the convenient script of the happy, docile, Black female servant during a period when Black women were transitioning from unpaid house slaves to paid domestic workers" (p. 9). Post-slavery, a typical Southern tradition for Black girls was to train for domestic work by doing chores and taking care of younger siblings. Collins (2000) describes this type of work as "alienated labor," saying that this type of work can be "economically exploitative, physically demanding, and intellectually deadening" (p. 48). Rollins (1985) argues that what made domestic work more "profoundly exploitative than other comparable occupations" is the aspect of the personal relationship between employer and employee. The treatment afforded U.S. Black women domestic workers exemplifies the many forms that objectification can take; minimally paid, sexually assaulted, demeaned by being referred to as 'girl.' According to Collins (2000), "…calling Black domestic workers 'girls' enable[d] employers to treat their employees like children, as less capable human beings" (p. 71), an extension of the treatment they were regarded as slaves. While Black women might have been emancipated as slaves, their labor as domestic servants still entailed sexual harassment by the man of the house. In many instances domestic workers were approached by the White

male homeowner to engage in sexual acts, if not raped. A precarious situation:
working to support her family while having to avoid the male homeowner
furtively.

For not engaging in sexual acts, exposing his attempts to his wife or law
enforcement, and a slew of other circumstances beyond her control, African
American domestic workers were often fired without notice and without a
reference to seek employment. With no financial resources, minimal options and
no education, domestic work became Black women's labor niche. According to
Collins (2000):

> "Black women wanted to withdraw from the labor force, not to mimic
> middle-class White women's domesticity but, rather, to strengthen the
> political and economic position of their families. Their actions can be
> seen as a sustained effort to remove themselves from the exploited labor
> force in order to return the value of their labor to their families and to find
> relief from the sexual harassment they endured in domestic service. While
> many women tried to leave the paid labor force, the limited opportunities
> available to African American men made it virtually impossible for the
> majority of Black families to survive on Black male wages alone." (p.54)

Some domestic workers were able to thwart their employers' attempts while many
more were not. The sexual exploitation of black domestic workers, especially
live-in maids was commonplace. They were violated against their will routinely
as almost a condition of employment. Similarly, with limited acting and modeling
opportunities for Black women, some try to gain access to that industry by first
becoming "video models." Many of these positions like domestic work, employs
sexual coercion and assault as a typical condition of employment.

Matriarch. This image of the Black woman is seen as overly aggressive
and spends more time at work than at home being mothers and wives. Moynihan

(1965) notes that the Black matriarchy theory argued that "African American women who failed to fulfill their traditional womanly duties at home contributed to social problems in Black civil society" (p. 76). Spending too much time away from home inevitably led to unsupervised children who became failures in school and a burden on society. Assuming that Black poverty in the United States is passed on intergenerationally via the values of the home environment and parental structure, Collins (2000) further notes that "dominant ideology suggests that Black children lack the attention and care allegedly lavished on White, middle-class children" (p.76). Additionally, Collins (2000) contends, "portraying African American women as matriarchs allows White men and women to blame Black women for their children's failures in school and with the law, as well as Black children's subsequent poverty" (p.76). Further, as "overly aggressive women," Black matriarchs allegedly emasculate their lovers and husbands, and these men, thereby, either desert their partners or refuse to marry the mother(s) of their children. Sadly, Black men have bought into this stereotype of the matriarch. The matriarch, or overly strong Black woman, has also been used to influence "Black men's understandings of Black masculinity" (Collins, 2000, p. 76). Claiming that Black women are less desirable than White women due to their assertive nature. Years of single Black women raising sons and daughters for less pay than their White female and male counterparts are never considered in their assertiveness. The image of the matriarch persists and often finds many Black women feeling as though they have done something wrong.

The matriarch image allows White men and women to blame Black women for their children's mistakes in schools and society, the continuation of Black poverty and economic disadvantages having spawned from the lack of attention Black mothers placed on their children's care and education. The Moynihan Report (1965) contends that slavery destroyed Black families by creating reversed roles for men and women. Black family structures are seen as being deviant because they challenge the patriarchal assumptions underpinning the traditional family ideal. Moreover, the absence of Black patriarchy is used as evidence for Black cultural inferiority (Collins, 2000). Therefore, the image of the matriarch also supports racial oppression.

Welfare mother. Governmental assistance in the form of welfare benefits was created for White women whose husbands had gone off to war and who needed financial supplements. As long as poor Black women were denied social welfare benefits, there was no need for the stereotype of the welfare mother, however, when U.S. Black women demanded and gained equity to access state services, the need for this controlling image arose. This image has been developed for Black women who use welfare benefits. However, while Black women are not the only people who utilize this form of governmental assistance, they are the only ones degraded for using benefits they are entitled to by law.

The welfare mother has transmuted to the welfare queen. The term "welfare queen" was coined during the Reagan era in an effort to paint a portrait of Black women fraudulently collecting excessive benefits, so that these benefits could be minimized from the federal budget. Since that time, welfare queen is

generally used to describe Black women utilizing governmental assistance which still posits that she does not need the services and is somehow abusing the system.

Contemporary scripts. Many scholars propose that White and African American females have different gender socialization experiences and develop clashing ideals about femininity (Collins, 2000; Davenport & Yurich, 1991; King, 1982). Many White females are socialized to adhere to the cult of true womanhood in which "true" women possess four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Collins, 2000; Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995). Conversely, according to Lindsay-Dennis (2009) "African American female family members and friends who serve as African American girls' primary socialization agents often do not adhere to the cult of true womanhood" (p. 24). For these reasons the socialization experiences of Black females and some White female teachers can be starkly varying and create an incongruent learning environment. According to Irvine (1990), cultural congruency can only occur when educators recognize that their lived experiences and gender expectations may differ from those of their students their students. Teachers must also learn to view cultural differences between themselves and their students as strengths rather than primarily as problems to be solved.

In addition to understanding the socialization and history of objectification of Black women over history, it is critical to this study to explore family socialization. The socialization messages from parents and siblings are significant to this study because "parent" in this study refers to anyone who maintains the emotional and psychosocial well-being of the youth involved.

Family Socialization

In the literature on African American adolescent's psychosocial functioning, research focuses on racial and ethnic socialization over gender (Bennett, 2006; Brown, Tanner-Smith, Lesane-Brown, & Ezell, 2007; Hughes, Smith, Stevenson, Rodriquez, Johnson, & Spicer, 2006). Updegraff, Delgado, and Wheeler (2009) explicitly state, "Lack of descriptive information about gender dynamics and family socialization process in ethnic minority and. . .families" (p. 559). Although researchers acknowledge that racial, ethnic, gender, and class socialization processes shape African American youth's racial and ethnic identity black girls' gender and racial socialization has received less attention in social science research (Bennett, 2006; Brown et al., 2007; Hughes et al., 2006). The literature which indicates gender socialization is found within research on racial and ethnic socialization (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Thomas & Speight, 1999; Thomas & King, 2007). There must be more research on the racialized-gender socialization of African American females. A review of socialization literature shows that African American girls receive socialization messages about strength, nurturance, racial pride, self-defined ideal of beauty, and education (Jones & Shorter,-Goodson, 2003; Thomas & King, 2007). Socialization involves passing on the roles, behavior patterns, values, norms, and beliefs of adulthood. Socialization in African American families also includes preparing youth to fit in broader adult society and their racial and ethnic communities (Boykin & Ellison, 1995).

Systematic oppressions such as slavery, racism, sexism, and other forms of societal injustices have created a need for culturally situated survival skills that often protect youth from the harsh realities of being Black in America. For African American

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youth, the family provides the foundation for understanding their cultural realities

(Boykin & Ellison, 1995; Staples, 1994; Stephens, 2000). African American families

have the dual role of serving as a buffer against the outside world and an important

socializing agent (Greene, 1990) which is why dialogue between parents and daughters is

a critical element I explored with my research study. My research is situated within the

theoretical frameworks of Womanism and ecological systems theory (see Chapter 3), so I

use Womanist theorist Layli Maparyan to expound on the significance of dialogue.

Maparyan (2012) explains:

> "When the process of dialogue becomes intentional and conscious,
> energetically directed toward a well-defined and principled end, dialogue
> becomes a powerful tool for change. Womanist methodology capitalizes
> on the human love for communication and tethers it to metaphysical
> principles of energy transmutation." (p. 60)

Socialization involves transmitting roles, values, norms, and behavior patterns of

adulthood, and according to Boykin and Ellison (1995), for Black families socialization

also includes preparing youth to fit into their racial and ethnic communities, as well as

mainstream society. Therefore, families are an important factor in this study as the age of

the participants provides the assumption that their parents, or older siblings, are a part of

the hip hop generation. According to Sharpley-Whiting (2007), the term "hip hop

generation" refers to "those born in the post-movement era—post-civil rights, black

power, and women's movements—yet profoundly influenced by those movements" (p.

xv). Kitwana (2003) defines that time frame from 1964 to 1985. For Black adolescents,

their families provide the foundation necessary for understanding their cultural realities

(Boykin & Ellison, 1995; Staples, 1994; Stephens, 2000). It is vital that Black families

serve the dual role of serving as both a mediator to mainstream society as well as a socializing agent.

While communication and messages sent from mother to daughter are critical, research proves that the same is true for the messages sent from father to daughter. In making a distinction between the transmission of sexual information and the transmission of sexual attitudes and values, Hepburn (1981) argues that fathers are involved in the sexual socialization of their adolescents. Whether fathers are actively engaged in conversations with their daughters about sexual health and activity, or not, their communication or lack thereof both involve them in the sexual socialization of their youth. Secunda (1992) observed, "fathers have the more profound impact on a woman's sexual and romantic choices and relationships…And yet, of all family ties, the father-daughter relationship is the least understood and least studied" (p. 44). Father-daughter research should not be used to diminish the influence of mothers on their daughter's psychological and sexual development, but rather to illustrate how much more attention should be given to the impact of fathers in these areas. Miller and Jorgensen (1986) stress the need to examine the individual influences of mother-son, mother-daughter, father-daughter, and father-son relationships on adolescent sexual behavior, rather than focusing solely on mother-daughter interactions.

In a study conducted of White, upper and upper-middle class families with a daughter in the ninth to the twelfth grade, both parents and daughters were interviewed, by Dittus et al. (1997). In their research, daughters were asked where they learn most of their information about sex. While 55 percent reported either "home" or "home and

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school," of those, 51 percent reported their mothers as the source of the information, and only 4 percent reported both parents.

In addition to verbal communication, Jaccard and Dittus (1991) examined the impact of paternal attitudes towards premarital sex over and above maternal attitudes as predictors of teen sexual behavior for a sample of middle class, White, two-parent families. They found minimal evidence for independent effects of father attitudes, although they did find that the general relationship between fathers and teens, amount of paternal warmth toward the teen, and paternal communication restraint were important predictors of adolescent sexual behavior. According to Peterson (2007),

> "The quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrate that the influence of fathers on their daughters' sexual risk is exerted both directly and indirectly. Communication about sexual issues provides instruction about sexual safety and imparts desired expectations about relationship patterns. Closeness between fathers and their daughters shapes sexual expectations by reinforcing messages that girls are valued and loved." (p. 340)

Peterson (2007) also found that African American mothers were found to provide sexual education, whereas fathers were found to discuss family and community values as they relate to sexual decision making. In the author's study, fathers had a more powerful effect on sexual risk than mothers which suggests that the limited attention given to fathers, particularly in research focused on African American populations, may have hindered "the development of effective, empirically-based prevention and interventions programs aimed at reducing the negative health consequences associated with sexual risk" (p 341). The results of this study, still however, imply a duality of interdependence between men and women in shaping their daughters' sexuality. Larson, Richards, Sims, and Dworkin (2001) state, "Parenting behaviors and the parent-child relationship may be especially important for African American youth because of the strong value placed on family

relationships in the African American community. Though siblings have been neglected in the research on family gender socialization, McHale, Crouter and Whiteman (2003) note, "An ecological perspective on the role of family in children's and adolescents' development holds that knowledge of the larger environments in which families are embedded is central to understanding the ways in which families work to socialize children" (p. 126). Whiteman, Becerra, and Killoren (2009) contend, "…a body of work indicates that children and youth develop important skills and capabilities through their direct interactions with their siblings, such as conflict resolution, perspective taking, negotiation, compromising, cooperation, and other forms of social competence" (p. 30). My study includes hip hopers as siblings to explore how their influence impacts identity construction of Black girls. Identity construction, specifically of Black youth, is missing in the literature on siblings' process of socialization. Families in my dissertation include biological mothers and fathers as well as older siblings. Hopefully, the findings of this study add to the dearth of literature on the socialization process of siblings in the African American family.

Media Socialization

Not only do families serve as socialization agents for Black girls, popular culture, specifically hip hop media, also serves to influence the racialized-gender identity construction of Black girls. Several researchers' claim, that Black women are hypersexualized in the media, can be found in analyses of the images presented by the music industry (Emerson, 2002; Stephens & Phillips, 2003; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 2002). Content analyses of the music and music videos popular among Black youth indicate that the image of women as sex objects is prevalent among portrayals of Black women. Ward

and Rivadeneyra's (2002) analysis of popular Black music videos found sexual imagery in 84 percent of the videos and 71 percent of the women in those videos were scantily clad, if they were wearing clothing. The message from these videos is one-dimensional; depicting Black womanhood in a singular function which is to look good and be desirable to men (Emerson, 2002). Sanders (1997) pointed out that corrective messages also need to be included in the racial socialization process for African American girls. These messages seek to combat negative stereotypes associated with the worth of African American people and African American women. Further examination of the socialization of African American girls is needed to understand and contextualize the adaptive strategies that they utilize in educational settings.

In a study of the effects of media on White and minority girls, researchers found that minority girls do not identify with "White" media images, nor do they believe that significant others are effected by them (Milkie, 1999). The minority girls within this study were labeled 'at risk.' That is 'at risk' of dropping out of high school, and or becoming a teenage mother. Overall, the term 'at risk' refers to youths possibility of becoming unsuccessful, with success defined by whoever is using the term. The label 'at-risk' carries a connotation of pathology and deficiency that does not always acknowledge the contributing role of the environment and society to the challenges Black adolescent girls face. This 'at-risk' perspective ignores that African American girls grow up in a society that historically devalues African Americans and women, and perpetuates a pejorative one-dimensional view of African American womanhood (Sanders & Bradley, 2005). In today's media, especially music and television programs marketed to youth; there has been an increase in the sexualization of African American girls (APA Task

Force on the Sexualization of Girls, 2007). The corporate media also portrays Black girls as loud, unintelligent, sexually promiscuous and welfare dependent (Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

Adolescents are affected by popular culture by tailoring their fashion, style, slang, or sexuality to the music, media, and celebrities they listen to and watch. These kinds of things have become a priority for adolescents globally, and African American children are especially susceptible to the influence of media due to their high rates of media consumption (Gentile & Walsh, 2002). Black youth have reported watching an average of almost 6 hours of television and movies in comparison to an average of 3 hours and 47 minutes for White youth (Roberts, Foehr & Rideout, 2004). African American children are also susceptible to media influence because they tend to identify closely with and imitate the behavior of characters, especially Black characters (King & Multon, 1996), as there are fewer representations on television for them to relate to. Due to their increased exposure to and identification with media content, African American girls may be particularly vulnerable to internalizing media messages that emphasize the importance of beauty and appearance for girls and women. The time youth spend watching television, listening to music, and searching the Internet is a part of their learning experience (Kellner, 1995; Storey, 1998). Therefore, what they learn through hip hop media can become the landscape for their lives. By condemning rap music's, and hip hop media's, usefulness as a pedagogical tool, schools fail to equip students with the knowledge to detach themselves from popular culture as fans engage with the text of hip hop as intellectuals capable of separating their emotions from analysis and interpretation

(Shumway, 1989). It is for this reason, that it is necessary to provide youth critical media

literacy skills.

Critical Media Literacy

Steinberg and Kincheloe (1995) state, "critical media literacy is necessary in the

struggle to construct counter-hegemonic practice" (p. 3), and Sholle and Denski (1995)

go on to note that the simplest form of media literacy education is a process which

includes parents monitoring and discussing their children's television viewing with them.

The authors are clear that parents must be critical in this process and aid their children in

understanding the "meanings" that the TV shows produce" (p.13). In Giroux's book

Disturbing Pleasures (1994) he justifies the need for critical media literacy:

> "Moreover, the shift in the political toward popular practices has made
> clear that the hybridized space of popular culture is where the conflicts
> over the related issues of memory, identity, and representation are being
> most intensely fought over as part of a broader attempt by dominant
> groups to secure cultural hegemony." (p. 27)

Critical media literacy encourages critical thinking and production of multimodal

literacies. The practice of media literacy promotes reflexivity in media consumption

habits and urges the student to analyze the messages they are receiving. Hobbs (1997)

listed the key components of media literacy and discussed the importance of utilizing

critical media literacy in the classroom. The key components that Hobbs list are:

> "1. All messages are constructions.
> 2. Messages are representations of social reality.
> 3. Individuals negotiate meaning by interacting with messages.
> 4. Messages have economic, political, social and aesthetic purposes.
> 5. Each form of communication has unique characteristics." (p. 9)

Researchers must consider the social context in which African American youth,

specifically girls, are socialized and educated. Since adolescents construct themselves,

and their perceptions of communities, outside of the classroom, African American girls, specifically, need a space where they feel comfortable resisting demeaning notions of Black womanhood. Beach and O'Brien (2008) provide strategies for teaching popular culture in the classroom, and one of their strategies encourages students to explore how race, class, gender and other forms of identity are mass produced in popular culture. For example, they promote teachers and students having dialogue that discusses, "Whiteness in Hollywood films" since Whiteness is "often the invisible norm against which identities as 'others' are constituted…[and] foster negative, racist representations of urban people of color in ways that serve to fuel suburban White resentment toward the inner city" (p. 791). A critical media literacy program would require that students "not simply develop the ability to interpret media meanings but also the ways they themselves consume and affectively invest in the media" (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1995). A program of this function would prove to encourage students to, as Steinberg and Kincheloe (1995) continue, "explore their own sense of historical agency as they come to realize that everyday decisions and choices are not simply 'free,' nor are they a product of rational decisions alone" (p. 2). Critical pedagogues suggest that the process of critical media literacy is conducted through constant questioning (Hammer, 1995; Tyner, 1998).

Flores-Koulish (2005) states that media literacy education provides great educational hope for two reasons: first, media literacy education bridges cultural gaps between educator and student; secondly, media literacy education creates a collaborative, co-learner environment for teachers and students. Together, teacher and students have the ability to "develop skills to both navigate and create the entertainment and information media popular culture in which we all live, breathe, move and have our

being" (p. xi). Media literacy education must be infused with teacher education as Gathercoal (2000) notes "teacher education is the place where content is fused with pedagogy" (p. 4). An example for the necessity of including media literacy in teacher education is the work that Renee Hobbs has conducted around teacher media use in the classroom. Hobbs (1993, 1997) found that teachers misuse media in schools. Educators do this by turning on a video for students to watch while grading papers or rewarding the class with a video which works to promote passive consumption of media. Steinberg and Kincheloe (1995) contend that "If educators and cultural workers are interested in who students are and how their subjectivities are formed, they must address the complex politics of media representation" (p. 3).

Hip hop media may be a significant link to Black cultural practices that teachers and students outside of Black culture have to gather ideas about their students so a focus on critical media literacy, both for educators and students, proves to have both critically interrogate media consumption, the dominant narrative prevalent within it, and counterhegemonic practices.

Hip Hop

Historical Context

I am not writing an exhaustive hip hop history, rather, I am looking at the cultural movement to explore how Black girls experience, embody and or resist the stereotypical images in hip hop media. I am attempting to utilize the space hip hop provides in order to mediate the lives of Black girls. Hip hop media does two things that are critical to this study: it influences public opinion about Black women, and it can be used as a

pedagogical tool since popular culture is an educative site. According to Steinberg and

Kincheloe (1995):

> "…educators must understand the multiple contexts that shape the
> identifications and desires of students, including the shared experiences
> they bring to the classrooms. One of the most important factors in the
> manufacturing of student experience, and the ideological production we
> call 'learning' is media." (p. 1)

Pough (2004) also implicated academia as contributors to learning media by saying that

in order for Black women's studies researchers to make meaningful inquiries in the field

requires we tap into the potential of hip hop for future generations of Black scholars and

activists.

Rap music evolved from the hip hop cultural movement, in fact the definition of

rap is a 'form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically

based music' (Rose, 1994, p. 2). Hip hop, for many, is more than just music. Hip hop is

centered in African and Black traditions of art, dance, poetry, fashion, and experience

(Baker, 1993; Neal, 1997; Osumare, 2001; Rose, 1994; Toop, 1984). According to

Pough (2004):

> "The association between Hip-Hop and rap often results in people
> collapsing Hip-Hop and rap without fully realizing that Hip-Hop is the
> culture and rap is a form of music that comes out of Hip-Hop culture.
> Talking about Hip-Hop as a culture, not just in terms of its connection to
> rap, sets the stage for a wider understating of Hip-Hop as a youth
> movement and as a cultural phenomenon that encompasses a variety of
> genres." (p. 5)

It is for this reason that I broadened my study to include more than music during data

collection.

Rose (1994) wrote, "From the outset, rap music has articulated the pleasures and

problems of black urban life in contemporary America" (p. 2). The problems Black urban

youth in the 1970s experienced, at the start of the hip hop era were, unemployment, drug

abuse, poor schooling, gang violence, and teen pregnancy. Additionally, the

neighborhoods that hip hop was born within were a part of a long historical and political

infrastructure of discriminatory housing policies and segregation. In fact there have been

federal policies that have created and sustained segregated communities. For example,

redlining, which began in the 1930s, did not allow banks to provide loans for Black

homeowners wishing to live in suburban or White areas. Further, federal guidelines

forbade bank loans for housing rehabilitation or purchase in city neighborhoods that

resulted in a deterioration of housing stock and discouragement of business investment in

cities. In the late 1940s and 1950s, government policies gave substantial tax deductions to

businesses that moved from the city rather than renovate, and in the 1960s investment tax

credits allowed manufacturers to take credit for new industrial plants and equipment but

not the renovation of existing ones (Anyon, 2005). Federal policies, White flight, and

middle-class Black flight left many neighborhoods dilapidated, with minimal jobs which

led to a politic of abandonment of which hip hop grew. The artists spoke about the issues

they were encountering. For example, Grandmaster Flash and Furious Five rapped in

their 1982 hit "The Message":

It's like a jungle sometimes
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under
It's like a jungle sometimes
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under

Broken glass everywhere
People pissin' on the stairs, you know they just don't care
I can't take the smell, can't take the noise
Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice
Rats in the front room, roaches in the back
Junkies in the alley with a baseball bat

I tried to get away but I couldn't get far
'cuz a man with a tow truck repossessed my car.

Black and Brown youth still experience these problems today. As a result of these social ills, which span across the nation hitting almost every major city, hip hop became the sound and culture of inner city youth in America. Hip hop became a culture with traditions, customs, and a language seen as a counterculture that now speaks to youth around the globe (Alridge, 2005; Stephens & Few, 2007; Smitherman, 1997; Watkins, 2000). The narratives and images used by rappers, whether consciously or unconsciously, link themselves to larger stories that play out in society—poverty, crime, and violence, to name just a few. I believe that there is a distinct difference between hip hop and rap music, where hip hop is a cultural movement and rap is an element, or component within it. However, I will use the terms rap and hip hop interchangeably because much of the literature lumps both terms together.

While hip hop was born in New York, out of African and Caribbean traditions, the South, specifically Atlanta, Georgia, where this study takes place, is highly influential to the cultural movement today. Sarig (2007) affirms that although New York youth created the gritty and poetic style of rap, and transformed that music into a cultural movement, cities in the South, like Atlanta and Miami have helped to form a bass driven form of rap. Currently, Atlanta, Georgia is an influential city to the sound of hip hop music and hip hop media, as many music videos and television shows are taped within the city limits. In most recent years, most rap songs are produced in Atlanta, or have input from Southern artists as featuring rappers or singers. Further, many music videos use dance moves from Atlanta's urban dance culture (Sarig, 2007). For these reasons, the significance of how youth in Atlanta understand hip hop media is important.

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Rap music has become a global phenomenon with a mass appeal. There are

countless books and articles that examine rap music and the hip hop cultural movement

through multiple lenses, but few have given voice to the youth who consume the music,

especially in Atlanta, Georgia, where rap music is now so prevalent (Sarig, 2007). Not

only is how youth understand the text of rap music important, it is also of significance to

understand the impact of rap music videos. Durham (2010) continues the discussion of

the impact of music videos. She states:

> "In the 1990s, 2 Live Crew provided the porn chic or the popular porn
> blueprint for the emergent lyrical and visual content in rap music videos
> where regional representations of the booty and the accompanying bass-
> heavy "booty" music eclipsed other aesthetic forms for hip hop audiences
> tuned into MTV programming, such as Yo! MTV Raps (1988-1995). By
> 2001 Snoop Dogg produced an award-winning adult film fashioned as a
> music video. The Tip Drill music video that aired on the defunct BET
> Uncut in 2003 provides an important flashpoint to illustrate the
> convergence of the backwards gaze with familiar tropes from
> pornography. The hip hop music video formula highlights
> hypermasculinity through the accumulation of wealth and sexually
> available women." (p. 134)

The lyrical content and visual imagery, while performed primarily by Black men, cannot

be wholly attributed to the fault of the artists. Black music has been commodified by

music executives for decades, including the blues and rock and roll, and rap serves as no

exception. The history of how hip hop music transcended from the airwaves to the

television screen is vital to understand the influence of rap culture on youth because the

cultural genre's representations were shaped by outsiders, specifically outsiders who

were historically the 'other' in the racial binary opposition. Before hip hop videos, youth

attended concerts to view rappers, but with the creation of videos, corporate America was

able to put a face to the sound that depicts Blacks as nefarious, promiscuous, oversexed,

and violent (DuRant, Rich, Emans, Rome, Allred, & Woods, 1997; Nelson, 2000; Ward, 2004).

The Corporate Takeover

Today music executives in the hip hop industry are comparable to "plantation owners" exploiting Black people—African American women especially. Music executives and artists produce monolithic narratives of Black womanhood as a result of racialized-gender stereotypes that have plagued Black women throughout our history here in the United States and our interaction with colonizers in Africa. These myths and stereotypes, West (2001) contends, "are part of a wider network of white supremacist lies whose authority and legitimacy must be undermined" (p. 131). Rap music and media are both strong illustrative examples of West's contention. Not only is the hip hop cultural movement inundated with racial undertones, patriarchy also permeates the culture as it objectifies women for male desire. Arnett (2002) concluded, "If there is such a thing as a typical music video, it features one or more men performing while beautiful, scantily clad young women dance and writhe lasciviously…The women are mostly just props, not characters, not even people really" (p. 256). As was the case for enslaved African women, the Black women that appear in rap videos as objects have the sole purpose of fulfilling male pleasure.

According to Stephens and Phillips (2005) "extensive qualitative and anecdotal data has led to the identification of four foundational images of African American women's sexuality, the promiscuous Jezebel, asexual Mammy, breeding Welfare Mama, and the emasculating Matriarch" (p. 39). Collins (2000) asserts that:

> "Analyzing the particular controlling images…reveals the specific
> contours of Black women's objectification as well as the ways in which

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oppressions of race, gender, sexuality, and class intersect. Moreover, since the images themselves are dynamic and changing, each provides a starting point for examining new forms of control that emerge in a transnational context, one where selling images has increased in importance in the global marketplace." (p. 72)

Intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality could not continue without powerful ideological justifications for their existence (Collins, 2000). The four dominant images (Jezebel, Mammy, Matriarch, and Welfare Mother) have developed into contemporary controlling images that can all be found within hip hop media. The notion that Black sexuality is deviant and lacks the ability to be "moral" and "good" such as White sexuality is apparent in rap videos (Collins, 2000; Stephens & Phillips, 2005). Those sexually explicit and patriarchal depictions of Black culture and Black womanhood specifically, are detrimental to youth constructing identity with popular culture. According to Kellner (1995), "Radio, television, film, and the other products of the culture industries provide the models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless" (p. 1). Therefore, hip hop media teaches viewers' both consciously and subconsciously about Black culture.

Through hip hop media Blacks are highly visible. However, they have limited control of how the media represents them to the world. Hip hop music videos reify the idea that the lyrical content of Black youth who seek to be performers in the hip hop industry, must center itself on White supremacist and patriarchal ideologies. Pough (2004) notes, "gangsta culture is as American as apple pie and baseball, and young Black men rappers are not social deviants but true purveyors of the society's culture" (p. 71). Pough (2004) observes, "In fact, the rappers become grunt workers for the patriarchy: they sow the field of misogyny for the patriarchy and provide the labor necessary to keep

it in operation, much as Black men and women provided the free and exploited labor that built the United States" (p. 71). Therefore, when using hip hop as a pedagogical tool, educators must also be sure to provide critical media literacy instruction, since the corporatization of hip hop involves capitalist and creative power not usually extended to the artist.

Since hip hop videos depict social relationships of men and women in "pornographic" ways, young men and women will understand their gender roles as such (Stephens & Phillips, 2005, p. 38). The Jezebel script which uses the present-day moniker of "bitch," or "ho," "work[s] to demonize Black women's sexuality and maintain White patriarchal assumptions about Black womanhood and the Black body through rap music" (Love, 2008, p. 6). The represented definition of Black womanhood is not self-defined. Media representations remain monolithic. For contemporary young, Black women the imagery presented of who they are or can become—their "media role models"—resembles stereotypes of old, the Jezebel, Mammy, Matriarch, and Welfare mother of the new millennium. It is for this reason that within this study hip hop is not referred to as culture but rather as a cultural movement, as the people within the culture are not in control of its production or dissemination. Sholle and Denski (1995) explain that "media can be looked at as a pedagogical machine, constructing discourses that function primarily in the locus of a mode of transmission where 'culture becomes defined solely by markets for culture'" (p. 21). Hip hop has been misappropriated, commodified, and corporatized and perpetuates hegemonic notions of Blackness and Black womanhood for capitalistic gains. Steinberg and Kincheloe (1995) expound on these notions:

> "With the cost of entering the media market measured in the hundreds of millions of dollars, only the conglomerates can enter the fray. Those

groups without such wealth cannot challenge such economic power. When their voice is heard, it is reshaped and bent to the contours of the dominant ideologies. Racism, sexism, and economic inequality are often discussed in such contexts, but not in a manner that connects them to the lived experience of individuals. Here rests the role of a critical pedagogy of media: to take these various forms of oppression and connect them to the real life experiences of students. But critical media literacy is not to be confused with a bourgeois pedagogy that privileges experience at the expense of developing a critical language that interrogates the meanings produced in the name of experience." (p.4)

Because hip hop is an educative site, students must become media literate in order to construct counter hegemonic practices. Sholle and Denski (1995) note that media literacy is a practice that does not take place in isolation, but rather "in order to understand the media, one's self, one's relation to it, one must be able to speak (with a voice) and be able to recognize who is speaking in the media and who is not speaking" (p. 27). This ushers in the need to utilize hip hop as a pedagogical tool. It is also significant to note, within hip hop pedagogy, the objectification of Black women over time which permeates the cultural movement of hip hop. This is important to understanding the socialization messages prevalent in a cultural movement that Black girls engage in and construct identity through.

The corporate takeover of hip hop is significant to the media representation of Black women. According to Stephens, Phillips and Few (2009) "Because Hip Hop exists at the intersection of African American culture in all its richness and U.S. mainstream commercialism vis-à-vis the entertainment industry, it constitutes a uniquely precarious site for the unfolding of young women's sense of self" (p. 161). hooks (1992) notes that influence of the foundational stereotypes on contemporary images:

> "Just as nineteenth-century representations of Black female bodies were constructed to emphasize that these bodies were expendable, contemporary images (even those created in Black cultural production) give a similar message" (p. 127).

Byrd (2004) continues, noting "contemporary black women are forced to negotiate the traces left by these contaminated constructions of black female sexuality" (p. 11). Stephens, Phillips and Few (2009) state, that within the cultural movement of hip hop, the success of an artist is usually measured by "material acquisition, including acquisition of multiple women" (p. 164). The authors go on to state that within the context of hip hop media, "African American women's value is male defined such that her greatest commodity is her sexuality and body" (p. 164). For these reasons, many hip hop generation parents have learned to negotiate their own racialized-gender and sexual identities as hip hop media messages have differed over hip hop's history (Emerson, 2002; Keyes, 2000; Roberts & Ulen, 2000; Stephens, Phillips, & Few, 2009). Therefore, this study exploring the parent-daughter relationship as a vehicle by which the girls may come to embody, experience, and or resist the stereotypical imagery in hip hop media is significant. The role of families as mediators to the influence of popular culture, specifically hip hop media, is important in the identity construction of Black girls. Durham (2007) notes that it is "…time we must seriously engage with the hip-hop generation" (p. 305), and in order to do so this study explores the hip hop generation and their off-spring. The parent-daughter dyads in this study provide an understanding on intergenerational engagement with hip hop media. Exploring the interplay between parents and hip hop has implications for the connection between hip hop and schools.

While I have highlighted a history of objectification of Black women,

Black women are not the only women being sexualized. Byrd (2004) notes,

"Magazines like *Maxim* and *Rolling Stone* enjoy massive sales due in large part to

the soft porn shots of white celebrities that grace their covers" (p. 15). All women

have been sexualized. However, Byrd (2004) continues:

> Before [rap videos], there were countless images of scantily clad women
> in music videos. Bands like Van Halen and Motley Crue had perfected the
> art of the gratuitous bikini shot long before rappers. The difference was
> that these women were white. And they were not being depicted in a genre
> proclaiming itself to be politically charged and revolutionary." (p. 8)

Television programming executives, music industry producers and artists, and

video casting agents are largely responsible for the reproduction and distribution

of Black women in popular culture at large, and hip hop media specifically, as

sexually licentious. The myths created during slavery to justify the forced

exposure of Black women's bodies still influences the beliefs about and Black

women and the ways they are treated today (Tribbett-Williams, 2000). In order to

justify the colonization and enslavement of Africans, Europeans began 'othering'

African people. Othering is a process of stigmatizing others in an effort to define

and secure one's own positive identity (Sartre, 1957; Story, 2007). Washington

(2007) contends, "American society is stratified on the basis of gender, race, and

class. Within this stratification Black women…have normally been placed on the

bottom. Being in a 'powerless' position made it possible (and easy) for women of

color to be objectified" (p. 81). The image of the Jezebel is being mass marketed

in popular culture, and specifically hip hop media. As with the enslavement of

African women in the United States, the bodies of Black women are being sold

for economic gain through the entertainment industry (Washington, 2007).

Muhammad (2007) asserts, "Marketing practices built on widely accepted ideology, which, in the case of mass media's representations of Black women, is informed by racism and sexism" (p. 128). Oliver (2007) states:

> "At present, the discourse surrounding the commercialization of hip-hop, and its egregious exploitation of Black females centers on the aforementioned question: will Black girls play the caricaturized role of the hip-hop Jezebel or reject and re-appropriate their fragmented and colonized bodies and psyches." (p. 248-249).

The ways that Black girls perform their racialized-gender identity is a reflection of how they have both adopted and created identity within the cultural movement of hip hop. A critical media literacy that espouses hip hop pedagogy is important in aiding Black girls in understanding the subtexts of society, especially in relation to the ways Black people in general, and Black women specifically, are represented in the media.

Scripts and Stereotypes in Popular Culture

Although popular culture and hip hop media do not use the terms "Jezebel," "Mammy," "Matriarch," or "Welfare Mother" to describe Black women, these representations are still reflected in current depictions of Black women and girls today. Stephens and Phillips (2003) highlighted eight contemporary scripts that can be found in hip hop media, and although the names may change by region, or by an artist coining a new term, the meanings remain the same. For example, the term "freak" can be used to describe the "Jezebel" stereotype. A "freak" is defined as a woman who pursues sex to satisfy her own desires. Many have debated who has true control over her sexuality. An example

of this term can be found at the 2006 MTV Awards show. Rapper Snoop Dogg

garnered much attention upon his arrival with two black women chained and

tethered to him. Both women had on virtually see-through shirts, exposing their

breasts and nipples, with black leather miniskirts. Both women also had leashes

around their necks. After this entrance, it was widely debated if Snoop Dogg or

the women were in control of the women's sexuality. Another example of a

contemporary script is that of the "gold digger." This script represents the

"Welfare Mother." According to Stephens and Phillips (2003), the gold digger

will trade sex for economic gain. She purposefully uses her body to attract men

through her dress and language, and will do whatever she has to do in order to get

the material resources she desires. Many rap artists lyrical content is based on the

gold digger image and not falling victim to her trappings. One example of this

would be rapper Kanye West and singer/actor Jamie Foxx's song "Gold Digger"

in which the refrain Foxx sings says, "She take my money when I'm in need.

Yeah she's a trifling friend indeed. Oh she's a gold digger way over town, that

dig's on me."

These scripts are detrimental to Black women in particular as White

women have not had the ongoing historical construction of themselves devalued

and considered animalistic and sexually immoral worthless. African American

women have carried this burden since slavery and hip hop music is imbued with

these stereotypical depictions of Black girls and women. Stephens and Phillips

(2005) argued that differentiating the stereotypes of Black and White women

perpetuate racist and sexist beliefs about Black women, while White women are

seen as "good, innocent, virginal girls" (p. 4). In order to maintain the "pure" image of White women, the demoralizing scripts of Black women must continue to be produced. Hip hop media maintains the stereotypes about the Black race and sexuality. According to Stephens and Phillips (2005), these sexual scripts are "embedded within an African American, youth developed culture known as Hip Hop" (p. 65). Hip hop is an African American urban based culture of creativity and expression, and rap music is situated within this space in popular culture. Rap music has become the place where Black youth search for their identities, however this can be dangerous as many images within the music are patriarchal and sexually explicit.

In this sense, the influence of hip hop is problematic as Black girls begin to negotiate their sexual behavior. According to Ross and Coleman (2011), "young African American women are particularly likely to adhere to sexual scripts that are depicted in Hip hop because they represent figures to which they assume similarity" (p. 158). The negotiation of sexual behavior can be seen statistically, as Black adolescent girls have disproportionately higher rates of early sexual activity, teenage pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2000) than girls from non-Black backgrounds.

The hip hop cultural movement has been an increasingly prevalent aspect of Black culture. One of the ways hip hop media can be deconstructed for Black girls is with the help of their parents. Additionally, as the majority of the images of Black women in hip hop media are patriarchal and misogynistic, young Black women need a more positive counteractive role model. As even today, dominant

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culture still (re)presents Black women's bodies as grotesque, pathological, and deviant. It is for these reasons that a hip hop pedagogy that utilizes critical media literacy is necessary to educate youth on the messages they receive and how they can create counter-hegemonic narratives.

Hip Hop Pedagogy and Critical Media Literacy

Few studies have been conducted to highlight the impact of hip hop media, specifically rap music and its videos, on Black female youth. Emerson (2002) explored the representation of Black womanhood through the examination of music videos by Black women performers to illuminate the significance of mass media as a social institution. She emphasized the representation of Black womanhood, as recent research on hip hop culture, focuses primarily on the experiences of young Black men. Emerson discovered that Black women have a significant presence in hip hop; however the discourses in hip hop culture reproduce prevailing and distorted ideologies of Black women's sexuality.

Emerson collected a sample of 56 music videos that featured Black women performers on cable networks BET (Black Entertainment Television), MTV (Music Television) and VH1 (Video Hour 1), recorded at the time of day when teenagers and young adults would most likely view them. The videos mirrored the *Billboard* magazine rotation playlists for those channels, and all featured Black female performers (defined as singers, rappers, or other musicians). First the videos were coded based on identified emergent themes, then the author performed a textual analysis. The videos reflected and reproduced the institutional context in which they were produced, which reinforces stereotypical controlling images of Black womanhood. The themes which emerged were

the body (artists required to live up to dominant notions of physical attractiveness), one-dimensional womanhood (simply displayed as decorative eye-candy), and the male sponsor (one-dimensional depiction of Black women as objects of male pleasure does not legitimate their agency as artists). This study shows how popular entertainment, specifically rap music, serves as a space for the production of stereotypical controlling images. Further this study highlighted the importance of examining rap music and media as a reproductive site of stereotypes and scripts on African American girls and women.

In a qualitative study conducted by Stephens and Phillips (2005) the researchers gave youth pictures of female entertainers and asked them to circle the sexual script they thought that female entertainer exhibited. According to the researchers, youth's "continuous consumption of Hip Hop" (p.56) established congruency in the definitions and meaning they associated with hip hop female entertainers. The youth were able to identify images associated with the term Freak. Rap videos label Black women as "ho's" and "freaks" which sends a message to young Black girls about what Black womanhood means. The influence of hip hop in this sense is problematic if Black girls begin to negotiate their sexual behavior. According to Ross and Coleman (2011), "young, African American women are particularly likely to adhere to sexual scripts that are depicted in hip hop because they represent figures to which they assume similarity" (p. 158). Sholle and Denski (1995) explain that in order for teachers to educate youth on media literacy, teachers must first understand how popular culture is constructed, the messages implicit within popular culture and how those messages come across to youth. Kellner (1995) notes that, "Radio, television, film, and the other products of the culture industries

provide the models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure,

powerful or powerless" (p. 1). Aufderheide (1993) continues:

> "…schools can no longer afford to limit education to print literacy skills.
> There are deep, nuanced messages contained within the visual, aural, and
> sensual arrangements of the ubiquitous media that surround students,
> teachers and society. Some in these groups have determined that media
> literacy is the best response to these phenomena. One researcher defines
> media literacy as 'the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and
> communicate messages in a variety of forms.'" (p. 11)

In the case of Black girls and women, who find scripts for Black womanhood represented

in demeaning ways, Stephens and Phillips (2005) suggest that, "The everyday usage of

these scripts has a direct impact on young African American women's sexual self-

concept, behaviors, and experiences" (p. 35). As hip hop videos depict social

relationships of men and women in lewd ways, the male and female youth watching can

embody and represent their gender roles in similar ways.

Currently, African Americans have limited control of how the media represents

them to the world. Dyson (1996) contended that it is easier for a rap artist to get a record

contract and album made if they are "pimpin' hoes," "cockin' glocks," or generally bitch-

baiting your way through yet another tired tale about how terrible it was to come up in

the hood without your father" (p. 114). Dyson (1996) is referring to a common

prescription of rap music to discuss being a "pimp," or a man with many women,

"cockin' glocks," which is to use a gun, or to discuss the trials and tribulations of

growing up in a single-parent household in a bad neighborhood. Rap music videos reify

Dyson's notion that the lyrical content of Black youth who seek to be performers in the

hip hop industry, must center itself on White supremacist and patriarchal ideologies.

Therefore, when using hip hop as a pedagogical tool, educators must also be sure to

provide critical media literacy instruction, since the corporatization of hip hop involves capitalist and creative power not usually extended to the artist.

Queeley (2003) explains that corporate America has sold Black culture and exploited urban youth in the process, because as youth posture their identities around the artists, the youth are then "blamed for society's ills (i.e. crime, drug use, delinquency, apathetic behavior toward education, etc.)' (Stovall, 2006, p. 586). These youth are identifying with inauthentic actors and are creating forged racial, gender and sexual identities. Youth need the skills necessary to be analytical of the interplay of systems which create essentialized narratives of Black man and womanhood. Therefore, according to Sholle and Denski (1995):

> "Attending to the popular in student experiences involves not simply valorizing that experience, but working with (and on) that experience. Such a pedagogy must allow students to speak from their own experience at the same time that it encourages them to identify and unravel codes of popular culture that may work to construct subject relations that serve to silence and disempower them. Popular culture must be viewed as a complex and contradictory sphere in which dominant culture attempts to structure experience through the production of meaning, and which at the same time may provide possibilities for more open democratic formations." (p.19)

The significance of employing hip hop pedagogy that utilizes critical media literacy in the classroom, is in effort to use the language of youth's culture to aid them in becoming critical citizens. Critical media literacy can produce transformative practices counter-hegemonic points of view. Hip hop can provide the space for educators to have meaningful conversations about race, class, the effects of capitalism and commodification, as well as media representations. Hip hop pedagogy allows students and teachers can create and enter real-world discourse. Sholle and Denski (1995) note that, "critical literacy of media must

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focus its energies toward the opening up of new spaces from within which traditionally marginalized and excluded voices may speak" (p. 7). Hip hop pedagogy is a venue that educators can use to bridge the gap between teachers and Black girls, and between the traditional curricula and youth cultures. Giroux (1988) maintained that "we" as educators "must take seriously the experiences through which students constitute the dominant culture" (p. 175). When using critical media literacy the following five questions can be asked of the hip hop media messages:

> "1. Who is sending this message and why?
> 2. What techniques are used to attract my attention?
> 3. What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in the message?
> 4. How might different people understand this message differently from me?
> 5. What is omitted from this message?" (Hobbs, 1997, p. 11)

Sholle and Denski (1995) continue Giroux's (1988) assertion stating, "…students need to engage media representations as constructive of meanings which discursively set the boundaries of how reality may be approached, but they need to also look at how these meanings are mobilized in everyday life, how they hook up with emotional (affective) commitments that are historically situated" (p. 22). Utilizing hip hop pedagogy for Black girls that provides a historical analysis of the objectification of Black women, from the Hottentot Venus to hip hop, would enable Black girls to re-conceptualize their constructions of identity. Providing text and the context of text is critical in attending to the affective investments that youth, specifically Black girls, bring to the texts.

Questioning media representations is key in utilizing hip hop pedagogy, as West (1996) writes, "…education must not be about a cathartic quest for identity. It must foster credible sensibilities for an active critical citizenry" (p. 217). Land and Stovall (2009) note that "hip hop can serve as a useful tool to bring student voices into the classroom, and to inform and influence curriculum, pedagogical practices, and the construction of knowledge" (p. 1). Although rap music and hip hop media has been criticized and admonished in popular culture based on lyrics and imagery, many researchers and hip hop pedagogues choose to use hip hop as a transformative element in teaching and learning (Love, 2012; Hill, 2009; Washington, 2007; Dimitriadis, 2001, 2003; Durham, 2007). Hill (2009) asserts:

> "In order to fully understand the pedagogical power of hip-hop, our intellectual energy cannot merely be exhausted at the level of textual analysis. Instead, scholars, critics, and everyday observers must also consider the relationships between hip-hop culture and the ever-expanding range of economic, political, and social arrangements that shape its consumption and production." (p. 121)

Schultz (2003) encourages teachers to adopt a posture of "deep listening" in order to engage in critical dialogue with students. "Deep listening" moves teachers from "listening in on students" to listening "for understanding" (p. 105).

Hill (2009) provides examples of ways educators can expand discussions of hip hop into broader contexts. One example is using the act of 'counting bars' when writing a rap song to teach algebra. Another example is having a conversation about sampling (a process in which an artist uses a beat or chorus from another song for their own) to discuss issues of citation and plagiarism. A final example is using the hip hop cipher (when rappers huddle in a circle and take turns freestyling) to reimagine classroom participation. Since rap is a "successful crossover genre" Pough (2004) notes that hip hop

has "an enormous potential for effective teaching, bridging gaps, and maneuvering contact zones" (p. 193).

Summary

While research has explored the racial and ethnic socialization of African American youth, there is a lack of research which addresses the unique racialized-gender position of Black girls. This position locates Black girls to view demonizing and degrading imagery of Black womanhood in the media, with an exclusion of counterhegemonic images. Critical media literacy seeks to increase the ways in which we talk about media. As hip hop media has been misappropriated and corporatized, a lesson in critical media literacy would expand the conversation on who produces the images, for whose consumption and what purposes, and what counterhegemonic images are excluded. Utilizing hip hop as a pedagogical tool should prove to develop critical comprehension skills, a hip hop media consciousness, and use hip hop media as a catalyst for broader discussion and connections.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study is situated at the nexus of literature that examines the socialization of

Black girls, critical media literacy, and hip hop. Therefore, the study is framed within a

constructionist epistemological framework that utilizes a case study methodology. These

conceptual frameworks inform the methods of this study which are centered within the

methodological innovation of the critical media literacy group I co-created, Beyond Your

Perception.

Epistemology

Epistemology seeks to understand what knowledge is, what constitutes knowledge

and what it means when one makes knowledge claims. In its simplest form, it is a way of

knowing. However, Ladson-Billings (2000) states that epistemology is more than just a

way of knowing, it is "a 'system of knowing that has both internal logic and external

validity…linked intimately to the worldview'" (p. 257-258). Thereby, ones epistemology

is shaped by their worldview while their worldview is informed by their epistemology.

This study is grounded in the constructionism epistemological theory. Constructionism is

an epistemological theory which believes that knowledge "is being constructed in and out

of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted

within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). My research also sought to

explore how the Black parent-daughter relationship might serve as a vehicle by which the

girls came to experience, embody, and/or resist hegemony in hip hop media. From within

a constructionist epistemology I explored the social constructs of the lived realities of the

participants in relation to the way they are socialized by hip hop media and by their

families. Through the use of the group Beyond Your Perception as a methodological innovation, I examined the participants' construction of identity within the cultural movement of hip hop. Human beings constructing the meaning of the world we live in is the essential principle of constructionism (Crotty, 1998) and this construction is evidenced in adolescents' engagement with hip hop media and their development of identity.

Collective Case Study

According to Schwandt (2007), "methodology is a particular social scientific discourse (a way of acting, thinking, and speaking) that occupies a middle ground between discussions of method (procedures, techniques) and discussions of issues in the philosophy of social science" (p. 193). I will discuss the rationale for my choice of methodology, which is informed by my constructionist epistemology, and how it informed the methods of this study in design, implementation, analysis, and representation of the findings.

I chose to classify this research as a collective case study. I explore the individual cases of the seven participants which includes their parent-daughter dyad. A qualitative case study allows for a description of the context and can assist in understanding social and familial interacting factors that might be part of the development of particular behaviors, perspectives, and relationship dynamics of the participants in this study.

Stake (2005) states that a "number of cases may be studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition" (p. 445). Stake (1995) explains that the case studies are investigated because the researcher is interested in them

for both their uniqueness and commonality, so the collective of these cases should prove

to present richer methodical benefits. Weiss (1998) further explicates Stakes' position:

> "A case study is a way of organizing data so as to keep the focus on
> totality. One who conducts case studies tries to consider the
> interrelationships among people, institutions, events and beliefs. Rather
> than breaking them down into separate items for analysis, the researcher
> seeks to keep all elements of the situation in sight at once. The watchword
> is holistic." (p. 72)

Case study "champions the interaction of researcher and phenomena" (Stake,

1995, p. 95), so this methodology affords the researcher the opportunity to join a site not

under the false pretenses of stumbling across a rare chance, but rather carefully designed

research. This, however, is problematic in that the fragility of case study fieldwork may

not follow prescheduled plans nor may each detail be planned a priori. While

problematic, this nature of case study research still allows for research to be authentic and

rich. This collective case study design investigates the seven cases of African American

girls-their experiences with hip hop, their parent-daughter relationship, their experience

in the BYP collective, and their focus group conversations to gain insight into a central

phenomenon (Creswell, 2002; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003). Each case includes the focus

group data, one-on-one interviews with the seven Black adolescent females and their

parents, and a pedagogical intervention group, Beyond Your Perception, created to

initiate conversations about racialized-gender identities.

Each case study began with an initial interview of preliminary questions that

frame the problem statement and the purpose of the study, and additional questions

evolved as the interviews unfolded. Each interview with the girl and her parent began in a

semi-structured fashion, utilizing initial interview questions and probing and exploratory

questions, which made each interview more closely resemble dialogue. The initial

interview questions for the girls and parents can be found in Appendix A.

Theoretical Perspectives

According to Crotty (2006), the theoretical perspective is "our view of the human

world and social life within that world" (p. 7). The theoretical perspective "is a way of

looking at the world and making sense of it. It involves knowledge, therefore, and

embodies a certain understanding of what is entailed in knowing, that is, "how we know

what we know" (p. 8). Our epistemology informs our theoretical perspective and

comprises one part of our "philosophical stance" (Crotty, 2006, p. 7). Essentially, it

informs our worldview, the way in which we see and experience the world (Swartz, 2009,

p. 1049).

Womanism

A Womanist perspective was utilized to explore the multiple contexts shaped the

educative experiences of African American girls. According to Maparyan (2012), "a

Womanist is triply concerned with herself, other Black women, and the entire Black race,

female and male—but also all humanity, showing an ever-expanding and ultimately

universal arc of political concern, empathy, and activism" (p. xxiii). Although Collins

writes out of a Black feminist paradigm, her argument is consistent with Maparyan's

analysis that African American girls are socialized and educated within a context of

double (race and gender) and/or triple (race, gender, and class) modes of oppression

(Collins, 2000). So Womanism aids the means of this study because it is a "social change

perspective" rooted in the "everyday experiences and everyday methods of problem

solving in everyday spaces, extended to the problem of ending all forms of oppression"
(Maparyan, 2011, p. xx).

Additionally, this is a Womanist investigation in so far as it focuses on racialized-
gender. As a Womanist, I am situating Black women's "historical antisexist struggle
within a Black cultural framework" (Maparyan, 2011, p. xxxiv) which is antiracist
instead of a feminist framework which would serve solely antifeminist ends. Therefore,
this investigation is not to be considered feminist or Black feminist, because the agenda
of Womanism is "unique and separate from both White feminism and Black feminism"
(Phillips, 2006, p. 47). Ladner (1995), a forerunner in sociology, argued, "Black women
do not perceive their enemy to be black men, but rather the enemy is considered to be
oppressive forces in the larger society which subjugate black men, women and children"
(pp. 277-278).

While Black feminist thought is much more commonly used I maintain situating
this study in Womanism. A metaphor for feminism and Womanism, as described by
Maparyan (2012) is that "feminism is like a particular kind of magnifying lens that
highlights certain Womanist political concerns but not others" (p. xxxv). Other social-
justice-oriented critical perspectives could be employed to magnify in the same way.
Womanism, then as politics, is the entire 'text' that stands to be so magnified. The
"entire text" expands the discussion of identity construction within Black popular culture
to include parents and educators. Phillips (2006) continues an explanation of the
problems of Black women and how we can begin to resolve our issues and heal our
wounds. She explains:

> "…physical brutality, sexual harassment, and female subjugation
> in general perpetrated both within and outside the race, ultimately

have to be solved on a collective basis within Africana communities. Africana people must eliminate racist influences in their lives first, with the realization that they can neither afford nor tolerate any form of female subjugation." (p. 53)

I posit that additionally one way to eliminate racist and sexist influences is first through the use of kitchen table dialogue by parents and youth, specifically daughters. Kitchen table dialogue should be extended to educators and youth as well as youth workers and youth, specifically those who do work with girls. I must define "kitchen table" dialogue at length here, from Maparyan (2006) *The Womanist Reader*:

"The 'kitchen table' is a key metaphor for understanding the Womanist perspective on dialogue. The kitchen table is an informal woman-centered space where all are welcome and all can participate. The table is an invitation to become part of a group of amicably comprised of heterogeneous elements and unified by the pleasure and nourishment of food and drink. At the table, people can come and go, agree or disagree, take turns talking or speak all at once, and laugh, shout, complain, or counsel—even be present in silence. It is a space where the language is accessible and the ambience casual. At the kitchen table, people share the truths of their lives on equal footing and learn through face-to-face conversation. When the kitchen table metaphor is applied to political problem-solving situations, the relations of domination and subordination break down in favor of more egalitarian, interpersonal processes." (p. xxvii)

Creating and implementing the methodological media literacy group served to provide this kitchen table dialogue with Black adolescent females and encourage this dialogue with their families. Morgan's (1999) *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: My Life as a Hip-Hop Feminist* embraces both the "untidiness of feminism and hip hop, opening up a third space called hip hop feminism" (Sharpley-Whiting, 2007, p. 152). However I proffer a space of hip hop Womanism as Womanism seeks to expand the discussion on oppressions and identities. Hip hop Womanism views the issues of hip hop beyond the

battles of the sexes and gender wars, and highlights oppressions within the cultural

movement like colorism, body size, and the commodification of hip hop.

According to Pough (2004):

"Several Black and third-wave feminists have started to approach in their
writing the tenous relationshiop among rap music, Hip-Hop culture, and
feminism. They offer a variety of different feminist perspectives on rap,
rappers, and Black women. Some condemn the sexism in rap and
encourage others to do the same. Others offer complicated analyses that
critique the larger societal issues that contribute to rap's sexism,
production, and consumption. Some offer third-wave feminist critiques
that ask how one can be a child of the Hip-Hop generation, love the music,
and still critique and actively speak out against the sexism. They all offer
examples of how Black feminists have begun to deal with, think about,
and write about rap music and Hip-Hop culture." (p. 71)

Womanism, however, encompasses antioppresionism as a critical characteristic;

thereby the unique issues that Black girls face within hip hop, like colorism, can

be addressed. Feminism highlights an anti-sexist agenda and would focus on

issues of misogyny in hip hop, while Womanism would seek to eliminate

oppressions that may not have labels.

Ecological Systems Theory

In addition to utilizing a Womanist perspective, this study also uses ecological

systems theory. Womanist logic, Maparyan (2012) posits, is ecological, which means

"that truths are understood within networks—networks of truth, networks of people,

ecological networks within nature or linking humans and nature, or even supernatural

networks of signs. Truth is assessed according to the impact of one thing (for example, an

argument or an action) on other things within the network/ecosystem" (p. 68). This

ecology, as stated by Bronfenbrenner (1979), maintains that behavior is the result of the

interaction between a person and their environment. Therefore, when conducting

educational research on African American girls, the context of their experiences must be considered in relation to the world around them. Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach pushes researchers to gather all relevant information about a person's life, and examine a variety of issues and causes for problems (Stephens, 2000). More specifically, the ecological approach views African American girls' school and home socialization experiences as interwoven processes that contribute to their academic outcomes. Polyrhythmic, a concept utilized by Sheared (2006), reflects "the belief that individuals do not just have multiple realities and distinct understandings of them. Instead, individuals experience intersecting realities simultaneously—their realities are polyrhythmic" (p. 270). The adolescents who engage with hip hop media experience the intersectionality of realities nested in the various layers of their environments.

The core levels that interplay in Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem. The microsystem include the institutions that have the most direct impact on a child, like the family, school, church and the community. The mesosystem is the interaction of those institutions, so the relationship between parents and the school would be an example. The exosystem are those things which the child does not have control over, like the impact a parent's work schedule might have on that child's interaction with said parent. The macrosystem is cultural context that a child is a part of. Ethnicity and socioeconomic status are examples of the macrosystem. Lastly, the chronosystem represents transitions over a period of time.

For this study, I will illuminate the ecology at play for these participants (See Appendix B). Black girls are the center of this ecology. The first layer around them is the

microsystem and includes their parents, peers and school. This study explicitly explored the relationship of parents and youth in the microsystem. The next layer is the mesosystem that includes the interplay between parents and hip hop, which I explore and that also has implications for the connections between hip hop and schools. Following the mesosystem is the exosystem over which Black girls have no control. This system includes the corporate takeover of hip hop, as defined in the review of the literature. The commodification and commercialization of hip hop by record label executives, maintains White, patriarchal ideals of blackness, specifically Black womanhood. These ideals are highly influential with regard to the ways in which Blacks, in general, and women and girls specifically, perform identity. The next layer, the macrosystem includes the mass media, the cultural values of society, and the girls' home environment. Although objectifying imagery is maintained in the exosystem through record labels, executives and artists, it is society's cultural values that enable these portrayals to exist and transcend time. As discussed in the review of the literature, the foundational stereotypes of Black women have been transmuted into contemporary controlling imagery. The final layer in ecological systems theory is the chronosystem. This system relates both to the waves of hip hop which affects the messages that have been disseminated through rap over time. Therefore, a framework which is both Womanist and ecological allows a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple cultural realities of African American girls. According to the ecological systems approach, individual behavior and outcomes are a result of the interplay of complex layers of the environment. Sheared suggests that if educators understood and utilized students' polyrhythmic realities, students would see themselves as "active authors of their worlds" (Giroux & McLaren, 1986, p. 235). The

critical media literacy group I co-created sought to utilize the participants' polyrhythmic realities to aid them in consciously constructing their worlds. The systems within ecological systems theory are fluid and enable the girls' not only to be influenced by the people and institutions in each layer, but also enables them to push back against those layers. I hoped that Beyond Your Perception would educate and empower the girls' to influence the social contexts of the environments around them.

Method

Setting

The research study took place at a large, urban university in the form of a critical media literacy program conducted between the months of February and May of 2014 through a partnership with a high school within the Atlanta metropolitan area. A school district and university have partnered together in the development and implementation of a College Preparatory program. Under the terms of this partnership, university faculty of various departments serve as facilitators for professional development and supplemental support for the high school. The goal of the project is to support students in graduating with a high school diploma and sixty hours of college credit, making them eligible to enroll in a bachelor's program at any college or university of their choice.

College Prep Academy (CPA) is one of four smaller schools within a larger high school, Sylvia Robinson High. Each school is housed in a different building on the campus. Students, who wish to attend CPA, even if they are zoned for the larger school, are required to submit an application, 8th grade standardized test scores, an essay and are interviewed. Zoned students, who are not accepted into CPA, can be enrolled in one of the other three smaller schools.

I choose to limit the information that I disclose about the school and the

university as I am revealing the city and state of my research site. Atlanta, Georgia is

important to this study because Atlanta has become a burgeoning location for hip hop

media as many producers, artists and video shoots are conducted within the city, as well

as, various popular shows a part of the culture like VH1's "Love and Hip Hop Atlanta"

and Bravo's "The Real Housewives of Atlanta." Writer, producer, and director Tyler

Perry labeled Atlanta "Black Hollywood" during the period of time when data was

collected for this study. Evans-Winters (2005) notes:

> "Space cannot and should not be ignored in critical approaches to teaching
> and learning. The places where students live have a significant impact on
> their self-esteem, level of confidence and the resources that they do or do
> not have available to them. Because Black girls' learning preferences are
> shaped by social experiences in their surrounding environment, urban
> educators need to be aware of, and arguably become experts on, the
> context of the historical experiences that have shaped their students'
> lives." (p. 50)

Participants

In this section, I describe the seven participants of the study. These descriptions

will provide the reader with an in-depth depiction of the seven Black high school females

as multifaceted, empathetic, candid, proactive, and willing to learn. The participants were

not selected by me, but signed up during recruitment and were able to participate if their

course load at the university, work schedules, or extracurricular activities permitted. Two

of the seven participants were zoned to attend CPA. Four participants lived across the

metropolitan Atlanta area and parents chose CPA for them to attend due to its college

preparatory program, and one participant researched and selected the school herself. Six

of the seven participants live in two-parent homes, although two of those live with a

biological parent and a step-parent. One participant was being raised by a single mother.

These names are pseudonyms that the girls chose for themselves. More detailed, composite profiles of each girl are presented in Chapter 4.

Sy Ballard. Sy is zoned to attend CPA and lives with her mother and stepfather, which provides tension in their parent-daughter dynamics. She decided to participate because she appreciated discussions about "relevant issues" and "being around positive vibes." From Beyond Your Perception, she expected to "become more at peace" with who she is, stating that she "wanted to learn to accept it more and own it fully."

Dakota Johnson. Dakota is also zoned to attend CPA, but her parents registered her in elementary and middle schools in more affluent neighborhoods. The CPA environment was a culture shock to Dakota. She wanted to participate in the group because she was interested in a program that was "just for African American girls." She anticipated expanding her knowledge on the perceptions of Black girls and how she could "combat these perceptions."

Audrey Faust. Audrey is being raised by both parents, albeit in separate households. Audrey lives with her mother, stepfather and baby sister but has a great relationship with her father. Audrey chose to participate in BYP as she saw this as "an opportunity to discuss" the role she has in being an African American woman, and hoped to "gain knowledge" from our time together.

Kai Douglass. Kai, is soft spoken but is always willing to share her perspective and experiences. Of all of the girls her home life seems to be the least troublesome. She joined BYP with the intentions of gaining "knowledge on my heritage and to develop a sisterhood with my classmates." Kai is creative and artistic; a true artist who does not

follow this passion but instead wants to secure a better financial future for herself by pursuing Business.

Mya Alexander. Mya is the youngest of six and lives with her parents, a sister and her husband, and their two children. During the BYP session she talked about feeling distant from her parents, arguing with her mother, and having a strained relationship with her father. She is closer to her brother closest to her in age, although he is twenty-two. While Mya joined the group because her "best friend" Audrey joined, she said she hopes to get out of the group "knowledge about my background."

Milan Carter. While she lives with both of her parents, and two younger sisters, she credits being raised to her late, maternal grandmother. Milan's mother was pregnant with her while a freshmen in college, so to prevent her daughter from leaving school Milan's grandmother took custody of her. When asked why she wanted to participate in our girls group, she responded that she was "always open to the idea of black girls being empowered" and hopes to gain more knowledge about herself and to "grow mentally and spiritually." Spirituality is a huge part of Milan's character and she talks about her relationship with God often. Her comments often beckon her peers to reflect on their faith.

Aaliyah Jackson. Aaliyah, migrated to the United States while in middle school and spent the earlier years of her life with her maternal grandmother and older brother in the Caribbean, where her mother is originally from. She expressed feeling abandoned when her father moved to another Caribbean island and her mother, shortly thereafter, moved to the United States. Five years without either parent sets currently the tone for the relationship dynamic between Aaliyah and her mother. Aaliyah decided to join BYP

because of her "fascination" with African American culture, and she hopes to "gain more knowledge" about her heritage.

Parent Profiles. Based on my reflections on how I was introduced to hip hop, which was through my older brother, when I sat down to interview each girl I asked them, "What's your rap story?" I wanted to know who and when they were introduced to the cultural movement of hip hop in its musical form. As "parent" in this study refers to anyone who maintains the emotional consideration of the child involved, whom each girl noted in their rap story is who I solicited to participate in the parent-daughter interview. These interviews sought to get at how being a parent born in the hip hop generation shapes how parents aid their children, girls specifically, in creating or maintaining positive self-identities.

Sy and Dakota listed their mothers Miss Ballard and Mrs. Johnson. Mya and Kai expressed relationships with their brothers—Jamarcus and Devon—as the source of their baptism into hip hop culture. While Aaliyah listed her brother, he resides in the Caribbean so because she lives with her mother, Miss Brown, I interviewed her. Audrey and Milan credited their fathers as present consumers of rap. However, because Milan and her father have a strained relationship, she and I both decided that I should interview her mother, Mrs. Carter, instead. I interviewed Mr. Faust, Audrey's father.

<div align="center">

Procedure

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Recruitment

I recruited the participants for BYP directly from Sylvia Robinson High School (SRHS). The principal of SRHS allowed me to come and speak with all of the girls who attended the college preparatory program at the university. After conducting my

recruitment script and allowing all who wished to participate to sign up, when I returned

to the university, I informed the College Preparatory staff of the girls who wished to

participate. The College Preparatory staff determined whose schedules aligned with the

time and days of the BYP program. Eighteen girls were initially believed to be available

to participate. I emailed each of them thanking them for listening to my spiel,

volunteering to participate, and gave them the days, times and location of our group

meetings, which would be held in a building on the university campus. Eleven girls began

BYP, two dropped the program due to heavy course loads and one program attendee is

not represented in this study as her "parent" was unavailable to participate in the study.

Data Collection

I used myriad data sources for this dissertation: a pre-interview questionnaire with

each girl, documents collected through BYP activities, one-on-one interviews with Black

adolescent girls and their parents, focus groups, and field notes from participant-

observation. Data collected through BYP includes the pre-interview questionnaire,

various activities, and observations throughout the program. The data collected for this

study include the parent survey, focus groups, interviews, and post-session dialogue with

the co-facilitator, Nina. I used a digital recorder for the one-on-one interviews with each

girl and the parent interviews and a digital and video-recorder to capture the girls'

comments during the focus group sessions. Table 2 provides a description of the data

sources. Appendix C provides a timeline of the data collection procedures. Initially I

planned to interview parents and daughters together, however, I found through getting to

know the participants that interviewing them separately from their parents would garner a

more honest dialogue between the two of us, and similarly I found the parents could

speak more openly about their concerns if the conversation was between the two of us adults.

Focus groups. Focus groups served as a means for gaining insight into how the girls created identity in light of hip hop media and parental influences. Shaha, Wenzel and Hill (2011) describe focus groups as "moderated group discussions designed to allow research participants to exchange, discuss, agree or disagree about opinions, attitudes, and experiences" (p. 78). They further assert:

> "The benefits of this method include: it is less intimidating and time intensive than one-on-one interviewing; it provides more depth than questionnaires; it acknowledges participants as experts; it yields insights into participants' language and concepts; it allows group interactions; it permits researchers to learn more about the degree of consensus on a topic." (p. 78)

Since my research participants are youth, I attempted to account for the dynamics created by the age difference. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), because "grown-ups tend to take charge with juveniles, directing conversations…and evaluat[ing] children's behavior," young people have "developed particular strategies in dealing with the full grown; they may seek their approval, withdraw, or even conspire to mislead" (p. 95). The power differential was something that myself and Nina were cognizant of and earnestly tried to prevent. We introduced ourselves as Sherell and Nina and never asked or required them to use titles like "Miss." These were southern girls however, so they tended to use terms like "ma'am" and "Miss" despite our easy going demeanor. According to Shaha, et al. (2011), communicating with youth in focus groups may serve to lessen the effects of the age differential dynamics. Working with the girls in BYP before conducting focus groups was quite helpful in breaking down the power differential and allowed the girls to better get to know me. I believe it created a level of comfort.

Focus groups have also been identified as one of the most culturally congruent modes of data collection for adolescents and individuals from marginalized groups (Hughes & Dumont, 1993).

While Shaha et al. (2011) focused their discussion on the usefulness of focus groups to the medical profession; their research lends itself to my study. Based on their suggestions, I ensured confidentiality of the participants by allowing them to choose pseudonyms. Further, I developed an interview guide with probes to direct and enhance the group's discussion. I took detailed notes which included my impressions related to the discussions and observations related to group dynamics. I conducted three one-hour long discussion groups by which the first discussion revolved around the music, musical artists, and imagery in which the girls participate, the second discussion centered itself on parental involvement in hip hop and their conversations regarding such and the third explored the identities the young ladies presented at school, how their teachers incorporate their culture and what made the dynamics of BYP "work."

Girl interviews. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) define an interview as a "purposeful conversation…that is directed by one in order to get information from other" (p. 103). They further contend, "the interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 103). While these definitions characterize the general nature of qualitative interviews, I prefer to approach interviews as "a conversation between the researcher and the interviewee" (Heyl, 2002, p. 373). I believe that the "researcher and the interviewee are active creators in all phases of the interview process." As a result,

"the knowledge that is produced out of [the] conversation is a product of [the] interaction" between the researcher and the participant" (p. 373).

I conducted one-on-one, 45-minute, semi-structured interviews that focused on three areas: hip hop media engagement, messages received in the media, and parents' role in how they engage with hip hop media. I asked each girl to determine where she wanted to meet for our interview to ensure she had a level of comfort going into our interview. I met Sy and Audrey at a coffee shop near the high school. I interviewed Dakota at the location of one of her extracurricular activities. Aaliyah and Milan asked for me to meet with them on school grounds due to their work and extracurricular schedules, so we met in the school library. Kai, and Mya, asked for me to interview them at their homes. I met Kai at her home and after deciding we were hungry I drove us to a nearby restaurant and we dined and conversed. Mya and I interviewed in her bedroom. For each interview, especially for those that did not take place in or near homes, I attempted to get their minutes earlier than planned so that the girls would not be waiting on my arrival. Additionally, when I began each interview, I began with an explanation, reiterating what I hoped to gather from speaking with them one-on-one. I informed each girl that even though I believe they all speak freely in BYP, speaking with them one-on-one would allow them to speak uninterrupted, which may not occur in our group sessions.

Parent interviews. Parent interviews were scheduled at mutually beneficial times in a location which suited the parent best. While the locales for some of the interviews may be unconventional, it was more suitable for the parents to choose the best time and location for their schedules. I opted to be flexible to work with my participants. I informed each parent that we could meet in any locale which would be most convenient

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for them so most parents asked that I come to their job on their lunch break. This was the case for Miss Ballard, Mrs. Johnson, Miss Brown, and Mr. Faust. Interviews with Miss Ballard and Mr. Faust took place in their office. Mrs. Johnson and I sat in the lobby of her work and we discussed Dakota and media like old friends. Miss Brown and I walked a couple of blocks from her job to an eatery and we ate and spoke. For interviews with Jamarcus and Mrs. Carter, I met them at their homes and the interviews casually took place in the living room. I wanted each parent to feel as comfortable as possible sharing with me. Scheduling for Devon's interview was more problematic due to his work hours; he worked a night shift and slept during the day. However, one afternoon he called and informed me of the location in which he was headed and stated that he had free time in between meetings to meet with me if I was available. While I recommended us sitting down at a local eatery or coffee shop he suggested interviewing in my car so he could keep his hectic schedule, which I obliged.

I began each interview with the parents by asking them how much they heard about the BYP program. Afterwards, I would explain to them why I co-created BYP, types of things we discussed and the purposes of my study. After, then, reading and signing the consent forms, I would start each interview with the question: How would you describe [your "daughter"] to someone who didn't know her? Our ability to both know and discuss their "daughter" enabled us to connect.

Participant-observation. My participant-observations are represented in the composite profiles I created for each girl in Chapter 4. I was a teacher, participant, and a researcher, and my observations were recorded in my field notes. BYP was held every Tuesday and Thursday from 2 pm-4 pm at the university. There were several weeks that

were disrupted due to inclement weather, the university spring break and the district spring break. On the university and district breaks we fellowshipped on the weekend; meeting for lunch and prom dress shopping. Additionally, this program was intended to be ten weeks; however, because of our bonding we continued the group until the end of the term for a total of fourteen weeks. I vividly recall Aaliyah asking "When is this over? I'm not ready for this to be over. I'm really going to miss you guys."

Implementation: Beyond Your Perception

I co-created the girls' group, Beyond Your Perception to develop critical media literacy skills. I designed this group with a particular curriculum set to discuss Black girls perceptions of how Black girls and women are portrayed in the media as well as the history behind many contemporary tropes. Black girl- and womanhood framed our discussion of issues regarding identity, race, and media consumption. Hip hop media was the background to discuss these issues. The participants all shared personal stories and reflections about their lives as students and young adults. I co-created this critical media literacy group to educate Black female youth on the history of our oppressions and to challenge their agency in being who they want to be. The girls' group was intended to operate over the course of 10 weeks, discussing topics in African American women's history, and analyzing and interpreting images of Black women in music, television, radio, film, and social media. While it was designed as a 10-week program, the desire of both the participants and the facilitators to continue connecting through this program led us to extend the program until the end of the girls' district's semester, and they graduated from high school, for a total of fourteen weeks.

Curriculum

Table 1: Beyond Your Perception Curriculum Overview

Unit	Description	Media Literacy Key Concepts
Historical Understandings	• History of objectification of Black women • Foundational stereotypes: Jezebel, Mammy, Matriarch, Sapphire, Welfare Mother • Division in the Black community: Colorism, hair texture	• Origins of gendered-racism, sexism, and colorism as it relates to Black women.
Media Analysis	• Viewed music videos and listened to songs the girls selected on their "Favorite Song Worksheets" • Detailed discussion of the lyrics and imagery in videos. • Viewed clips of television shows the girls discussed during BYP.	• Addressing consumerism • Critical examination of media and the industry
Counter-narratives	• Introduced a variety of mediums for the girls to express their individuality. • Girls wrote personal counter-stories	• Understanding the dangers of a single story • Creating counter-stories

Unit one. I began the program with a discussion on the history of objectification

of Black women, so we started Unit One with a description of the foundational

stereotypes of Black womanhood-mammy, the matriarch, jezebel, sapphire, and the

welfare mama. Additionally, we connected historical images to contemporary

representations of Black womanhood. For example, we began a discussion on Saartjie

Baartman, or the Hottentot Venus, and concluded with a discussion about Nicki Minaj.

Sometimes, our thoughts flowed backwards. As another example, we began discussing

"twerkin" (a style of dance in which, usually females, dance in what could be viewed as

sexually provocative based on the hip movements) and concluded with a conversation on

Josephine Baker and her role as a dancer. We provided an historical background on other

unique issues for Black girls, like colorism. Colorism is skin color stratification that

favors lighter skin rather than darker skin tone, based solely around whiteness as the

standard of beauty.

Unit two. For our unit on Media Analysis, we initiated discussions on

contemporary stereotypes by illuminating them within music, television and film. The

group analyzed music, music videos and television shows that the girls engaged with.

Thereby, while the curriculum was constructed by me for the first unit, the second unit

was a collaboration of the girls media consumption. During this unit the focus groups and

one-on-one interviews were conducted.

Unit three. The third unit on Counter-narratives served as an opportunity for the

girls to challenge the dominant narrative on Black girlhood by composing counter-stories.

The participants were introduced to a variety of mediums such as art, photography, and

poetry to express their individuality.

Data Sources

Table 2: Data Sources

Data Source		Description
BYP	**Other Data**	
Pre-Interview Questionnaire		The pre-interview questionnaire asked questions such as: Why did you decide to participate in this girls group? What type of music do you like listening to? How do you think African American women and/or girls are portrayed in society? How are African American women

		and girls portrayed in media such as music, television, internet, magazines, and radio? What do expect to gain from this girls group? Do you think these representations are accurate? Why or why not?
	Parent Survey	The parent survey asked the following questions: Do you like hip hop? Do you listen to rap music? Did your parents listen to rap/hip hop music? Do you ever watch rap videos? Do you listen to the same artist(s) that your children enjoy? Do you talk to your children about the music that they listen to? The worksheet then asked them to list the three songs they enjoyed listening to the most in the last few weeks (prior to receiving the form) and write down anything that jumps out at them about the song. (See Appendix E)
Favorite Song Worksheet		This worksheet asked the girls to list the three songs (and the artist who sings them, if you know) that they enjoyed listening to the most in the last few weeks (prior to/since BYP). For each song they were asked to write down anything that jumps out at them about the song - the part you remember most or that keeps getting stuck in your head, or something that seems related to our discussion so far. (See Appendix F)

One Thing I've Learned About Being a Black Girl		Each participant received a sticky note on which they will write one thing that they have learned about being a Black girl. In no particular order girls stated what they wrote and whatever else they wanted to share about it and place it on the "Learning from Experience" parking lot. Other participants found commonalities in the experiences of others.
The Masks we Wear		Decorate the mask. One side represents what you think people see/know/believe about you (i.e. on the outside). The other side represents what you feel about yourself (i.e. things on the inside; what people do not necessarily know or see). (See Appendix G)
Personal Slogans		A slogan is generally a company motto that reflects their values. There are a lot of slogans out now that have been pinned on Black women and girls, which may not reflect who we say we are; our values. What are some of the things people say about us? (We're loud, we're hoes, etc….facilitator will write those responses on the board) (2) If we could create our own slogans, what would they be? You can state a slogan that reflects Black women and girls, or just a slogan to reflect yourself.
Mission Statement		Our mission statement was created by the girls to capture the purpose of BYP.

Just because I am Statements		Girls responded to the following statement: "Just because I am _____, does not mean that I am _____."
I Am Poems		I Am" poems which are autobiographical representations of things the girls feel, hear, see, understand and worry about. What repeats throughout this poem is the phrase "I am" which is followed by two special characteristics the girls chose about themselves.
Counter-story for Stereotypes		After being provided examples of counter-stories, the girls were asked to create a back story for one of the foundational stereotypes ("Jezebel," "Mammy," "Matriarch," "Welfare Mother"). (See Appendix H)
Personal Counter-stories		Each participant was asked to write a counter-story which spoke against those perceptions they decorated their "Masks" with.
	Participant Interviews	Each participant was interviewed, at a location of their choosing.
	Parent Interviews	Each participant was interviewed, at a location of their choosing.
	Observations	BYP ran for 14-weeks and observations of the girls' style, slang and personal characteristics were witnessed.
	Focus Groups	Three focus groups revolved around the girls' engagement with hip hop media; the influence of media

		and the role of parents and educators as mediators; and the process of BYP.
	Post-Session Dialogue	Conversations between Nina and I to discuss the content and concepts that developed during the focus groups.

Data Management

I used a digital and video recorder to capture my participants' comments during the focus group discussion, and a digital recorder for the one-on-one and parent interviews. Each girl participant was allowed to choose their own pseudonym, or "code name". The code name key and participants' names were kept in a locked file in the researcher's work office. All video recordings and documents were stored, separately, and without students' names on a password- and firewall-protected computer kept at the researcher's work office. Audio recordings and transcripts were available on my personal computer, which was also password protected.

Data Analysis

Case study research seeks to generate knowledge based on a set of how or why questions in a real-life context. Merriam (1998) asserts, "Data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research" (p. 151), so I was simultaneously involved in data analysis during the process of collecting the data. This simultaneous process allowed the "insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses" gained through collection and analysis to "direct the next phase of [my] data collection" (p. 151). After a rough transcription of each interview, I listened to each recording along with my field notes in order to include places where the participants may have used hand gestures, laughed,

paused, or noted any other interruptions while the interview was fresh in my mind. A

second and more thorough examination of the transcript included listening to the

recording while reading the transcripts editing mistakes and missed content. A final

reading was performed, along with listening to the audio, to begin making sense of the

content of the interview, using open coding. As the parent interviews were conducted

after the girls, I used a reputable transcription company to transcribe the parent interviews

to provide me the opportunity to fact check and question the girls about responses in our

interview, or the meanings of particular words they used. Upon receiving the transcripts

of the parent interviews, I conducted the same process of listening to the interviews

repeatedly for corrections and to make note of nuances from my field notes.

I used thematic analysis to examine each case as this study contains a set of

within-case contentions and distinct interpretations. I conducted all coding by hand. This

was the most time consuming and intense aspect of data analysis. Thematic analysis is

composed of six phases (Braun & Clark, 2006). Phase I is familiarizing oneself with the

data. I accomplished this by reading and re-reading the transcripts as well as listening to

the audio recordings for nuances in speech patterns made by myself or the interviewee. I

created a binder for the interview transcripts. Each girl interview was approximately

forty-five minutes, while parent interviews averaged one hour and fifteen minutes. I was

careful in my review of each transcript to note reflective pauses or when an interviewee

would redirect their response. As a novice researcher, I used initial coding, as according

to Saldana (2009), "Initial Coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but

particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code data,

ethnographies and studies with a wide array of data forms" (p. 81). Initial coding served

as a starting point that provided "analytic leads for further exploration and 'to see the direction in which to take the study'" (p. 81). During this phase I began a list of general recurring themes which came from the girls and their parents. These themes were self-awareness, age determines influence of media, the beat of a song takes precedence over lyrical content, television is not reality, tension in parent-daughter relationships, resilience, Black boys versus Black girls, genres of music, types of television shows, gender over racial messages, responsibility of artists and actors, role of parents, schools responsibility, peer influence, drugs, future aspirations, resistance, individualism, music tells a story, TV is entertainment, sexualized messages, and a space for Black girls.

As the coding process goes "beyond the data, thinking creatively with the data, asking the data questions, and generating theories and frameworks" (Coffey, 1996, p. 30) in Phase 2, I began dividing each transcript into excerpts which related to the themes that I found during the initial coding. To include the voice of all participants, I coded each excerpt with at least one code found during the initial coding. A theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 82), so I kept each theme in a separate Microsoft Word document with the corresponding excerpts. Each theme was printed and kept in a binder used specifically for data analysis.

In Phase 3, I re-examined my research questions and began merging initial themes to align the findings with the questions guiding this study. During Phase 4, I worked to refine themes. Some themes overlapped and others did not address the research questions guiding this study. In Phase 5, I re-examined the framework of ecological systems theory

to determine how the layers of environment these girls are nested in relate to the themes I uncovered during analysis. I repeated all five phases to analyze the focus groups as well. Lastly, during Phase 6, I began to draft my findings utilizing the excerpts from the focus groups and interviews within the themes that I discovered. I additionally, examined the data collected during BYP to determine which documents supported the themes. I found in this phase the way in which I named my themes did not necessarily encompass the multifaceted nature of the data within it, so within this phase I also set out to rename the themes to be more useful.

Role of the Researcher and Representation

According to Stake (1995) case study "champions the interaction of researcher and phenomena" (p. 95) so this methodology afforded me the opportunity to carefully design the research. My interactions and relationship with the participants of BYP is a large part of the construction of data and findings of this study. If the methods of this study were solely interviews and focus groups without the implementation of a critical media literacy group, the findings, while there may be commonalities, would be different. As the co-creator of the group and an active participant, my role as researcher is inextricably linked to the outcomes of this study. Therefore the analysis and representation of the data includes my interpretations of the data.

As significant participants in this research, it is necessary that I provide my subjectivities. Acknowledging research bias is a critical aspect of establishing rigor in a qualitative study. Additionally, Nina, the co-facilitator of BYP, role as co-constructor of the collective and an instrumental factor in the group dynamic is as critical to the study as my own. Therefore, I provide a glimpse of her and how she came to girl work. For this

study, I acknowledge that the intersection of my race and gender shape the manner in which I approach this research. Preissle (2006) notes, "we are studying ourselves studying ourselves and others. If we can no longer use detachment, distance, and neutrality to achieve objectivity, we can at least document and track how what we study is influenced by who we are" (p. 691), so I share a glimpse of myself as the construction of this study and the media literacy group Beyond Your Perception, and the way I analyze the findings are undoubtedly shaped by who I am.

I worked as an elementary school teacher for two years before deciding to begin my doctoral studies. Many initiatives that I found in my school and the schools of my fellow educator peers were focused primarily on Black males. The word "urban" or the term "urban education" seemed to be synonymous with Black and Brown males. Within my doctorate program, we were reading about researchers who were trying to "save" Black males. Maybe they did need saving, but I began to question why there was not a focus on their female counterparts. I additionally wondered why it was assumed that Black girls were not experiencing unique issues as well in these "urban" environments. Even in the middle of data collection for this project in the spring of 2014, the President of the United States, President Barack Obama, launched a project aimed at empowering young men of color titled "My Brother's Keeper." This initiative's intention is to expand public and private efforts specifically directed towards Black and Brown boys. In fact, businesses and corporations immediately began getting involved in this initiative and designated funding to create opportunities for males of color. I imagine that it is assumed that Black and Brown girls have all the opportunities they need. It is the continuous efforts of the nation, researchers, and schools to focus its attention and efforts on the

needs of boys of color, which I would agree are true needs, while excluding the needs of young women of color which brought me to this work. As a woman of color, having worked with women and girls of color, I know the unique experiences that my friends, colleagues and I have faced and it is for these reasons that I decided to embark upon this work for Black girls.

Co-facilitator

As a youth-led community organizer with a program for homeless, Black youth, Nina became passionate about the project of sisterhood and solidarity amongst Black women and girls. She created a program with the girls' to organize them around key political issues that they were facing; however their personal experiences prevented the group from being successful in their attempts. Frustrated at her inability to emotionally detach from the work, Nina left youth-led organizing and began pursuing her doctorate degree, where she and I met. Although she and I co-created Beyond Your Perception, she was anxious as the start date got closer because she was worried about getting as emotionally involved as she was in her previous efforts. Nina was concerned that the personal lives and experiences of our participants might prevent us from teaching them all that we wanted to. However, Nina was adamant in her ideal that the profound acts of sharing and caring with youth would develop a transformative love and that love could inspire youth into action.

Summary

Through an epistemological constructionist lens, I designed a collective case study situated in Womanism and ecological systems theory to explore the Black parent-daughter relationship. I co-created a critical media literacy group with high school,

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African American girls where we explored personal identity development in relationship to representations of African American women in the media. It was through my interactions with the girls in this group, Beyond Your Perception (BYP), which allowed me to serve as a participant-observer, interview each of the participants and their parents, conduct focus groups and collect data from the documents they composed in BYP. I have presented my role as the researcher which directly impacts the design, implementation, analysis and findings of this study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present my analysis of the data and to report the findings from the study. The purpose of this collective case study was to explore to what extend, and if they do, how African American adolescent girls construct their racialized-gender identity through the cultural movement of hip hop. This study further sought to explore the role of parents as mediating influences as insiders within hip hop. To conduct this study another graduate student, identified as "Nina," and I co-created Beyond Your Perception (BYP), a critical media literacy collective, with seven African American high school girls. During this 14-week critical media workshop, we explored the girls' racialized-gender identities development in relationship to representations of African American women in the media. We examined hip hop media as well as other genres of media (e.g. cartoons, White oriented TV shows, etc.). Nina and I developed and co-facilitated the twenty-eight, two-hour sessions with the girls (two sessions each week).

The significance of this study resides in its effort to provide empirical data that add to the scholarly literature on the psycho-social development of Black girls' and that can support the use of hip hop pedagogy as a critical media literacy education intervention. Second, the study's significance also resides in my experience as a teacher who designed this critical media literacy intervention that incorporates hip hop and popular culture media as education resources. Third, this study examines the role of parents in the education and socialization of Black girls and their resistance to hip hop media influence, an undertheorized area of research. Understanding how girls experience

their education and social development requires that we examine youth culture, opportunities for family and school collaboration, and new possibilities for teacher education, as contemporary adolescents continue to construct themselves within their cultural communities outside the classroom. Finally, this study demonstrates a Womanist/Ecological Systems theoretical approach to these educational issues.

This chapter consists of three sections that focus on the study's guiding research questions:

1. How do Black adolescent girls experience, embody, and/or resist hegemony in hip hop media?

2. What is the role of parents in mediating the socialization influences of hip hop media on their daughters?

3. What implications might the racialized-gender identities the girls represent have for pedagogical intervention?

Three themes emerged in the data analysis that respond to these questions. Each theme includes several sub-categories that tell a more complete story, as shown in Table 3 (below). The first theme addresses how Black girls construct their racialized-gender identities by both "representin' and resistin'" hegemonic portrayals of Black women in hip hop media. The second theme, "Parents'" Media Literacy, illustrates how parents, as insiders, find hip hop media entertaining, and the different forms of conversation parents engage in with their daughters about hip hop media. The third theme, Media Literate Teachers are Possible, focuses on BYP, which illustrates how teachers can create collaborative and emancipatory spaces if they are media literate and can develop culturally relevant hip hop pedagogy.

Table 3: Themes Developed from the Research Study

Themes	Categories within Themes
Black Girls Representin' and Resistin'	• Black girls experience traditional hegemonic stereotype in hip hop media. • Black girls buy into the mores of the cultural movement of hip hop. • Black girls resist hegemony in hip hop media.
"Parents'" Media Literacy	• Parents find hip hop media entertaining. • Parents typically engage in uncritical forms of dialogue. • Relationship dynamics between parent and daughter influence the role parents play as mediators.
Media Literate Teachers are Possible	• Teachers can create collaborative and emancipatory spaces. • Culturally relevant pedagogy should include youth culture. • Teachers need critical media literacy education.

The Data

In Beyond Your Perception (BYP) I was a participant-observer, then I interviewed each of the seven girls and a "parent;" I conducted three focus groups; and I developed the assignments the girls composed during various media literacy activities in BYP. I also engaged in reflective pedagogical conversations with Nina after BYP sessions and wrote field notes, all of which constitute the data analyzed and presented in this chapter in profiles of the girls, their parents and selected data sources. To illustrate the themes I just discussed, I constructed composite profiles of the girls and their "parent" (e.g., mother, father, or brother) using the pre-interview questionnaire, parent survey, excerpts from BYP conversations and activities, the one-on-one interviews, the

focus group discussions, and my field notes. Based on my analysis of these data, these profiles are presented to show the influence of hip hop media on the racialized-gender identities the girls are constructing as they experience, resist, or acquiesce to these influences. Likewise, parent profiles illustrate the role mothers, fathers, and brothers play in mediating the girls' hip hop media experiences. These data, my participant observations, and my pedagogical reflections with Nina inform my analysis and interpretation of the data. Additionally, I include selected blocks of text from the one-on-one interviews and the focus groups in order to allow the girls to speak for themselves. Profiles that I constructed for Nina and myself (See Appendix I and J) inform the third research question about pedagogical implications. In Chapter 5 I will present my narrative account that details my experiences as a participant-observer in the BYP collective.

The importance of the parent-daughter dyad relationship dynamic is an unexpected finding and presenting this data proved most difficult to unravel. I wondered whether I should present these dyad dynamics as individual cases to allow the voices of the girls and their parent to emerge on their own terms or whether I should foreground my own interpretation of their voices. I returned to the theoretical frameworks that are the foundation for this study to find my way. This chapter is structured to underscore the understanding that: 1) the girls both represent and resist the influences of hip hop media in conscious ways; 2) there is a great need for parents to become media literate; and 3) the racialized-gender identities these girls demonstrate have important implications for culturally relevant pedagogy interventions and teachers' media literacy. The culturally relevant pedagogy I used with these girls is what I am calling Womanist Hip Hop

Pedagogy. With another population of students another form of culturally relevant pedagogy may be appropriate. The data supporting each of these findings follow in three sections, followed by a chapter summary.

Black Girls Experience, Embody, and or Resist Hip Hop Media Hegemony

Research Question 1 asks: How do Black adolescent girls experience, embody, and/or resist hegemony in hip hop media? BYP participants experience traditional stereotypic controlling scripts of Black womanhood as they construct their racialized-gender identities and often recognize the consistent damaging representations of Black women in the media. Overtime, however, within the Beyond Your Perception critical media literacy collective they were able to articulate and analyze the media they consumed.

Where We Started: Day 1

Starting the session on Day One, I welcomed the girls, thanked them for being in attendance, passed around a sign-in sheet, and Nina and I introduced ourselves. For the girls' introductions, I asked them to include one thing they were currently working on to develop themselves in some way. I told the girls that one thing that I was working on was weight loss, so I had recently purchased a treadmill and jogged in the mornings. At the conclusion of introductions, I explained that as we are all developing ourselves (which none of the girls had a problem stating an area that they were working on) and I hoped that this group would enable us to develop together. I told them to help us better get to know one another we were going to engage in a few ice-breaker activities.

In order to build our sisterhood, Nina and I wanted to participate in short activities that would enable us to get to know each other and begin discussing some of the deep

topics in Black women's history that we would discuss over the course of BYP. (A

description of the BYP Units is found in Chapter 3). As one of our first day activities,

when the girls entered our meeting space, I handed each participant a Post-It note on

which they wrote something they have learned about being a Black girl. In no particular

order girls stated what they wrote and whatever else they wanted to share about it and

placed it on the wall in an area that we designated as the "Learning from Experience"

parking lot. The participants found commonalities in the experiences others shared. All

of the girls resonated with the statements made by Sy, Audrey, Dakota, and Mya as

shown in Table 4, Day One: Ice-breaker.

Table 4: Day One Ice-Breaker

"What I've Learned about Being a Black Girl"

Sy	"From being a black girl I learned that we are an underestimated beautiful species that is although sometimes misinterpreted. We're the "strong ones.""
Audrey	"If upset, be cautious of how I respond and pay attention to what even needs a response, so I'm not considered an Angry Black Woman."
Dakota	"We are often stereotyped."
Mya	"I've learned that it's lots of terrible statistics of black girls. [It] makes it hard to go far in life with limitations."
Source: BYP Session 1 Field Notes	

These statements articulating their experiences being Black girls coincide with

experiences Nina and I have. Their statements also coincide with the narrative of other

Black women and people of color. Their responses during this first ice-breaker reinforced my desire to do something with Black girls in order to take back the narrative, reclaim our story and find ways in which to engage youth in critical dialogue to analyze media representations.

After the ice-breaker activities, I discussed the topics we would cover and how Nina and I wanted them to bring in their perspective, their voice. For example, if we watch a video or listen to a song and they think there is something that better applies, or that they just want the group to view, they should bring it in. I continued to emphasize that this group was all of ours; a collective space for us to be free to be the Black girls that we are. I explained that since we were all going to be open with each other, BYP had one guideline: we were not to share our conversations and others' experiences with people outside of our group. In response Toni (who would later leave the group, and is therefore not discussed in this study) replied that "we should sign a contract." Nina and I exclaimed that was a great idea and I agreed to bring a confidentiality agreement to the next session. We then closed our group with our closing affirmation, "My sister, myself," in which, while holding hands, we each stated one thing we appreciated about the session, or someone during the session, to which each sister concluded their statement with, "My sister," and the group responds, "Myself."

Based on the desire to have a confidentiality agreement during our first session, I created and handed out an agreement to each participant at the beginning of our second session. (See Appendix D.) We read the agreement together, and I asked the girls if there was anything they thought should be added. Our confidentiality agreement was agreed upon, read collectively, and signed individually by each BYP participant. I believe that

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the girls spoke more freely and comfortably from that point forward, and maintained the privacy of their sisters' experiences. We never experienced an issue with confidentiality and the girls recognized that just as Nina and I shared our experiences on the first day, as facilitators (teachers), we would continue to be as transparent as we hoped they would be.

Theme 1: Black Girls Representin' and Resistin'

In some ways, the members of BYP serve as examples of the influence of popular culture, specifically hip hop media, on black girls' socialization and their racialized-gender identities. These girls "represent" the cultural movement by engaging with the music, music videos, television, and social media, and the aspects of the genre they are fond of are evident in their clothing, hairstyles, language, and style of dance, for example. On many occasions, while we were engaged in an activity, when we played music and the girls would stand up and show us a new dance that was out at the time. Figure 2 (below) presents an excerpt from a conversation that took place during the second focus group. This conversation illustrates how the girls both "represent" and "resist" the controlling scripts in hip hop media. In other words, they vacillate between representing the hegemonic cultural mores in hip hop (e.g., values, practices, behaviors, etc.) and consciously resisting the hegemony in hip hop. Nina started the conversation this way and I followed with other questions to engage the girls in further conversation:

> **Nina**: "So one of the things that everybody said when we were talking about 'Love & Hip Hop' was that the show doesn't influence you in your real life. So, I just want to know, like, how do you know? How do you know that you're not influenced by 'Love & Hip Hop 'or TV?"
>
> I followed with other questions as the girls responded.

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Figure 1: Focus Group 2 Conversation

Black Girls' Representin' and Resistin'

Mya: "Because I look at it and I'm like, this some BS; and then, like…I would say, I would never do that. I would never do nothing like that. Like, stuff like that…in my head, I already have it settled that it's like, it's not real to me."

Audrey: "It's for TV."

Mya: "Yeah. It's just for the money."

Audrey: "It's not real."

Mya: "Like, I can look at it for entertainment. Like cartoons! Like, you're not gonna, like do what you see on cartoons."

Sherell: "You guys say the same thing about music, like, "This doesn't influence us. Maybe if we were younger, if we were in middle school"; but you come in here using the language form the music and from the TV and. . ."

Mya: "Music is different."

Sherell: "…so do you guys feel like you're not influenced by the music? Some of your style comes from it."

Sy: "I think we use some of the vernacular from the music, but we don't like, our actions don't show it."

Sherell: "What do you mean by that? What do you mean by actions?"

Sy: "We don't act like what we see on the TV or like, what we listen to in the music; but our slang comes from TV and the music."

Source: Field notes

This conversation highlights how these Black girls were consciously constructing their identities through their engagement with hip hop media, which includes choosing what elements of the cultural movement they want to embody and which elements they want to resist. Sy comments that their "actions" do not depict what they view in the media and this signifies that Black girls experience traditional hegemonic stereotypes in hip hop media. The examples that follow illustrate how these girls construct their racialized-gender identities as they experience such hip hop media stereotypes.

Black Girls Experience Traditional Hegemonic Stereotypes in Hip Hop Media

Their media consumption affects how girls construct their racialized-gender identities. To illustrate the media the girls consume, this section presents our discussions of and their responses to television shows with all-Black casts or a Black, female lead character. Various hip hop expressions were the background for our discussion of media stereotypes in BYP, the one-on-one interviews, and focus group conversations. As all the participants in BYP shared personal stories and reflections about their lives as young adult women, they also revealed how they consume hip hop media and construct their racialized-gender identities in that process. Each of the participants in this study describes experiences with hegemony in hip hop media in myriad ways, and the overarching sentiments the girls expressed is that the media portrays Black women as stereotypes. Aaliyah's profile, in Figure 2 (below) is an example of how the girls experience the stereotypes of Black women in the media.

Figure 2: Aaliyah's Profile: How Aaliyah Experiences Hegemony in Hip Hop Media

Aaliyah is often treated as the baby of the group. Her peers tend to pick on her

to toughen her up. While this seems odd, they always explain that they do not believe that she is ready to take on the world after high school and they are trying to teach her how to speak artfully to people who attempt to disrespect her. While they are comfortable "picking" on her, she recognizes their intentions and usually looks for their approval, when she offers a quip in response. The other BYP girls also take up for Aaliyah at school. On one occasion, Aaliyah came to the group upset about a student who had berated and humiliated her at school that day. When the girls heard this they all began discussing who would say something to the young man, to which Sy responded, "Don't worry about it, I just sent him a text."

Despite the way the other girls treated her, Aaliyah was our "Line Leader." Whenever we had written or reflective activities, it was Aaliyah who opted to speak first. In fact, there were a few occasions when she would stop her peers from taking her turn as the first to share. In our BYP sessions, the focus groups and her personal interview, Aaliyah was quite vocal on how Black women are portrayed in the media. When asked in her personal interview to describe the Black women she views on television, she had this to say,

> "Every time you see a black woman on T.V. it's the side whore
> type thing. Like we're the side chick; we can't have our own man.
> We're always a struggling single parent with like, five kids
> different baby daddies. There's always a negative outcome on like
> black women."

Source: Field notes, Personal interview

Aaliyah's profile illustrates how several of the girls also experience traditional hegemonic stereotypes. Though they do not identify these stereotypes specifically by

their historical names ("Jezebel," "Mammy," "Welfare mother," etc.), the description of the underlying controlling script is recognizable.

The contemporary stereotype, of the "side chick" phenomenon that Aaliyah refers to can be seen in two television shows that we discussed in BYP—"Being Mary Jane" and "Scandal"—which the girls, and many of their "parents" reported they have viewed. We analyzed these two shows during our Media Analysis unit. "Being Mary Jane," a television show that airs on Black Entertainment Television (BET), is about a successful news anchorwoman who is having an affair with a married man. During the season of the show that we discussed, viewers were encouraged to upload a personal video onto any social media platform, with the hashtag[2] '#IAmMaryJane' to share how they are like Mary Jane Paul, the lead character on the show.

Kerry Washington, the lead actress on "Scandal," is the first Black actress to lead a television series on network television since 1974. In her role as Olivia Pope, she works as a "fixer;" a crisis management expert to Congress and the President of the United States. By all accounts, during our BYP discussions in this unit most of the girls in BYP and their parent, agree that Olivia Pope is "professional," "strong," and "powerful." However, they also offer ethical judgments in agreeing that her "personal life is terrible." Olivia Pope began having an affair with the President during the presidential campaign and continues this affair, off and on, over the course of the three seasons of "Scandal."

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[2] A hashtag is a word or phrase used on social media sites preceded by a pound (#) and identifies comments, pictures or videos distinguished by that word or phrase. One can search on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram (and other social sharing sites) posts from people using a particular hashtag.

In addition to being presented as mistresses, the girls also point out many depictions of Black women in hip hop media portrayals, as Kai notes, as "drama, drama, drama." She recognizes that Black women are far more than "table flipping, weave slinging, overly aggressive beings," but that is the only roles she believes that we play on television and the only way we are discussed through song (Personal interview).

Figure 3 presents a composite Profile of Kai, based on my participant-observations, our dialogue in BYP, the focus groups, as well as her personal interview.

Figure 3: Kai's Profile: Kai and the Angry Black Woman Trope

You know Kai has a spunky personality as soon as you see her. She always has a smile, speaks to everyone she passes, and can usually be seen wearing colorful, and uniquely trendy attire. She prides herself on being different, and as the youngest of four, usually considers herself the "black sheep." She does not speak about any tension filled experiences with her siblings or parents; she does not think her family is conservative, she just believes her thoughts and physical appearance differ greatly from those of her family. She considers herself "abstract." Kai is soft spoken but is always willing to share her perspective and experiences. Although she is quiet and has an optimistic personality, she always claims to be a "low-key thug," and loves "gangsta rap." Despite this characterization of herself, she is non-confrontational and detests drama.

In our focus group discussion on television viewing and the depictions of Black women, Kai discussed shying away from many popular television shows viewed by youth her age. She said:

"I watched one season of 'Love and Hip Hop: Atlanta' and I used to watch all the seasons of 'Bad Girls Club' but I stopped because I

just don't like drama. I guess because I'm not like a drama type of person. And like, just watching that stuff just irritates me or whatever."
Source: Field notes, Personal interview

In Oxygen's "Bad Girls Club" each season selects "mean" girls from across the country to live together, to fight and disrespect each other while attempting to out "bad" (be worse than) the other housemates. "Love and Hip Hop: Atlanta" began as a reality show series filmed in New York City that depicts the love interests of rap artists living in New York. Eventually a spin-off was created for rappers in Atlanta. The show intended to observe the relationships between the rappers and their significant others, however, the show soon began to depict the significant others constantly brawling with each other— fighting over the rappers and other issues, such as gossip. So, what Kai is articulating in the focus group is the notion that the cast members of many reality television shows engage in overt acts of violence. Television shows like the "Real Housewives of Beverly Hills," and New York, and "Mob Wives," also portray White women in verbal and physical confrontations, as well. However, Kai expresses disdain that Black women are demonized for fighting while others' aggressive acts are overlooked. The importance of critical media literacy is that it promotes reflexivity and critical thinking regarding media consumption habits and urges the student to analyze the media messages they are receiving. Having a space like BYP in which the girls' were encouraged to share their thoughts, gave the participants the opportunity to benefit from Kai's critique on the differences of attention physical altercations receive based on the race of the fighters/actors. Critical media literacy also encourages students to think about who is represented, and in what ways, and who is not being represented, and why. Nina and I

encouraged the girls to think about other television shows that they watch which may

represent people in similar scenarios but which garner a different kind of attention and

response based on the race, gender, and social class of the actors. Grounding critical

media literacy in hip hop media, which is the methodology of BYP, can serve as a

springboard for broader discussions and connections for parents and youth and in

classrooms.

My interview with Audrey, which I used to construct her Profile in Figure 4

(below) delved deeper into how women are portrayed in music and rap videos. Audrey

claimed these portrayals are indicative of stereotypes and controlling scripts in the

musical genre and are related to the gender of the artist.

Figure 4: Audrey's Profile: Audrey and Female Rappers Reifying Patriarchal Views

Audrey always seems to be ruminating on the topic at hand and would

often provide a well thought out and succinct analysis of her perspective on a

topic we were discussing in BYP. She is incredibly smart and you know based

on how she speaks on schooling, relationships, and her future that she has put a

lot of thought into things.

In her personal interview, we discussed how women are portrayed in

music, and while playful in how she described different genres of music, she

was quite opinionated on rap music and female rappers emulation of patriarchy

in their music and image.

> "I feel like country [music] is kind of like 'Oh, he broke my
> heart,' and oh a sob story. Then I feel like R&B is more of
> the 'Yea, you cheated on me but I'ma be alright. It don't
> matter.' Then Rap is kinda like 'She gotta a big ol' booty,

and I like that.'"   For Audrey Rap is about the physical bodies of women. Asked in different ways about the nature of the depiction of women in rap music and videos, Audrey was persistent in replying: "Booty. All day all just booty."
Source: Field notes, Personal interview

Audrey suggested that the reason that rap is all about "booty," or women's posteriors, is because it is a male dominated genre. "Rap is kinda dominated by men and in R&B it's more, in most cases, it's dominated by women. So the way they portray themselves is not gonna be as explicit as men do." However, she was clear that female rap artists often likened their lyrics and style to exploit themselves as a typical male rap artist would. Audrey provided the example of Nicki Minaj, a female rap artist.

> "I feel like if she didn't talk about the things she talked about she wouldn't be as prevalent. . . Nicki Minaj came out and she was like, 'Well, they wanna hear songs about this and I'ma give it to 'em. I'ma go buy me whatever they like and they gone love me.' And they love her" (Personal interview).

Audrey believes that Nicki Minaj, and the messages from rappers about Black women's bodies, encourage her peers to want to make changes to their bodies. "If it was more available to them, then they probably would, but it's easier to just be like 'Girl, hook your hair up.'" So Audrey claims that in her school, many young ladies wear wigs similar to Nicki Minaj's hairstyle. "These girls come out here with the lil' rainbow wig…And [a] Nicki Minaj bang." Aaliyah's stance on how women are portrayed in hip

hop music is consistent with what Audrey had to say about the emphasis placed on

"booties."

> "We're like straight W's [whores] -- big booties everywhere. We can't be
> dressed up in a classy dress or gown or nothing; we also have to have our
> boobs out; booties out. Looking like video vixens really. Men touching us
> seductively. I feel like the women in music are mostly portrayed are by
> men though" (Personal interview).

I introduced Aaliyah above. Her perception of women in music videos, which she

expressed during her personal interview, underscores the notion that the Black woman

has, once again, been reduced to the sum of her parts. In my interview with Mya, she

articulated that these representations serve capitalistic gains for those behind the scenes in

hip hop media, and therefore serve to maintain popular, albeit degrading, imagery,

> "People like that producers, artists they just really want to make money
> and be popular basically…their outlook is—they just wanna make money.
> They wanna sell what is popular" (Personal interview).

Milan's comments on the subject reiterated Mya's, Because I feel like that's what the

media has done….Everything is money driven. Whatever's gone get them some money

that's what they're gone try and mold it" (Personal interview). Hip hop began as a vehicle

for Black and Brown youth to have a platform to share their voices on political, economic

and social issues in their neighborhoods. Overtime, not only are artists' voices

minimalized behind corporate greed; it is rarely a forum for brothers or sisters to voice

their truths. The stereotypical scripts prevalent in hip hop media can be destructive to the

creation of positive self-identity as Black girls negotiate their sexual behavior and

African Americans, specifically women and girls, have the highest HIV/AIDS and

sexually transmitted infection rate in the United States. One of the ways hip hop media

can be deconstructed for Black girls is with the help of their parents and educators, to aid

them in critiquing the popular culture in which they engage.

Here is a profile based on my interview with Mya's 25 year-old brother Devon,

who shared his concern for how the media exposes girls to stereotypes.

Figure 5: Devon's Profile: Devon and Accountability

Devon Alexander is the fourth of six children, Mya is the youngest. He is

closer to an older brother and Mya is closer to the brother in between her and Devon,

however, Devon felt responsible for ensuring that his sister was prepared for life

outside of their parents' home. He likened his obligation as a big brother to the role of

police officers.

> "I take a firearm class through my work and there's a portion of the
> firearm class that's about accountability…I'm sure you've heard of
> people getting shot by police 38 or 40 times and you're like, 'Oh my
> God, why are they shooting so many times?' Well, because everyone
> is accountable to bringing that person down. You cannot not shoot
> because someone is going to shoot and that's where the idea came
> from that, 'Hey, I don't know if someone's talking to her [Mya];
> someone should be talking to her.' I can't wait on my mom to talk to
> her or my dad or my older sister, I'll do it."

When Mya was sixteen years old, Devon often drove her to school. He

often spent the night at his parents' home after getting off work near their

house in the early hours of the morning. And it was the firearm course that

prompted him to have talks with his sister about her womanhood.

While Devon does not watch much television, as an employee on the set of

"Being Mary Jane" he is familiar with the characters and the plot. So in his personal

interview he was opinionated on the message that a show like that sends about Black

women and relationships to youth. Devon stated,

> "Wanting to sleep with a married man is celebrated. They have a campaign, the "I am Mary Jane" campaign. If you look at it, that's what the media, or our culture, is presenting to you as a strong black woman. Black women are portrayed as not being able to control their sexuality in a way, black people in general."

Further, Devon was able to connect archetypical scripts of Black women to

contemporary trope:

> "That's what you get with reality shows. You get the feisty, angry black woman [Sapphire], the sassy black woman [Matriarch] and you get the promiscuous black woman [Jezebel]. Those are all current storylines to any of those shows."

Source: Parent interview

Not only do the Black girls in this study experience these traditional hegemonic stereotypes in their engagement with hip hop media, some of their parents, as Devon's comments demonstrate, do as well. Devon's profile illuminates media constructions of Black female sexuality have left traces for contemporary Black women and girls to negotiate. So although the names have changed, the images remain the same and they have the same negative impacts. In the next section, however, the data presented show that, although all of the participants claimed to be uninfluenced by hip hop media, it was evident by observing these young ladies for fourteen weeks that they are influenced by the hip hop movement in the ways they styled their hair, for example, their fashion, slang and dance styles.

Black Girls Buy into the Mores of the Cultural Movement of Hip Hop

These Black girls submitted to the cultural mores of hip hop. However, they seem to be selectively choosing the ways in which they want to represent the culture, or to be

representatives of the culture, which does not influence their overall life choices. For some the evidence of this lack of influence in their life choices includes abstaining from sex, focusing on achieving good grades, and going to college. While mothers and the father I interviewed are less likely to say that their daughter is influenced by hip hop— influence that seems to have a negative connotation for these parents—with regard to hip hop media Jamarcus and Devon are more cognizant of the ways in which their sisters are consciously and unconsciously reproducing representations they view.

It also became apparent that the girls could see the influence of hip hop media more easily where their peers are concerned rather than with regard to any ways they are being influenced themselves. This revelation prompted the dialogue below with Audrey (in Focus Group). Despite being able to see the influence the music and the messages in the music are having on her peers, she seems to be oblivious that she, too, is influenced by the hip hop cultural movement. In the second Focus Group, I pointed this out to her.

> **Sherell**: Audrey, you keep saying that you aren't influenced by the media, but you're a pretty fashionable girl. Your hairstyle is pretty trendy right now. (One side of her hair was shaved and on the other side she kept hair extensions in so it was long).

> **Audrey**: I didn't pick this hairstyle because it was trendy. I got it from Cassie (an R&B artist]) because I really liked her hair (Focus Group 2).

Cassie, an R&B artist, who shaved one side of her hair while she kept the other half long, was featured in a music video of her on-again off-again boyfriend, Sean "Puffy" Combs, a hip hop mogul. That Audrey stated she emulates the style of a hip hop artist but does not recognize the influence of that artist on her own choices is concerning.

Profile 6 (below) illustrates Mya's stance. She and her female peers look to the fashion trends of women in hip hop media as a guide for their clothing and personal appearance.

Figure 6: Mya's Profile: Mya and Fashion Trends

Mya seems undaunted by others' opinions of her. She is silly and seems more accepting, or maybe in awe of street life than the other participants.
What is also clear through our interaction with Mya is that she is confident in her appearance, and will state that she "likes her body." This stems from a phase in middle school in which she had low self-esteem because she wore glasses, had acne and her clothes did not match the social milieu. For Mya it was the attention that she received from boys that changed her attitude about herself, which she said still applied.

> In her personal interview, as we discussed the impact of hip hop media on youth, she had this to say:

> "I feel like I always had this um, point of view, that people be like, 'Oh, I'm different' and this and that, but I feel like everybody like the same because when you look, let's say that you lookin' for an outfit. You'll search [for] it and be like 'Oh, this type of outfit' and you'll try to copy the outfit. So I feel like people do that. I would say me, too. I'll look at a outfit and be like 'Oh, I want that, I want those shoes.' I feel like people, they try to be original…"

Source: Field notes, Personal interview

Devon recognizes the effects of hip hop media on his sister, primarily in the same way in which she admits to its influence on her trendy fashion choices:

> "The way she dresses. I was a kid, so it's hard not to be
> trendy. What she thinks is cool, what she thinks is popular

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is influenced by pop culture with whatever is current at the moment."

As a participant-observer, I found that Audrey, Kai, and Mya's style of dressing was the most fashionably influenced by hip hop media than the other four participants. For these participants, hip hop is socially viable and relevant to their youth culture.

Not only did the girls buy into the mores of hip hop through their hairstyles and style of dress, this aspect is also indicative in their dance styles. During our Day One introductions in BYP, Sy stated many things about herself, such as "I like to twerk." Twerk(in') is typically a female dance that could be viewed as sexually provocative based on the dancer's hip movements and squat stances. Sy's Profile in Figure 7 (below) details a discussion between Sy and me, which highlights that not only do the girls buy into the cultural mores of hip hop, but that their family members do as well.

Figure 7: Sy's Profile: Sy and Intergenerational Engagement in Hip Hop

Sy is (what I like to call) our resident poet. We began to expect from Sy positive affirmations for any situation we encountered. Some of my favorite "Sy-isms" are:

"Be at piece, not in pieces."

"It's okay to not be okay." and

"Not everything you lose is a loss."

Her spirit and energy are always positive and she strives to view life optimistically. She was born and raised in Atlanta, to a mother who was seventeen when she Sy was born. In her personal interview, Sy's comments about the dance style "twekin" illuminated not only that she buys into the cultural mores of hip hop through dance, but that her

family members of the hip hop generation do as well. .

Sherell: "Tell me about this twerkin."

Sy: "I use that as my workout. When I don't feel like doing no pushups, no situps, no nothing. I just dance. And you burn a lot of calories."

Sherell: "And where did you get twerkin from? Videos?"

Sy: "Mm-hmm. Well first I got it from the Twerk Team, because they started it."

Sherell: "So YouTube?"

Sy: "Mm-hmm. Then just looking at different videos trying to figure out how they get they butt to do that funny move."

Sherell: "Has your mom ever seen you twerk?"

Sy: "Mm-hmm."

Sherell: "What does she say?"

Sy: "My mama tries to twerk. She's young so she think she still got it. Even my great-grandma be making her booty jump. It's so disgusting…(giggles)…it's just foul in all ways. It's too much."

Sherell: "So you guys are the new twerk team…the Ballard twerk team."

(Both laugh)

Source: Field notes, Personal interview

Sy's profile highlights the importance of understanding the role of parents and families in youth culture. For the Ballards, the intergenerational engagement with the cultural movement of hip hop not only included Sy's mother but her great-grandmother as well. Collectively, the family participates in the cultural mores of hip hop which extend beyond

listening to the music and watching television into dance. By cultural mores I also include values, practices and behaviors. I would assume that just as the girls buy into fashion trends and hairstyles, some of their family members do as well. However, unlike these examples of how Audrey, Mya and Sy buy into these mores, often many of the girls resist hegemonic influences in hip hop in various ways.

Black Girls Resist Hegemony in Hip Hop Media

To begin each BYP session, we started with check-in and an ice-breaker activity. Check-in enabled all of the participants, including Nina and me to vent about anything that had occurred since the last time we were together. I selected the ice-breaker activities to enable us to continue to bond as sisters. For one such ice-breaker I asked the girls to create personal slogans. I explained to the girls that there were many slogans which had been attached to Black women and girls, which may not reflect who we say we are—our values. I asked the girls to shout out some of the things people say about us, to which they responded with comments like, "We're loud*"* and *"*We're hoes" (whores). I asked them to consider the slogans they would create about themselves or that would reflect Black women and girls as they know them. Dakota's, Aaliyah's and Sy's personal slogans serve as examples of this BYP activity in Table 5 (below).

Table 5: BYP Ice-Breaker, Session 1

Personal Slogans

Dakota	"I am who I am, not who you want me to be."
Aaliyah	"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others"
Sy	"Your crown is bought and paid for. All you have to do is put it on your head"

Dakota's slogan was, "I am who I am, not who you want me to be." Dakota resisted

messages in hip hop media by intentionally minimizing her engagement in the cultural

movement. In Figure 8 (below) I introduce Dakota through her profile, which shows how

she resists hegemony in hip hop media.

Figure 8: Dakota's Profile: Dakota Resists

Dakota is quiet and considers herself a "sympathetic crier," which was

apparent in some of our BYP sessions that became emotional. She lives with both of

her parents, her mother originally from the Northeast and her father from the

Caribbean, and has an older and younger sister. Like Sy, Dakota lives in the same

community as College Prep High School, but stated that her mother enrolled her in

schools outside of her zone for elementary and middle school based on the poor

academic performance and resources of schools within their zone.

It may have been her background with more diverse peers that led her to have

an eclectic taste in music. During her personal interview we discussed the type of

music that she listens to and her opinions on rap.

> "Um I listen to some rap. Um…but um I guess like songs like
> the kids at my school listen to I kind of listen to for a short
> amount of time 'cause they kinda start to sound the same to
> me. And just like, I'd rather listen to something else I guess.
> That has more I guess substance."

Source: Field notes, Personal interview

Dakota actively resists, not just the cultural mores, but also the genre due to its

lack of "substance." Even though her peers are engaged in listening to particular artists

and songs within the genre, Dakota intentionally chooses primarily to listen to other

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genres of music. Along similar lines, Aaliyah does not find much to relate to in the lyrical content in hip hop music. For this reason, she reported that she consciously resisted the messages and instead primarily listens to the music due to the "catchy beats." During the second focus group discussion when the topic was on hip hop media, Aaliyah stated:

"I feel like rap is scenarios that people try to make cool. It's fake. It's just for the hype. Like who can outdo each other. Like that's not real music."

Aaliyah's personal slogan: "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." So she chooses to spend time focused on societal issues, such as homelessness, and she spends less attention on music and media, which she deems to be "fake."

Mya, like the other participants, is more inclined to engage with hip hop media; however she believes it to be recreational and not influential. Sy mimicked these sentiments; she believes that she was not influenced by the media. As example, on reality television shows with Black women as leads, such as "Love & Hip Hop" and "Real Housewives of Atlanta," arguments turn into physical altercations. It was Sy's view that if she were influenced by the message these shows convey—that Black women are aggressive—she would handle disputes in a violent and antagonistic manner, similar to what she observes on TV. In the Focus Group 2 discussion Sy said,

"When I'm faced with some of the situations that they face on TV I respond differently. . . .for example at school – I chose not to beat two BB's booties. You know what I mean, I don't want to say the B word…two bierts [slang for "bitch"] butts and I walked away. I could've just swung – because that's what I see on TV. Whenever somebody talks about the other person, they just fight automatically" (Focus Group 2).

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Sy's personal slogan, a James Baldwin quote, "Your crown is bought and paid for. All you have to do is put it on your head," is a mantra she maintains to keep her out of trouble and focused on success. To this end, with regard to the racialized-gender identities they construct, Sy, Kai, Audrey, Mya and Milan credit self-esteem and positive self-identity as strong mediating factors that counter the influences of popular culture in their lives. Sy was vocal that the television she views consistently depicts Black women as aggressive and volatile, and was able to distinguish the behavior of Black women she views on television from acceptable actions she should employ in her school setting and everyday life, mainly based on her positive self-identity. Therefore, the racialized-gendered identities Black girls construct is crucial in aiding their ability to resist hip hop influences and to experience cognitive and psychosocial wellbeing (Brown, 2009). That this study aims to contribute empirical research concerning these issues adds to its significance.

While most of the other participants reported that they consciously resist the messages in hip hop media because of their high self-esteem and positive self-identity, Aaliyah is more determined to prove the point: "But to like beat that statistic and like do well in life and like let people know that just 'cause I'm Black and a girl I can still make it." In addition, there is evidence of these girls' seeming innate resiliency, that is, they consciously choose not to participate in and eschew particular forms of the cultural movement of hip hop. Further evidence of their resistance is the narratives the girls composed as a part of a creative writing assignment for BYP.

Making Progress in BYP. After an ice breaker activity on the last day of our second unit, Historical Understandings, I handed out an excerpt from Joan Morgan's

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(1999) book "When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost," the letter she writes preceding

the chapter on the "StrongBlackWoman." ("Chickenheads" is a derogatory term usually

for a Black woman, that was created by rap artists as another term for "ho"). The letter

begins as follows:

> To Whom it May Concern:
>
> For reasons of emotional health and overall sanity, I've retired from being
> a STRONGBLACKWOMAN. Since I've been acting like a SBW for most
> of my life, I've taken the liberty of drafting a re-orientation memo (p. 85).

The letter goes on to explain to the people who needed Morgan to be a SBW ("the white

folks I work with," "the folks in my life who are used to calling me all hours of the a.m.

or p.m.," and "the brothers trying to kick it"). We all read the letter in silence and then I

read the letter to the group and asked for the girls to share their thoughts on it. Many of

the girls, especially Sy, said that she related to the letter. Then I handed out Maya

Angelou's poem "Phenomenal Woman," which again, they read it in silence and then I

read it aloud. Aaliyah stated that she loved Maya Angelou and this poem specifically.

Then I explained that both of these women were speaking back to the stereotypes about

women, and Black womanhood, highlighting "I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion

model's size" and "I don't shout or jump about, Or have to talk real loud." Then I walked

around and reviewed the reflections we had written in response to each archetype,

illuminated the objectives of Morgan and Angelou and asked the girls to choose an

archetype to create her counter-story. Telling them:

> "Today we extend their stories, and we lay to rest the ways in which white
> men justified their rape and abuse of us through Jezebel. We lay to rest
> Mammy not being considered beautiful. We lay to rest writing off
> Sapphire as an Angry Black Woman. We lay to rest the Matriarch as the
> issue with society. And we lay to rest the idea that the Welfare Mother is
> abusing the system for economic gain and prosperity" (BYP Curriculum).

Afterwards, I asked the girls what their motivation was for writing the piece they wrote. Much of what they wrote related to their personal experiences as Black girls or was derived from the experiences of the Black girls and women in their lives.

The following is an excerpt from Dakota's counter-story "Silence," which represents her response to the foundational stereotypes we educated the girls on in our Historical Understandings unit, including: Mammy, Matriarch, and Sapphire.

Table 6: BYP Activity, Session 5

Dakota's Counter-story for Stereotypes

If the color of my skin is just too much for you, then I'm sorry. If the way I am is just too pushy for you, then I'm sorry. If the way I stand with this deep arch in my back, this head held high, this smile painted on my face, this strut I take with each step…I mean if that's too much for you, then I'm sorry.…Because of the color of my skin, I won't be burdened with the stress of life. Just because of the way I push, I know I won't fail in life….The days get longer and the nights get shorter, but I'm done fighting by myself.
Source: BYP Documentation

The counter-stories these girls created to counter the stereotypes, as Dakota's writing demonstrates, indicate their ability to understand and uncover the stories of marginalized peoples and speak against the hegemony within the metanarrative.

When we reached the third unit, Counter-narratives, I asked the BYP participants to think back to our counter-story activity and how we attempted to provide a voice for

those intentionally silenced women. I also asked them to think back to the "The Masks We Wear" (See Appendix G) activity in which they listed common misperceptions of Black women they experienced. Many of the girls stated that people hold perceptions of them that are unlike who they really are. As an example, on Milan's mask she wrote the following words for how she believes others perceived her: small, stuck up, ambitious, "all fun", intelligent, and a "gold digger." On the opposite side of the mask, to indicate what she believes about herself, she wrote: independent, intelligent, blessed, pretty, driven, caring, destined, loving, and a "goal digger." Milan uses this play on words to make the difference between being a "gold digger," someone who relies on the financial support of a significant other, and a "goal digger," as one who relies on her own smarts to become successful and financially independent. In Figure 9 (below) I provide a glimpse of Milan in a profile in order to highlight that girls resist hegemony in hip hop based on myriad factors; for Milan this includes her spirituality.

Figure 9: Milan's Profile: Milan Resists by Faith

Milan's mother was pregnant with her while a freshmen in college. So after she was born, to prevent her daughter from leaving school Milan's grandmother took custody of the baby. Milan possesses many "old school" values and is spiritual, focused, driven, mature and independent. Milan was especially grounded in her spirituality. All the young ladies spoke about God, but many of them were not raised attending church. Milan was always spiritually grounded in conversations. If her peers were expressing great pain and obstacle or if Milan was recalling a traumatic situation, she always implored the group to remember their God and that He loves them. Of all of the girls, Milan is the only one who chose a gospel song as one of her favorites for our

BYP activity and focus group.

> "That's my first resort for everything. No matter what situation I'm going through I'ma talk with Him first…even if I'm going through something positive. Thank you God for getting me through here. If I'm going through something negative, "I need you to help me, I'm strugglin'. I need your strength," all this type of stuff 'cause no man can compare to that. I'm just like a real spiritual person. And a lot of people, like, question me; I mean, like "How you can be this and then be so turnt ["hyper, you real hyper"] and all this and still turn around [and be spiritual]? I don't know, I don't know (laughs). I just am."

Source: Field notes, BYP conversations, Personal interview

Reflecting on the mask activity, I challenged the girls to create a counter-story for the misperceptions on their masks. Milan, for example, used spiritual notions of faith, grace, and mercy in her counter-story to demonstrate how she would succeed against the odds. (See Appendix H for two additional examples created by Aaliyah and Sy that highlight the strength and resiliency of the girls, as well as the impact of BYP in aiding them in understanding what author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) called the "danger of a single story" in her TED Talk).

Sy's composition used imagery to align her physical countenance with the ways in which Black girls are treated as a result of the misperceptions and prejudices of others. Sy's counter-story is an example of how Black girls experience skin-color prejudice because of their appearance. She uses the fullness of her lips to articulate how she can be misperceived based on her physical features. She uses mathematical concepts to explain the fallacy of metaphorically judging a book by its cover. Womanist consciousness reflects the notion that Black women's experiences are connected to most of today's social problems. That Sy experiences misperceptions, prejudices, bigotry and injustices

based solely on her skin-tone is reflective of the racist, sexist, and classist underpinnings of society.

Aaliyah's counter-story speaks to resistance from that dominant narrative. A Womanist-ecological theory is useful for broadly framing the experiences of Black girls. That Black girls experience hegemony in traditional stereotypic ways but also resist these hegemonic notions, as indicated in both Sy's and Aaliyah's counter-stories, enables us to see the fluidity of the Ecological Systems Theory. According to Brofenbrenner's (1979) ecology, Black girls' are nested in the center of these environments, however, I am theorizing that Black girls' have the ability to push back, if taught how to be analytical.

Parents' Roles in Mediating Hip Hop Media Influences

Research Question 2 asks: What is the role of parents in mediating the socialization influences of hip hop media on their daughters? The findings presented in this section highlight the role of parents of the participants in BYP, in mediating the socialization influences of hip hop media. "Parent" in this study does not imply a purely biological connotation; however it is constructed around a set of behaviors based on nurturance and care-giving. Therefore, parent, in this study, includes siblings, in this case two older brothers. What is important to note is that I gave the girls a parent survey to take home on the first day of BYP. On the parent survey (Appendix E), in response to the questions asking parents if they like and/or listen to hip hop and rap music the overwhelming response was "No." However, I found during the parent interviews, all of the parents engaged with hip hop media, which did include listening to hip hop and rap music. In fact, all of the parents said that they did indeed like hip hop. According to the parent survey, one would think that parents do not engage with hip hop media. Parents

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may not readily admit that they engage with the genre due to the sigma of the music, however had I not proceeded to interview each parent to discuss hip hop media (considering the parent survey responses as truthful) I would not have been able to better understand the parents' roles in mediating hip hop media influences for their daughters.

Theme 2: "Parents'" Media Literacy

I define parent's media literacy as the ability of parents to make meaning of the messages disseminated in media and to be both analytical and critical of media and its messages. I made the assumption designing this study that parents would have a level of media literacy that they would pass onto their children through dialogue. By interviewing the "parents" in this study (four mothers, one father, and two brothers) I have found that parents are not always media literate, or based on the relationship dynamics between parent and daughter, able to share that literacy. The first thing that became apparent in the parent one-on-one interviews, was that despite the messages within hip hop media, the parents still find hip hop media "entertaining."

Parents Find Hip Hop Media Entertaining

Through interacting with the girls in BYP, and interviewing both girls and parents, the data show that parents engage in hip hop media in a variety of ways. These parents listen to the music and watch hip hop media on television, which includes TV shows and music videos. Moreover, these parents provide feedback for their daughters about the messages implicit in hip hop media. However, their feedback lacks the critical and analytical lens that Beyond Your Perception provided. Figure 10 (below) provides excerpts from three of the one-on-one interviews and are typical of parents' viewpoints in which their overall sentiment that hip hop is "entertaining."

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Figure 10: Parents Find Hip Hop Media "Entertaining"

Devon	"It's entertainment, that's all I can say. The rhythm is something to dance to and listen to."
Miss Ballard	"If you're in the mood at times and you want to dance or move around…I look at it as a form of entertainment and nothing that I'm trying to get a message from. . . "
Mr. Faust	"What are rappers called? Entertainers! He is just entertaining."
Source: Parent interviews	

Although parents are able to articulate messages in the music that they do not agree with, throughout the one-on-one interviews they support the genre of hip hop because they find it entertaining. For most of the parents, they believe their daughters are also able to recognize the music is for entertainment purposes.

Dakota shared in BYP that her family no longer had cable television in their home, but instead viewed television shows through Netflix (an online television and movie streaming site). In my interview with parents I explicitly wanted to know which television shows with Black casts, especially Black women actors, they view and their opinions on those television shows. Mrs. Johnson, Dakota's mother, not having cable, was intentional in attempting to watch television with Black female roles.

> "It's so freaking hard to find. I mean there's a few sort of sprinkled in and
> I admit that now that any TV watching we do is very deliberate because
> we don't have cable anymore so we deliberately watch what it is we want
> to watch and to be honest, very few of those shows have black women in
> it" (Personal interview).

As we explored the Johnson family's television viewing further, Mrs. Johnson shared that, "on occasion," she watches "the worst" reality television show, "Real Housewives of Atlanta" (RHOA).

RHOA began as the "Real Housewives of Beverly Hills," with an all-white cast, then became a series with the same storyline but new locale with the "Real Housewives of New York" and finally RHOA which yields the highest ratings of all of the Real Housewives series. RHOA is also the only Housewives series with Black wives. The Atlanta iteration of Housewives is an all-Black cast, having at one time had one white cast member who left RHOA and had a spin-off show. Most episodes of the RHOA depict verbal altercations between the cast members. I profile Mrs. Johnson, in Figure 11 (below), in order to highlight parents' engagement with media and the perspectives that they may pass onto their children.

Figure 11: Mrs. Johnson's Profile: Mrs. Johnson and Disciplined TV Viewing

Mrs. Johnson was raised by teenage parents, and her paternal grandparents who she refers to as *prudish*. Based on her parents strict up-bringing, they raised her in an open environment with candid dialogue.

> "I grew up with young parents who had no other way to raise us but in an open environment because his [her father] parents were very conservative so he kind of-- did the opposite so they were very young so I – that's the only way I really ought to be but I do realize that there's a line that has to be drawn at some point when you stop being this, you know, person that you can just come and be open with and still have to be a parent but I'll listen to you. I still had to give some kind of direction."

According to Mrs. Johnson, she always "just allowed and I mean nothing that's too bad but in general, I've allowed them to watch, you know certain things on TV or listen to some things on the radio but we always talked about it," and it

was the nature of those conversations, and the family's media consumption, that

we discussed in her personal interview.

Her favorite television show was "Real Housewives of

Atlanta," but she also had a particular aversion for it.

"I mean it's interesting, but it makes me sick. I hate to see people being so
calloused and irresponsible and ugly. That's the part that I don't like.
Dakota has no patience for it whatsoever. It pulls me in but I can be drawn
in to anything."

Source: Parent interview

Mrs. Johnson found this TV show entertaining yet deplorable, so I probed further

about why she would continue to watch such a TV show that "sickens" her. She

explained, "Us watching it isn't going to make a difference," expressing her outlook that

her family's not viewing the television show would not prompt TV executives to stop

airing the show. This mindset, however, is shared by many, which we observed in

discussions in BYP, although these sentiments are actually inaccurate. For example, in

2013 the Oxygen channel was set to begin airing a television show about an Atlanta

rapper who fathered eleven children with ten different women, titled "All My Babies'

Mamas." There was such a public outcry from the Black community that an online

petition was started to prevent the airing of this show, and Oxygen eventually released a

public statement that it would not continue with the production of the show. The petition

garnered over thirty-seven thousand signatures. As another example, at the conclusion of

BYP, the executive producer of the "Love and Hip Hop" series, and their spin-offs, Mona

Scott-Young, was in production for a new reality show that would portray Black sorority

life. Black fraternity and sorority members created an online petition which was widely

circulated. As a sorority member, I signed electronically and shared the petition on social

media sites to stop the possible damaging effects of another reality show that only serves

to depict African American women in disparaging ways. This petition acquired over

twenty-five thousand signatures, and as of June 2014 production stopped on "Sorority

Sisters." So, Mrs. Johnson's misguided sentiments that her not watching the "Real

Housewives of Atlanta" would not make an impact highlights the need for parents to be

media literate. Being media literate requires that parents not only develop the ability to

interpret and critically analyze media messages but also to understand the ways they

consume and invest in media and their underutilized power to influence it.

> Sy stated that her mother, Miss Ballard

> ". . .is young, so she's sometimes more up to date on stuff than I am. I'm
> like 'How do you know this?' 'You didn't see it on Media Takeout?' 'No!
> Why are you on Media Takeout? You're supposed to be at work,
> working'" (Personal interview).

Media Takeout is a gossip website which posts pictures and blog-style commentary about

celebrities, most often artists of hip hop media. In these interchanges, Sy reports that she

and her mother are directly discussing celebrity news. However, while they are enjoying

celebrity gossip, they are not engaging in more analytical dialogue. Regardless of how

entertaining parents may find hip hop media, the messages prevalent within it are highly

influential for children and youth. Therefore, the role of parents as serving as mediating

counter-force is critical as youth define themselves against the backdrop of popular

culture.

As with most of the parents in this study, Mrs. Johnson, Dakota's mother,

was drawn to the music first via the beat. She said that it was after first listening

to, and enjoying the beat, that she would listen to the lyrics. Lyrics were never her

first objective when listening to rap music.

> "I always hear the music and I hear the beat first. That's what I hear first.
> And then I'll listen to the lyrics and then I am like "Oh, yeah this is kind
> of crazy." I mean, it's the music, it's the feeling, you know, the feeling
> that invokes in you" (Parent interview).

Like Dakota and Mrs. Johnson, Milan and her mother engage in hip hop media

together by viewing television shows and listening to rap music. Mrs. Carter likes

listening to rap music however, like most of the parents the beat to the music

draws her in first: "Whenever I hear a song, I'm always listening to the beat and

the music." Although Mrs. Carter's profile detailed in Figure 12 (below) shows

that she engages in indirect conversations with Milan, she was adamant about

engaging in dialogue about current social events with her daughters.

Figure 12: Mrs. Carter's Profile: Mommy-Daughter Time

> Mrs. Carter initiated conversations with her daughter regarding pertinent issues,
>
> saying, "The majority of the time it's me going to her but there are times where she
>
> would come in and she would make a comment or she would ask a question." As a
>
> Black woman raising three daughters she was mindful of the lessons she needed to
>
> provide for them, especially in light of the media that they were consuming and their
>
> peer groups.
>
> > "I have one in middle school and I have one in elementary so we have a
> > different type of conversation and what I would always tell to my girls, I
> > would always keep it one-hundred [completely honest]. There's nothing
> > that she is going to hear out in the street that she hasn't heard from me
> > and that's what I'm trying to make sure that she [Milan] knows.
> > Whenever it's just she and I. . ."
>
> Mrs. Carter is determined to provide for her daughters the type of open-dialogue she

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wished for in the relationship between her and her own mother.

> "My mom didn't feel comfortable with, like, sex conversations. . . .I
> always had to fight with my mom so I made sure that I tell her [Milan]
> everything. It's easy for me to have a conversation because I wish I had
> that person to have that kind of conversation. I'm not saying that I didn't
> have that conversation; my mom just didn't feel comfortable. I would
> always be the person that will have to bring it up to her for her to talk."

Subsequently, she initiates conversations with her daughters, especially Milan, as

the eldest and who was soon to move away from home to attend college. Though

Mrs. Carter was confident that Milan receives her messages, she was undecided

if Milan is overly influenced by factors beyond her own teacher, that is to say hip

hop media.

Source: Parent interview

Like Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Johnson also prides herself on having conversations that

related to music's lyrical content, an artist, sex, drugs, and beyond—whether the

conversations are framed in the context of the music or not. However, she

revealed over the course of her one-on-one interview that "I made the assumption

that they (her daughters) are able to differentiate what's being played and what's

being said on these songs from like. . .real life." My experiences with Dakota and

the other BYP participants indicate that there are ways in which they are able to

differentiate between the storytelling in hip hop music and "real life" but there are

other ways in which they do not. The ability for parent and daughter to dialogue

about the messages in the music is critical to their cognitive and psychosocial

development. Parents, especially those engaged with hip hop media, must take a

more active role in engaging their youth in critical dialogue pertaining to the imagery and the lyrical content in the hip hop cultural movement.

Parents Typically Engage in Uncritical Forms of Dialogue with their Daughters

Parents engaged in hip hop media and relationships with their daughters by listening to the music and watching the media together or talking about what they have listened to and viewed. This study found that parents also provide feedback, albeit usually uncritical, through specific types of dialogue: Direct Conversations, Indirect Conversations, Hybrid Conversations, and Interrogations, or talking "at" their daughters. The findings show that parents engage in five forms of dialogue: Direct Conversations,

Direct conversations. Direct conversations are those in which during, or following, engagement with hip hop media—music, videos, radio, television—parents question their child's knowledge on a topic, message, or idea from the media. These conversations are situated in the culture, so parents may directly refer to an artist, a song lyric, or a television show to discuss topics such as relationships, drug use, or character. Of all three of her daughters, Mrs. Johnson felt more at ease discussing various topics with Dakota. She was unsure how to account for the comfortable relationshiop between the two of them but she observed:

> "I don't remember that first initial conversation, us sitting down…I just feel like with Dakota, anytime I came to her with something she already knew about it. And she was sort of reiterating some of the same conversations I was having with my other daughters so I've never been afraid of Dakota hearing about things or watching things because she's always been able to make sense of it all" (Parent interview).

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Despite expressing that Dakota was able to "make sense" of particular subject matter,

Mrs. Johnson shared this example of a direct conversation she had with Dakota, which

suggests the importance of parents engaging their daughters in critical dialogue.

> "Have you heard the song where they say something about 'push your panties to the side?' So Dakota and I were listening to it and I was like, 'Oh, I hate that. I wish they would flag out that part because I like the sound of the song' you know half the time I don't know what they were singing about but I couldn't help hear that part. And I thought that was so funny because I was talking to Dakota and I was like 'Oh, that's so disrespectful. I hate it when I hear things like that' and 'Why are they saying that in the song?' She [Dakota] says, 'No, mommy. He's saying your panties are on the floor. They are in the way, so just take them and put them over to the side.'"

Mrs. Johnson reported that this conversation with Dakota branched off into a discussion

about safe sex. Engaging in the musical forms of hip hop, together, allowed Mrs. Johnson

and Dakota to discuss a topic such as sex. Although Dakota, as with many of the other

participants, was a virgin, engaging in a debate about lyrics of a sexually explicit song

enabled her parent to have a direct conversation about its content and sexual activity.

Indirect conversations. Indirect conversations are those that, while they may be

prompted by media consumption, are not situated within that context during the dialogue

between parent and child. As example, a parent may hear the term "molly" referenced

(which is a party drug that induces euphoria and physical energy) in rap music and will

later use that knowledge to discuss drug use or partying with their child without

referencing the song lyric or artist. Kai's brother Jamarcus, a graduate of College

Preparatory Academy, recently moved back into his parents' home after earning his

Master's degree. Living in the same home, Kai turns to her brother for advice. Drawing

on my interviews with Kai and Jamarcus, Figure 13 (below) describes Jamarcus' profile.

His profile includes his relationship with his sister, Kai and the kind of conversations they have regarding hip hop media.

Figure 13: Jamarcus' Profile: Big Brother Talks

Kai and Jamarcus are the two youngest of Mr. and Mrs. Douglass' four children. There are two girls and two boys, and Kai finds that she "bumps heads" with her sister but has always gotten along with her brothers Jamarcus and Leon. Kai believes she is the "black sheep" of the family based on her "eccentric" style; however she does not believe that Jamarcus judges her and she feels most comfortable being herself around him. For that reason, Jamarcus considers himself Kai's "bridge to what's hip in the world of hip hop."

Jamarcus takes seriously the lessons he has learned throughout his own experiences with hip hop. In his role as big brother he makes sure that he has expressed to Kai, "You're much more than a catchy tune or you're much more than just what [an] artist believes that you might be."

Source: Parent interview

Jamarcus espoused an "open door" policy for Kai so that she could come and discuss anything that might be on her mind. That open door policy occasionally presented Jamarcus with conversations he was not prepared to discuss but he attempts to remain impartial so as to not deter his sister from sharing with him. "She knows that I'm not judgmental and that I would keep it objective as possible." This open door policy enables Kai and Jamarcus to discuss a wide range of topics that are not necessarily situated directly within the context of media consumption.

Like Jamarcus, Mya's brother Devon's connection to hip hop as a cultural participant prompted him to engage in indirect conversations situated in his experience

with Mya when she was around the age of sixteen. However, he began to extend his

dialogue with his sister into hip hop media and the messages she was receiving from it,

when she created an account on Instagram. Instagram is a social networking site in which

people upload pictures or videos while "friends" (people one allows viewing access to all

of their photos and videos) or followers of that particular person, can like a photo or

make comments about it. Facebook, which much similar to Instagram, is a social sharing

site by which people can upload photographs, videos, or commentary in "posts." Mya and

Devon were Facebook friends, which allowed him access to her posted comments, and

syncing her Instagram account to Facebook allowed for him to see the pictures that she

was uploading of herself. By his account,

> "I started seeing how people were portraying themselves on Instagram. I
> think she had a couple of Facebook photos that weren't really, or that
> shouldn't be out there. I think she had a photo of her, I don't know if she
> was smoking Hookah or weed or whatever it was but it was something
> like, [thinking to himself] "I really need to talk to her about [this]."

So Mya and Devon's talks began, fueled by Devon's feelings of sibling responsibility for

his younger sister.

Mrs. Carter, Milan's mother, initiates conversations with her daughter regarding

pertinent issues. She said: "The majority of the time it's me going to her but there are

times where she would come in and she would make a comment or she would ask a

question." As a Black woman raising three daughters she is mindful of the lessons she

needs to provide for them, especially in light of the media that they are consuming with

their peer groups.

> "I have one in middle school and I have one in elementary so we have a
> different type of conversation and what I would always tell to my girls, I
> would always keep it one-hundred [completely honest]. There's nothing

that she is going to hear out in the street that she hasn't heard from me and that's what I'm trying to make sure that she [Milan] knows."

Though both mother and daughter do attest to the fact that they engage in conversations, both agree that these are indirect conversations. Mrs. Carter explains:

> "We haven't had a direct conversation about it but there are times where I guess she would be in her room and I could hear some of her music. To be honest, I really don't mind her listening to it here because I would like for her to know what's being said and for her to create her own opinion about it, 'No, I don't want to hear that' and at times when they [her daughters] get to those type of songs, I could hear that she would turn away. So, I say, 'I'm good' [our conversations were successful]."

The message still came across right. Mrs. Carter's view is that although the conversations are not situated within the context of the music, Milan is making musical choices based on the messages conveyed in the conversations with her mother.

Audrey's conversations with her father, Mr. Faust, are also indirect in nature. According to Audrey, both of her parents listen to and watch music and television that are similar to those she engages. However, she indicates that their conversations about the media she consumes remains focused on the episode or the song and neither parent delves deeper into the substance of any inherent media messages. Mr. Faust worked in law enforcement, so while he grew up listening to hip hop, he continues listening for personal and professional purposes. As a law enforcement agent, he is intentional in keeping up with the latest trends, slang, and drugs in an effort to keep up with what is going on around him while he is "out in the streets." But with respect to discussing lyrical content with Audrey, they both agree that he "mess[es] with her about the substance of it." So

while he may be analytical of the music in his professional role, he does not transfer

those analytical skills through dialogue on to Audrey. Audrey explained:

> "Like he might like crack jokes about it but he won't go into depth like
> 'Do you understand what they're saying?' It's more of like, 'Really? He
> goin' rap about…and, and runnin' in the middle of the street? That's not
> smart.' But not so much of 'Do you understand like what he's sayin' and
> what it means?" no, not like that" (Personal interview).

Based on Audrey's comments from her one-on-one interview, I decided to explore her

perspective with Mr. Faust during his personal interview.

> **Sherell**: "Do you talk to Audrey in light of the terms, the messages that
> are coming out? Do you and Audrey sit and have conversations about
> those things?"

> **Mr. Faust**: "Yeah, it usually starts out as a joke because when we're
> riding [in the car] she wants to turn on the [radio] station…I don't make a
> gripe about it, because I want to hear it. And I want to hear it in her
> presence so when they're sounding crazy I'm like, 'Really? What did he
> just say?' and she bursts out laughing, 'Dad, I don't know what he just
> said,' 'Oh, you know it. You listened to it. I saw you.' Sometimes she's
> like, 'Yeah, this is crazy,' and I'm like, 'Okay, as long as you know what
> sounds crazy.' But you know, I had to catch myself because I'm like
> 'think back.' I remember in high school [the content of the music was
> questionable]. . . [so] it's a fad" (Parent interview).

While Mr. Faust maintained a level of criticality in his thoughts about hip hop music,

often that criticality did not translate into his dialogue with Audrey. Both father and

daughter agreed that Mr. Faust was comical in his approach with Audrey about the nature

of the lyrical content, although he took the content seriously in preparation for his job.

This lack of criticality between parents to daughter could be quite detrimental if Audrey

does not exhibit resiliency that the Beyond Your Perception collective was able to

cultivate, reinforce and encourage.

Another parent who exhibited indirect conversations with her daughter was Sy's mother, Miss Ballard. Reporting that she discusses topics like sex, drugs, and partying with Sy in general, outside of the media, Miss Ballard said: "I mean we have those conversations in general. . .but not from the videos we talk about stuff, I'd say no." Although Miss Ballard maintains indirect conversation with Sy, the relationship dynamic between this mother and daughter dyad has created a rift that prevents the two from engaging in more beneficial and critical dialogue. Their relationship is highlighted in Figure 7 (below) in the section "Relationship Dynamics between Parent and Daughter Influence the Role Parents Play as Mediators."

Hybrid conversations. In these conversations, most usually a parent begins indirect dialogue but over the course of the conversation direct artists, lyrics, or images are discussed. Hybrid conversations are a mix of both indirect and direct conversations. Of all the parent-daughter dyads, Mrs. Johnson and Dakota most frequently engage in hybrid conversations. According to Mrs. Johnson, she always "just allowed…them to watch, you know certain things on TV or listen to some things on the radio but we always talked about it," and it was the nature of those conversations that we discussed further. Mrs. Johnson had both indirect and direct conversations with her daughters, however she situated much of her commentary on social and adolescent issues she situated within the context of the forms of popular culture they both indulged. Mrs. Johnson was adamant about teaching her daughters that the powers-that-be behind radio music push a particular agenda and in order to hear music from artists one can truly appreciate, they would have to search beyond the radio. She reported saying to Dakota:

> "You have to seek it out. It's not going to be funneled to you, because that's all
> the radio is, it's just a funneling system of saying, "Hey, this is good music.

Listen to it." But in order for us to find the artist we really like and we really appreciate that true artist, we have to take our time and find it for ourselves."

She further expressed that she believes that her daughters practiced this form of agency because by her account "they're always coming to me with something new that I've never heard before and it's not on the radio."

An activity Dakota completed in BYP also speaks to this notion. In order to have critical conversations with the BYP participants about the music they engage with, we asked each of them to complete a Favorite Song Worksheet (Appendix F) which asked the girls to list three songs, and the artists who sing/rap them, that they enjoyed listening to over several weeks prior to completing the form. They were also asked to state what about the song they like the most—the beat, the lyrics and/or the video. Lastly, they were asked to write down anything that jumped out to them about the song, as example, a part that they remembered the most or that kept getting stuck in their head. While there were a few songs from the girls that I was unaware of, I had never heard of the three songs or artists that Dakota listed as her favorites of the time. Dakota credited Pandora (customized internet radio streaming) and her aerial dance class. As a performer, the songs she danced to she usually sought outside of practices and performances through YouTube or Pandora. In addition to her dance class, the conversations with her mother prompted Dakota to seek music not widely disseminated through radio. The discussions about rap music were a catalyst, for this family, in discussing other genres of music.

Interrogations. Sy and Miss Ballard had one of the most tension-filled relationship dynamics. Miss Ballard illuminated this tension in her explanation of how she broaches topics of discussion: "I [talk to her] all the time. She doesn't always have questions but I do initiate the conversation…questioning her. She doesn't like that. . .[It]

gets on her bad side. But I hope she's listening." I probed Miss Ballard further. I wanted to distinguish the nature of their talks. I asked when she did discuss the music, what was she talking about: the artist, the lyrics, the content? For Miss Ballard, when she hears incredibly explicit music, or music with a derogatory message she likes to know "how comfortable or uncomfortable it makes her [Sy] feel when she hears that coming from somebody." Further, Miss Ballard stated that if she overheard Sy listening to music, she may step into her bedroom and ask her questions like "Do you like that?" According to Miss Ballard, Sy responds "Yes."

Here, Miss Ballard articulates a vital point about dialogue: talking at our youth is quite a different thing from talking with them. Miss Ballard was adamant about Sy's reaction to their "conversations," but she also expressed that these "dialogues" were less an interchange of ideas and experiences, and could be viewed by Sy as condescending speeches. By Miss Ballard's account, it may be that Sy feels criticized. Regardless, the tension prevalent in their mother-daughter dynamic prompted Miss Ballard to state, "I think hopefully, she would come to me if there is something that she is really unsure about or don't understand. . .I hope that she would be open and not stubborn that she normally is and just come to me and we'll talk about it." This parents' approach to dialogue may be why Miss Ballard "hopes she [sic] listening." For youth who cannot, or choose not, to engage in dialogue with parents, there must be a space and culturally competent and media literate mentors available to engage in critical dialogue. Thereby, the relationship dynamic for parents and their daughters are critical in the girls' psychosocial and cognitive development.

Relationship Dynamics between Parent and Daughter Influence the Role Parents

Play as Mediators

As I examined the role parents in this study play in mediating their daughter's experience with hip hop media, some parents are not able to actively mediate the influence of hip hop media due to their relationship dynamics with their daughter. Thus, this aspect of Theme 2, "Parents'" Media Literacy, relationship dynamics of the parent-daughter dyads, is worth exploring. I highlight two examples of parent-daughter interaction through Sy and her mother, Miss Ballard (Figure 14), and Aaliyah and her mother, Miss Brown (Figure 15). Using the examples of these parent-daughter dyads, I illuminate how the nested layers of Ecological Systems Theory are significant in the exploration of identity construction of these Black girls. In this section I provide a glimpse of the relationship between these daughters and their mothers to contextualize the importance of relationship dynamics in engaging in critical dialogue about hip hop media influences and popular culture influences at home and in schools.

During our one-on-one interview, I asked the girls to describe the relationship they have with their parent in one or two words and Table 7 (below) depicts the words each participant chose. Sy and Aaliyah's word choices highlight the nature of the relationship between themselves and their mothers. Also reflective of this dynamic, is the nature of conversation employed by these mothers, also indicated on the table.

Table 7: Relationship Dynamics

Parent-Daughter Dyad	Daughter's Description of the Relationship	Type of Conversation
Sy/Miss Ballard	"Reflectively Different"	Interrogations
Dakota/Mrs. Johnson	"Loving and Trusting"	Hybrid (Direct/Indirect)

		Conversations
Audrey/Mr. Faust	"Free"	Indirect Conversations
Kai/Jamarcus Douglass	"Trusting and Loving"	Hybrid (Direct/Indirect) Conversations
Mya/Devon Alexander	"Simply Siblings"	Indirect Conversations
Milan/Mrs. Carter	"Supportive and Connected"	Indirect Conversations
Aaliyah and Miss Brown	"Hostile"	None

When I asked Sy to describe the relationship between her and her mother, she said it was "reflectively different" because they could both "see traits and characteristics within one another that are alike, but we are two totally different women." When I asked Aaliyah to describe the relationship between her and her mother, she simply responded "hostile." When I probe her further, she stated that she and her mother do not talk and when they do they argue. I provide a clearer picture of the tension between these two participants and their mothers in the figures below. Sy and Aaliyah had the most tension in their home life. Figures 15 and 16 detail the relationship between these girls and their mothers. These profiles are constructed using the data from both the daughters and the mothers. Figure 14 below describes the relationship between Sy and Miss Ballard.

Figure 14: Miss Ballard's Profile: A Contentious Relationship

Miss Ballard had Sy as a teenager and because of such she chose not to finish high school. Sy graduated with honors from CPA, with recognitions such as National Honor's Society and graduating in the top ten percent of her high school class. I am unsure if the accomplishments Sy was able to achieve or the trajectory that she was on created the problem, but of all the BYP participants Sy had one of the most tension-filled relationships with her parent.

On numerous occasions, outside of the group sessions, Sy would text my cellular phone expressing the need to vent. Over the course of BYP, Sy continuously vented about the tension in her home. Towards the end of our time together in BYP, she claimed that she was relatively non-responsive during tiffs with her mom in hopes of minimizing the argument, but this, according to Sy, only made each situation worse. During our one-on-one interview, I asked Sy questions about her perspective of the conversation between her and her mother in relation to media. Sy explained the dynamic, "When it's just me and her there we talk, a lot. But when it's me, her and her husband there, we don't really talk at all." Sy was not fond of her stepfather. This was not a new relationship; he has been a part of Sy's life since she was in elementary school. However, Sy has witnessed her mother being continuously physically assaulted by this man, which has created much distance between her and her stepfather. Based on a few comments she made during sessions, it seems these domestic violence episodes also altered the way she views her mother. She used works like"weak" or "vulnerable" to describe her mother; unable, or "unwilling," according to Sy, to leave the relationship. Sy is asking, "Why wouldn't she choose herself over him? Why wouldn't she choose me over him?" She has concluded: I shouldn't have had to see that!" Maybe Miss Ballard could sense the disdain from her daughter in their daily interactions. She has apparently forgiven her husband, why couldn't Sy? In a BYP session, Sy once stated,

> ". . . at some point you just…you gotta know your worth. . . Cuz my
> mom and her husband, they been together since, like, well, yea,
> elementary school you can say [since Sy was in elementary school]. . . .I
> feel like, she feel because they been together that long—that's who she
> gotta be with. Like, that's the person for her. But, you know, I hint at
> the fact that like, should could still find somebody else. Like, throw

those hints out there, but she don't catch 'em. . ."

During one out-of-session conversation between me and Sy, she stated that her

mother asked Sy why she would leave the living room when her stepfather

entered or would stay in her room when he was home. When Sy did not respond

to those questions, this only seemed to create an even bigger problem. Miss

Ballard, according to Sy, began to berate, saying things like: "You think you're

better than everyone, but you ain't shit."

Source: Field notes, Personal interview

Although Figure 14 is a lengthy profile, it provides a clear snapshot of the

relationship dynamic between Miss Ballard and Sy. What is more concerning about this

problematic parent-daughter relationship is the reason Sy gave during the pre-interview

questionnaire for wanting to participate in BYP. Her response to that question was, "I like

having open discussions about relevant issues." The Beyond Your Perception collective

provided a much-needed avenue for Sy to have the open discussions with other adults

about relevant issues.

While I have provided a glimpse into Aaliyah's and Miss Brown's relationship

above in my discussion of why Aaliyah chose "hostile" to describe the relationship with

her mother, Miss Brown's profile in Figure 15 (below) provides more details about their

relationship dynamic.

Figure 15: Miss Brown's Profile: Two Ships Passing in the Night

Aaliyah was the first BYP participant to voice her concerns about the relationship with her mother. In BYP's "The Masks We Wear" activity, Aaliyah recognized that some people view her as "mean" or "aggressive." She admitted to recognizing that when she talks to peers she hits them as well. When I asked her why she did so, she said that those are actions she both witnesses and experiences from her mother. Aaliyah and her mother are from the Caribbean and when Aaliyah was five years old, her mother moved to the United States in hopes of providing her children with the "American Dream." In order to become a U.S. citizen one must first live in the United States for five years. So when Miss Brown was assisted with her paperwork, the aide did not include her children and she was unable to file for their citizenship until her five-year residency concluded. Around the same time, Mr. Jackson, Aaliyah's father, took a job promotion and relocated to the Dominican Republic. Aaliyah, living with her maternal grandmother and older brother, naturally felt abandoned by both of her parents. She did not see her mother for five years after she relocated. She did not see her father for another ten. The contempt Aaliyah had for her mother by the time she was brought to the United States never dissipated, and both Aaliyah and Miss Brown recognize the tension between them. Both shared, in their personal interviews, great attributes about the other but overall the relationship needs mediation and healing.

Source: Field notes, Personal interview

The relationship dynamic between Miss Brown and Aaliyah suggests the need for the creation of more critical spaces like BYP.

My personal interview with Miss Brown indicates that she is the most media literate parent that I interviewed. However, the relationship dynamic between her and her daughter prevented her from sharing her knowledge and experience. For example, one unique issue for Black girls, that BYP discussed, is colorism—a hierarchy that is based on color, or skin tone. When one examines the foundational controlling scripts, they reference racialized-gender-based physical attributes. For example, Mammy is described as an overweight, dark-skin woman. A contemporary example of colorism can be found in music videos with the intentional selection of fairer skinned, or ethnically mixed, models rather than darker skinned models. Along with the skin tone, models that have long, straight hair are cast over women with naturally kinky hair. These casting selections favor a particular type of "beauty" and this is the ideal offered for viewers. In my interview with Miss Brown, she discussed colorism in her home country, which she referred to as being "racial," which is to say that a color hierarchy is also widespread on her island. But when I asked her if this was a conversation that she shared with Aaliyah, she told me, "No."

Miss Brown also referenced Saartje Baartman, the South African Hottentot Venus, and she compared her to contemporary examples of the racialized-gender gaze concentrated on the Black female body on television and in music videos. Again, when I commented that BYP discussed Hottentot Venus and asked if she and Aaliyah have had conversations about her, her response was, "No." It appeared as though tension between Miss Brown and Aaliyah prevents them from engaging in even indirect conversations, especially since much of what she and I discussed in our interview pertains to lessons that I covered with the girls in BYP. Miss Brown's critical media literacy could have served

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as a great tool for her daughter. Her high level of criticality also calls the attention to the need for schools and youth workers to fill these critical educative gaps since some parents may not be media literate, or, like Miss Brown, they may not share such information with their children.

Miss Brown is definitely a media literate parent, however, the relationship tension between her and Aaliyah prevented their critical engagement. In her pre-interview questionnaire, when Aaliyah was asked what she hoped to gain from participating in BYP, she responded, "I expect to gain more knowledge about my heritage;" a heritage that her mother was well educated to impart in her. Aaliyah is undoubtedly one example of a youth without a positive home life, lacking the ability to participate in open dialogue that is very significant for her racialized-gender identity construction.

Implications for Pedagogical Intervention

This section provides data that responds to the third research question: What implications might the racialized-gender identities the girls represent have for pedagogical intervention? Through the discussions and activities in BYP, personal interviews with daughters and parents, and reflections with Nina, these we created a collaborative and empowering space, the BYP critical media collective that can show other teachers the value of hip hop pedagogical interventions to assist Black adolescents girls to become more critically media literate. Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2002) define culturally relevant pedagogy as education curriculum and practice that responds to the particular academic, cultural, and social needs of marginalized students. Utilizing a hip hop pedagogy with youth who engage in, are influenced by, and construct identity through hip hop media is culturally relevant pedagogy. Further, these findings suggest the

need for such culturally relevant pedagogical intervention that focus on the racialized-gender identities of Black girls. Womanist Hip Hop Pedagogy is an extension of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Looking Back

In our third Focus Group, the girls stated that they find themselves analyzing media they consume outside of the Beyond Your Perception collective. This is a practice they did not engage in prior to joining our collective. Below are Aaliyah's comments indicating how the girls analyze media outside of BYP.

> "Like if we see something we will extend a shout out to each other like 'Bruh! Like, like we, we did that.' We watch TV or listen to music and we start connecting it back to our convos in BYP. Like we like talking about being black girls now so I feel like that's really empowering." (Personal interview)

When we began BYP, we wanted to teach the girls how to be analytical and critical of the media they engaged with and Aaliyah's comments in her personal interview indicate that we were successful in achieving this goal. She refers to extending "shout outs" which means if they are engaging with hip hop media alone, like at home for instance, they may text message, call, or connect with one of their BYP sisters through social media to discuss the song lyric or image further. It is Aaliyah who explicitly states that they make connections from the media they engage with back to the "convos," or conversations, we have in Beyond Your Perception. Figure 16 (below) provides more the girls comments on what they took away from the collective.

Figure 16: Girls' Reflection on the Beyond Your Perception Collective

Sy	"Like we talked about though provoking stuff. It like it wasn't the same thing every time. Like it was really intriguing. Like and it would like leave me with like thinking about stuff. But uh, I felt like it was needed, for me." (Personal interview) "Like, it's not just a group where you just come in and talk about stuff that you're going through and stuff. Like, normal groups, you would just be talking about, like, what we go through. But, here we learn stuff. So, yeah, the group is very versatile." (Focus Group 3)
Mya	"I don't talk about other about stuff like this to nobody except like my best friend so it's nice to talk to somebody. 'Cause everybody go through stuff in their own family and how you how you could help overcome their troubles and like problems." (Personal interview)
Aaliyah	". . .these conversations, like they're relevant to life. Every time I go there, I learn something else. I get to discuss, like issues. I get to discuss things that I necessarily won't sit and talk with like my girls about. Like we talk to each other [about] these types of [issues], like we real 'legit.'. . .and now it's like all of us talk to each other a lot. Like a lot a lot." (Personal interview)
Kai	"We like y'all 'cause we can relate to y'all" (Personal interview).

In Figure 16 I have quoted these passages so extensively because they are the voices of

the participants speaking about the effectiveness of BYP as a pedagogical intervention for

Black girls. They are expressing insights that they did not think about before. In our final

focus group the girls individually used terms like "encouraging," "informing," "therapeutic," and "uplifting" to describe Beyond Your Perception and the facilitators, Nina and me.

Theme 3: Media Literate Teachers

Beyond Your Perception permitted those who participated in this collaborative, and Nina and myself to identify two significant dimensions of teachers' critical media literacy that were important for the success of the BYP collective and that are possible for other teachers to develop. Teachers can learn to use a) the historical controlling scripts that remain evident in hop media representations of Black women and girls to empower girls in generating counter-narratives. b) Teachers can build upon ways girls resist hip hop influences to support girls' racialized-gender identity constructions. For example, I asked the participants to write "Just Because I Am" statements as an ice-breaker activity for one of our sessions. The girls were to reflect on the idea that just because they are identified in one way does not inherently define them another way. Milan, eagerly, responded, "Just because I am black does not make me ignorant!" As an educative space BYP provided opportunities for the participants and the participant-observers/teachers and parents to grapple with and discuss our varied experiences, perspectives, and ideas about hip hop media and social current events. Womanism is the lens through which I explored teachers' media literacy as a culturally relevant pedagogical response to various expressions implicit in the cultural movement of hip hop. BYP enabled the girls to wrestle with the feelings attached to the experiences they had as Black girls. Like Milan's declaration that Black does not equate to ignorance, through both an historical and contemporary examination we were able to analyze these ideas and representations in the

media. Another example my girls illuminated for me was a different spin on body size. As a curvy woman I never considered (which a few of the girls informed me) how they feel ostracized by the music because rap artists lyrical content describes women with curves, namely big busts and butts. The pressure to adhere to these strict body sizes is evidenced in the recent string of deaths related to butt injections. For many women of all ethnicities and races, especially since Nicki Minaj began rapping and her backside became a largely debated topic of conversation, women have acquired butt injections. Many women turned to back alley "doctors" all claiming that they could make their backsides as voluptuous as Nicki Minaj's. One rap video model, "Pebblez," was arrested in relation to a butt injection homicide in which a woman died after concrete was injected into her posterior (Mohr, 2014). This example is just one indication of how far the images and themes in hip hop media have penetrated into so-called "mainstream" society. Television advertisements for "Brazilian Butt Lifting" exercise and padded underwear are common place. The classroom should be used as a space for critical thinking in order to analyze the circumstances and context of the students' everyday lives. In BYP, we used a Womanist Hip Hop Pedagogy approach to critique these increasingly popular, but degrading, practices.

Teachers Can Create Collaborative and Emancipatory Spaces

Beyond Your Perception provided the collaborative and emancipatory space for the participants and facilitators to grow and to become more comfortable with who we are. Kai's comments on choosing to come to BYP but not wanting to go to school acknowledges the hard work that Nina and I shared to ensure that BYP was an environment the girls would want to be in. Kai said:

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"… I do like coming [to BYP]. Like, I feel like coming. I feel like coming here because I like y'all. I guess, if I liked my teachers a lot more…a lot more than I do, I would want to come. Yeah! Yeah! That makes sense. I don't like them, so I don't want to come." (Focus Group 3)

Kai's affirmation aligns with the existing literature in urban education that underscores how important relationships are among students of color and their teachers (Dance, 2002). As teachers, we created a judgment free zone to reflect, share, and to question who we were and who we wanted to be. By connecting Black girls identity to the community through an historical exploration of the archetypical images of Black womanhood we were able to create and maintain positive self-identity.

In this chapter the profiles of the seven girls show how BYP participants experience and resist hip hop media influences and how parents, four mothers, one father, and two brothers mediate these influences, through the use of profiles. For this theme, I profile the co-creators, facilitators, participant-observers, and teachers of Beyond Your Perception; Nina and I. In Chapter 3, I provided a snapshot of both Nina and myself, as significant participants in this research. Since we came to this work with multiple personal and professional experiences which provided the desire to create BYP, a more detailed look at the co-creators of this collective is in Appendices I and J.

Our collective backgrounds are critical in the discussion of BYP because as Black women, who have many experiences working with Black girls, we understand, as insiders, how visibly invisible our racialized-gender can make us. The double-jeopardy of being both black and female in society has continued to create and reinforce an American culture sated with derogatory representations of Black women. The normative definition of Black womanhood is not self-defined and media representations of Black women

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remain monolithic and mostly derogatory—like much of the social science research literature (King & Mitchell, 1995).

Youth actively construct their identities. This critical process shapes life trajectories of adolescents and can present unique challenges for Black adolescent girls, who are positioned in society to negotiate ideals of self when presented with hegemonic language and images representing other people's visions of Black girlhood. However, many initiatives and research are addressed to the identity development of Black boys. In my experience as a former teacher, many of our schools' initiatives (clubs and programs, and mentorship) were directed specifically to Black boys. Womanists are triply concerned with women, the Black race, male and female, and humanity. An initiative framed with a Womanist consciousness, would focus on how to develop the identity of youth and would adhere to the specific cultural and social needs of the youth involved.

Additionally, I noticed an opportunity to create something new and original to meet the needs of girls after an initial conversation with the director of the Institute that allowed me to work with their college preparatory students. This was the impetus for my collaboration with Nina to create BYP. As Black women, having worked with women and girls of color, we knew the unique experiences that we faced and it is for those reasons that we decided to embark upon this work.

Nina and I were deliberate in creating a space and a pedagogy in which we minimized the power differential between adult and young adult, researcher and researched, teacher and student. We were intentional in sharing our experiences and stories to add to the collective; providing an avenue for young, African American women to voice the ways in which their real lives disrupt the dominant narrative presented by the

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media and corporate controlled popular culture. There is a dearth of research that actually examines how hip hop media influences the ways that hip hop media can influence girls' racialized-gender identity construction. When parents and community members, educators and youth workers discount the importance of identity development through media consumption, these socializing agents fail to equip students with the knowledge that they can, and should be, critical consumers and that they can create their own definitions of self. Through the collaborative space that was co-created with Nina and the girls, the participants expressed strong feelings of connection and emancipation, represented in Figure 16 above.

When Mrs. Johnson and I discussed Dakota's racialized-gender identity awareness, she said: "I do notice that a lot of those things have been coming out lately and it's probably because she's been in this group and she's had that opportunity to kind of reflect on things." Mrs. Johnson continued,

> "Dakota is so quick to be like 'Oh, those kids, they're so stupid' [in reference to her schooling experiences] but she's only said good things about your group. And she makes a point of going. She blows stuff off, but she's never once said anything bad about this group. I think it's helpful for them to see other people be vulnerable too. To see people they look up to being vulnerable is helpful for them to see."

Mrs. Johnson spoke to the effectiveness of Beyond Your Perception in assisting her daughter reflecting on her identity and experience positive self-esteem and pride in her racialized-gender identity. Indeed, Dakota emphasized the collective as "therapeutic;" a space where she could "talk everything out." BYP was collaborative, activist, and intentional in forming a collective to explore personal identity construction in relationship to representation of African American women in the media. The units and lessons were intentionally situated within an historical context and took into account the

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intersections of gender, race, and class. Rooted in a Womanist framework, BYP espoused the idea of community over individuality. For example, our closing mantra affirms, "My sister, myself" to ensure us all that BYP is a sisterhood and that our identities are connected to each other, to the sisters who had come before us and those we would band together with us to "spark a revolution," as our mission statement declares. Also, each session opened with a check-in which provided an equal status context because both Nina and I "checked-in." We shared our "Praise Reports," or good news, or our not-so-good news, when we were frustrated, overwhelmed, angered, or hurting. By allowing the girls into our lives, they were more comfortable allowing us into theirs. This intentional destabilizing of power mobilized the collaborative nature of the collective, which the girls considered "open" and "therapeutic." This healing dimension of BYP is also an important feature of a Womanist framework. I hoped to provide insight into how one researches the experience of Black girls so their voices could be heard and Beyond Your Perception was the pedagogical innovation that made this possible.

At the end of BYP these girls touted being aware of who they are. Their overall response to the question posed during the final focus group regarding what the collective should focus on with another cohort of girls was, overwhelmingly, that BYP should focus on identity. Many times over the course of BYP these girls reported that they did not know themselves; they discussed finding themselves; and that they are now standing in self-awareness. That was the objective of the collective and it is also what the girls said they got from the collective: "knowledge…about Black women and about myself." These girls were able to articulate the importance of knowing the multifaceted nature of their racial, gendered, spiritual, and academic selves.

The purposes for which these BYP participants signed up to participate in the collective may indicate that they were already yearning for a space in which to relate to others, release negative thoughts and experiences, to be their authentic selves and to have those selves appreciated, affirmed, and applauded. However, it was the role and responsibility of me and Nina to ensure that this collective provided that experience.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Should Include Youth Culture

Urban youth cultures must be embraced within the context of education. While the student population is rapidly becoming browner, the teaching faculty remains primarily white. A teachers' Whiteness can mediate their role as teacher in a diverse school setting. Hip hop media may be an important cultural link White teachers have to Black cultural practices. Teacher perception affects both teacher expectations as well as how they discipline students. Therefore, teachers' media literacy is critical to their effectiveness in relating positively to youth and aiding youth in becoming critical thinkers, especially through their engagement with hip hop media.

We began BYP with an historical examination of the foundational stereotypes of Black women, "Jezebel," "Mammy," "Matriarch," and the "Welfare mother." That is where we chose to begin the program. However, as this was a collaborative space, we asked the girls if there were any contemporary stereotypes that they could connect to the historical tropes. Throughout this collective, even well after the Historical Understandings unit, the girls were able to make connections between current scripts and their historical antecedents. At the close of one BYP session, Audrey stated, "It's a never ending cycle." When I asked her to continue, she explained that schools just give them

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(students) the "history thing," but they never connect that history to what is happening

today. Kai echoed these sentiments in Focus Group 3:

> "Yeah – like the whole learning your history type thing. I think that that's
> important cause, I mean, in school, we really didn't repeat the same thing,
> like, at like, I guess a higher level. It's not really even a higher level, but
> you don't really learn new material. The history thing here– all of us
> learned stuff." (Focus Group 3)

Audrey went on to say that BYP made learning, understanding, and applying knowledge

easier when she was able to connect the dots between the past and the present, and she

also found that she enjoyed learning history a lot more since we used the television and

music that they listened to in our discussions and allowed them to dialogue about how

they make meaning of the media they consume.

Resounding issues from the participants expressed are the unique issues that their

racialized-gender identity creates for them. One such issue was colorism, the concept of

skin color stratification that is rooted in Western ideals of beauty. While they all agreed

that there would undoubtedly be commonalities between their adolescent experiences and

that of peers outside of the African American community, difficulty accepting their skin

complexion and hair texture, are issues most prevalently found in the Black community.

In her personal interview, Kai explicitly stated the need for programs geared toward

Black girls to focus on positive racialized-gender identity construction:

> ". . .identity is one of the main things. Even with all the light skin versus
> dark skin thing or whatever. Like people start hating themselves or
> whatever 'cause they feel like they're supposed to be a certain way and
> stuff or whatever. Which is not necessarily true. And, with identity, once
> you feel comfortable with yourself like, it's just rewarding." (Personal
> interview)

As teachers, facilitators, and co-creators of BYP, we specifically focused on the

identity constructions of Black girls. We opened the discussion about their

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identity complexes by situating conversations about the meaning of beauty,

relationships, and success in hip hop media. During our Media Analysis unit,

Nina showed clips from TV shows like "Scandal," "Love and Hip Hop: Atlanta,"

and "Being Mary Jane" to discuss such issues. We also examined music videos to

discuss the ideal standard of beauty in music videos and the implications of that

ideal for girls their age and younger. Situating our conversations in their

experiences proved successful, as the girls were active collaborators in the process

and were always willing to share their personal experiences and perspectives,

even when they differed from the rest of their peers. This kind of self-agency is a

feature of Womanism (Tsuruta, 2012).

Utilizing a media literacy approach, informed by Womanist Hip Hop Pedagogy, is

consistent with culturally relevant pedagogy and offers possibilities for social action that

can restructure classroom politics. The education community is seeking better ways to

inform educators about how youth make meaning of who they are. This study adds to the

research that supports the need for a culturally relevant curriculum approach.

Teachers Need Media Literacy Education

Miss Brown and Mr. Faust were the most vocal about the role of parents in their

children's socialization, while all parents explored the role schools should and could play

in instructing youth on popular culture and education. These are the implications for

schools. Mr. Faust stated, "There's a lack in the school system. The same lack is going

on at home." Mrs. Johnson echoed these sentiments:

> "These kids have to learn responsibility because some of them may not get
> it at home. . . and some of them that do have their kids, they might not be
> close enough with their parents to talk about certain things, so I do feel. . .
> it's now necessary because if they really want these kids to succeed, they

got to help them filter through a lot of these stuff because I'm telling you a lot of that music dumbs down our culture and I feel like an idiot by saying that because I listen to it but I sorta feel like I'm smart enough already to filter through it." (Personal interview)

Culturally relevant pedagogy, and culturally competent and media literate educators, are vital to creating critically conscious students and citizens. As Audrey highlighted in the previous section, Nina and my ability to discuss history in connection with hip hop media enabled the girls to become more engaged in the learning process, and we found that the girls began to call, text and share in BYP sessions ways in which they had begun to question messages in media, on television, in music, and on social media sites, when they were not in BYP.

The Beyond Your Perception collective provided a platform for these youth to develop, or strengthen their voice through an historical analysis of the portrayals of African American women in the media and create counter-narratives to these hegemonic portrayals. In the face of malevolence, growing poverty, increasing disease, and rampant violence, students need not only to know the three R's—reading, writing, and arithmetic—they must also learn how to think for themselves, how to identify new social possibilities, and pursue the collective good. Despite societal inequities, and political and economic injustices, critical consciousness allows individuals to join with others to address these challenges and sustain efforts to transform society. Youth today must learn to take pride in their beliefs and communities and to stand up for their values and morals. Adolescents all across the nation fall victim to peer and social pressures daily. Schools and classrooms should employ critically conscious values and techniques to address these social and pedagogical challenges, and it is my belief that we, as educators, must reorient

education towards promoting greater critical consciousness among our youth. Teaching critical media literacy skills translates to criticality across the disciplines.

Summary

As a Black woman working with Black girls, I attempted to reconcile both objectivity and subjectivity in this work. Utilizing Womanist consciousness allowed me to be both objective and subjective in my exploration of Black girls' experiences with hip hop media and the role of parents as mediators in that experience. The participants of the critical media literacy collective, Beyond Your Perception, are African American girls who both represent and resist the hegemony prevalent in hip hop media. They represent the dominant narratives within the cultural movement by ascribing to cultural mores like fashion trends, hairstyles and language. They also consciously choose to resist the stereotypical imagery and were able to compose powerful counter-narratives that challenge the monolithic, disparaging depictions of Black women in the media. The data indicate that parents engage in hip hop media by listening to the music and watching television shows and music videos. However, the ways in which they engage their daughters in dialogue pertaining to the messages within hip hop media are sporadic and suggests the need for parents to become media literate. Exploring the Black parent-daughter relationship affirms the need for programs such as Beyond Your Perception, because while parents discuss hip hop media they do not analyze the media for deeper meaning and criticality about the media they are consuming. More collaborative spaces are needed for Black girls to critically analyze their unique position as both Black people and females. Schools and teacher education programs need the capacity to implement

culturally relevant pedagogy that include critical media literacy from a Womanist and

ecological systems theory perspective.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

My purposes for this research were threefold: I wanted to investigate how Black

girls are impacted by hip hop media and how they resist it, if they do, by providing a

platform for Black girls to express their experiences with hip hop in their own voices.

Further, in this study I sought to explore the role of parents as insiders within the cultural

movement of hip hop and as possible mediating influences. Third, I also wanted to

explore critical media literacy as a possible method of intervention. In this final chapter,

first I discuss the major findings of the research in relation to the theoretical frameworks

in which this study is grounded: Womanism and ecological systems theory. Then I

discuss the implications of what can be gleaned from this study with regard to how the

findings can be applied to practice—in parent-daughter relationships and school contexts.

Next, I review the significance of this study's contributions to education research by

situating the findings within the broader context of educational policy

Table 8: Summary of Findings

Research Questions	**Data Sources**	**Findings**	**Theme**
How do Black adolescent girls experience, embody and/or resist hegemony in the media?	• Interviews • Focus groups • Participant observations • Documents	• Black girls experience traditional hegemonic stereotypes in hip hop media. • Black girls buy into the mores of the cultural movement of hip hop. • Black girls resist hegemony in hip hop media.	Black Girls Representin' and Resistin'

What is the role of parents in mediating the socialization influences of media on their daughters?	• Interviews • Focus groups	• Parents find hip hop media entertaining. • Parents typically engage in uncritical forms of dialogue with their daughters. • Relationship dynamics between parent and daughter influence the role parents play as mediators.	"Parents'" Media Literacy
What implications might the racialized gender identities the girls represent have for pedagogical intervention?	• Interviews • Focus groups	• Teachers can create collaborative and emancipatory spaces. • Culturally relevant pedagogy should include youth culture. • Teachers need critical media literacy education.	Media Literate Teachers Are Possible

Womanist-Ecological Perspective

I chose to situate this study within Womanism as this theoretical framework encompasses anti-oppressionism as a critical characteristic; thereby the unique issues that Black girls face within hip hop can be addressed. While feminism highlights an anti-sexist agenda and would focus on issues of misogyny in hip hop, Womanism seeks to eliminate oppressions that may not have labels. One such oppression that BYP participants discussed is colorism. This oppressive dynamic is prevalent within the cultural movement of hip hop specifically in the intentional selection of fair-skinned models over darker-skinned models for music videos.

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In addition to utilizing a Womanist perspective, this study also used ecological systems theory. Womanist logic, Maparyan (2012) posits, is ecological, which means "that truths are understood within networks: networks of truth, networks of people…" (p. 68), and she goes onto define truth as the impact that one has on another. Thus, a framework which is both Womanist and ecological allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple cultural realities of African American girls. The ecological approach maintains that individual behavior and outcomes are a result of the interplay of complex layers of the environment. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological ideology notes that an individual's perceptions and beliefs of their reality are products of the larger society. Therefore using a Womanist-ecological perspective allows one to examine the socialization experiences of adolescent girls by exploring a wide range of factors in their environment.

Chapter 3 I illuminates this ecology at play for these participants in this study (See Appendix B) in Chapter 3. At the core of the layered environment that I have delineated are the African American adolescent girls. According to Stephens et al. (2009), the emphasis on the microsystem, from a Womanist perspective, is on how social networks "are often women- (or girl-) centered, but not women- (or girl-) exclusive" (p. 169). The first layer environmental for Black girls, the microsystem, includes families, peers, school, and church; those people and institutions closest to Black girls in their everyday life experiences. It is important to examine the connections on this level as many of the hip hop generation have had children. It is their daughters, sisters, nieces, cousins, and students who are centered in this study of Black girls' experiences with hip hop. One of this study's key findings is that parents' dialogue is critical to mediate the

influence of hip hop. However, the study also found that the relationship dynamic between girls and their "parents" (including, in this case, mother, fathers or older brothers) is important, as is the media literacy of those parents. Future research, which utilizes ecological systems theory with Black girls at the center of analysis would explore the role of the peer group, especially regarding social media sites. Hip hop media has an even broader reach due to young people's engagement with expanding technology.

This study also explored the mesosystem, which includes the interplay between parents and hip hop, and this dynamic has implications for hip hop and schools-based interventions. This study explored the role of parents as mediators with regard to the impacts of hip hop media, and the data indicates ways that parents engage with hip hop media by listening to the music, for example, and by watching music videos, television, and Internet sites inspired by hip hop. Given that as the participants in the Beyond Your Perception collective effectively utilized hip hop media as a tool to both engage and educate adolescents, the implications for employing hip hop as a pedagogical tool in schools are compelling.

While this study specifically focused on the micro- and mesosystems, the impact of the other layers of the social context of these girls' environment deserve analysis. The exosystem includes the corporatization of hip hop as an industry. Black girls have no control over the institutions within the exosystem, however they are directly affected by the decisions and practices of record labels, executives, and artists. Stephens et al. (2009) contend that "because of the power of men within Hip Hop as artists, industry operatives, and consumers, their ability to influence sexual scripts for women in ways that reflect patriarchal, exploitative, or simply hedonistic desires is considerable" (p. 164). These

power players are instrumental in maintaining patriarchal notions of woman- and girlhood. Stephens et al. (2009) also maintain that using a Womanist perspective to analyze the exosystem allows the researcher the ability to examine the ways in which Black girls "simultaneously resist, reshape, and reproduce images of themselves that have been repackaged for their consumption" (p. 166) and undoubtedly an influence on their perceptions and behaviors. BYP served as an intervention which allowed the girls in this study to create counter-stories for the dominant scripts on Black womanhood, as well as for themselves.

The macrosystem includes mass media and cultural values. While record labels, executives and artists create and maintain degrading and dehumanizing portrayals of Black women, mass media disseminates these images. Hip hop is so pervasive that it transcends the borders of the urban landscape into suburbia, and expands across the borders of the United States into almost every country. It is society's cultural values that enable these portrayals to exist and transcend time and space from the foundational stereotypes to their transmuted contemporary representations. hooks (1992) noted, "Just as nineteenth-century representations of Black female bodies were constructed to emphasize that these bodies were expendable, contemporary images (even those created in Black cultural production) give a similar message" (p. 127). The final layer in this ecological systems theory is the chronosystem, which includes waves of hip hop and the time of life when one hears a particular song. Stephens et al. (2009) note that "time is not the unit of measurement used in the chronosystem" (p. 163), rather what is important here are changes in the messages from the music which have been disseminated over the history of raps' history. These messages impact the "rap story" of the parents and

daughters, that is, their affinity for and perspective of the cultural movement of hip hop. Not only have the messages changed, the exosystem highlights that the types of individuals controlling the industry have also changed over time as well.

The girls in this study are influenced by hip hop media and parents, and unquestioningly by peer groups, community institutions like church in Milan's case, and school. However, they pushed back and are consciously choosing whether to represent or resist the scripts of Black girlhood available in their multilayered environment. These systems have more fluidity than what might appear. For example, while Black girls are impacted by the people and institutions within each layer of their ecological system, intervention is possible to aid the girls in pushing back. Beyond Your Perception was a pedagogical intervention that educated the girls on the social, economic, political, and aesthetic purposes of the messages being disseminated through hip hop media, and we challenged the girls to be conscious, analytical, and questioning participants as hip hop consumers. Hip hop media has an influential on Black girls. However Black girls have power and agency, through education like that which BYP provided, to influence the social contexts of the environment around them.

For some of the participants, specifically Sy, not only are their parents a part of the hip hop generation, their grandparents are as well. The kitchen-table dialogue, espoused by Womanism, allows for all three generations to discuss hip hop media's presentation of women and the varied conversations which can stem from those representations, including discussion of sexual behaviors, relationships, self-respect, and identity. Using both Womanism and ecological systems theory allowed this study to connect the analysis of (racialized-gender) oppression to other social justice projects by

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emphasizing the connection between knowledge (of students and parent/teachers) and power (record executives/labels, artists, and fan base), and claiming and using the Black girls' voice in order to oppose the dominant narrative through the development of counter-stories. According to Stephens et al. (2009), "Womanism contributes an African American woman-centered point of view of the developing person, while the ecological model provides a complex structure for examining environmental influences on the African American female developing person" (p. 171). The integrated Womanist-ecological framework was useful for broadly framing the experience of Black girls with hip hop media and the role of the earlier hip hop generation as mediators of the cultural movement on their daughters (and sisters).

In terms of the number of participants this was a small study, however I do not want the voices of these Black girls to end with the completion of this manuscript but to be used to contribute to and link with other research studies that aim to bring the voices of Black girls to the center. Exposure to pejorative one-dimensional images of Black womanhood can be detrimental to the self-image and self-esteem of Black girls. Hip hop media inscribes historical stereotypes on the bodies of Black girls and in so doing can obstruct the ability of girls' to develop authentic racialized-gender, academic, and individual selves. Without an intervention, the girls are massively overwhelmed by the influences within their ecological network; however, this study highlights the point of interest by which these influences can be interrupted: parents' dialogue, the school and teachers' role in educating girls via critical media literacy, and the girls' awareness.

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Womanist Hip Hop Pedagogy

I developed Beyond Your Perception the way that I did because of how I understand the frameworks which inform this work. I proffer a space of hip hop Womanism as Womanism seeks to expand the discussion on oppressions and identities. Hip hop Womanism views the issues of hip hop beyond the battles of the sexes and gender wars, and highlights oppressions within the cultural movement like colorism, body size, and the commodification of hip hop. The curriculum of BYP—situating the historical antisexist and antiracist struggles of Black women within a hip hop framework—is Womanist Hip Hop Pedagogy. I designed this group with a particular curriculum set to discuss Black girls perceptions of how Black girls and women are portrayed in the media as well as the history underlying many contemporary tropes. I designed this curriculum to consider the multifaceted nature of our racialized-gender identities and the manifestations of representations in the media. We explored the history of our oppressions, and Nina and I challenged these girls to embrace their agency in terms of being who they want to be. Ladson-Billings (1995) defines culturally relevant pedagogy as education curriculum and practice that responds to the particular academic, cultural, and social needs of marginalized students. Adhering to this definition, BYP utilized a hip hop pedagogy with Black girls who engaged in, were influenced by, and constructed racialized-gender identities through hip hop media. In this way, we extended both culturally relevant pedagogy and Womanism into a Womanist Hip Hop Pedagogy.

Discussion

My role as both a participant-observer and teacher within the Beyond Your Perception collective allowed me to witness the ways in which the participants both

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represented the cultural mores of hip hop while they also chose to resist various characteristics of the cultural movement. Over the course of the implementation of this collective, three things became evident with regard to how Black girls experience, embody, and/or resist hegemony in hip hop media. First, the participants experience traditional hegemonic stereotypes in hip hop media. Strong support for claims that Black women are hypersexualized in the media can be found in analyses of the images presented by the music industry. Content analyses of the music and music videos popular among Black youth indicate that the image of women as sex objects is prevalent in media portrayals of Black women (Emerson, 2002; Stephens & Phillips, 2003; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 2002). Ward & Rivadeneyra's (2002) analysis of popular Black music videos found sexual imagery in 84 percent of the videos, with the most frequently occurring sexual behaviors involving sexual objectification. Seventy-one percent of women in these videos are dressed in provocative clothing or wear no clothing at all, and furthermore music videos present a one-dimensional image of Black womanhood, in which their singular function is to look good and be desirable to men (Emerson, 2002). Morgan (1999) notes that "through the constant barrage of hypersexualized images, the young, black female has ceased to be an anomaly in the marketplace and is now back in the slave era position of anonymous chattel" (p. 8). This is problematic because African Americans, especially women and girls, "experience the highest rate of HIV/AIDS transmission, gonorrhea, herpes, syphilis, multiple partners, unplanned pregnancy, non-voluntary intercourse, sexual abuse, and earliest stages of sexual onset" (Stephens & Few, 2007, p. 67).

The second finding regarding how Black girls experience, embody, and resist hegemony in hip hop media is that, with the possible exception of Dakota, most of the girls in this study do buy into the cultural mores of hip hop in various ways. For example, not only does Audrey not understand or recognize the influence of the artist Cassie's hip hop hairstyle on her own, but she also chooses to accept the status quo in order to maintain her personal style. Many studies have shown that African American youth are particularly vulnerable to media influence because of their high rates of media consumption (Gentile & Walsh, 2002). Black youth report watching, an average of, almost 6 hours of screen media each day (i.e., TV, videos, and/or DVDs and movies) in comparison to an average of 3 hours and 47 minutes for White youth (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2004). African-American youth are also susceptible to influence because they tend to identify closely with and imitate the behavior of characters, especially Black characters (King & Multon, 1996). Due to their increased exposure to and identification with media content, African-American girls may be particularly vulnerable to internalizing media messages that emphasize the importance of beauty and appearance for girls and women.

Another example of the influence of hip hop media in the lives of these girls is in their selection of pseudonyms in this study. All of the participants had the opportunity to create their own pseudonym. Six of the girls made up pseudonyms, the other one requested that I choose a name for her. Sy Ballard's last name comes from the character Jake Ballard on the television show "Scandal." Milan Carter and Aaliyah Jackson's names are partially derived from music artists: Carter represents R&B singer, Beyonce's

surname after marrying rap artist Jay-Z (Shawn Carter), and the name Aaliyah selected

represents this participant's love of the music of the late R&B artist, Aaliyah.

Third, the girls also resisted hip hop hegemony by choosing which artists and

songs to listen to and by not listening to those songs that for them lacked "substance."

They also consciously chose not to demonstrate behaviors prevalent in hip hop media,

like fighting. As a teacher in BYP, I developed ways to help these girls resist hegemony

by highlighting the power of writing counter-stories. Counter-stories, Baszile (2009)

explains, are "told from the perspective of the marginalized and are intended to challenge

the universality and often the efficacy of the majoritarian story, not simply in its context

but also in its very structure" (p. 10-11). Delgado (1989) explains that counter-stories are

used to uncover the subjugated stories of the marginalized as well as a strategy for

analyzing the dominant narrative, which serves to maintain hegemony in racial and other

forms. Aaliyah's counter-story illustrates resistance from that dominant narrative. As

Baszile (2009) explains, "stories are ultimately the invention and negotiation of

identities" (p. 13).

The BYP participants experience the controlling scripts of Black womanhood in

traditionally stereotypical ways and often recognize the consistent damaging

representations of Black women in the media. Beyond Your Perception provided

opportunities for them to analyze and critique the media they consumed and to discuss

the messages within the media, their meanings, and what messages they believe need to

be represented through the creation of counter-stories.

Designing this study, I was interested not only in how Black girls experience

hegemony in hip hop media, but also the role of parents as mediators of hip hop media

influence. I defined parents not in the biological sense, but as any family member who was influential in the girls' psycho-social development. My introduction to hip hop and rap music was through a young, Black man in a space dominated by young, Black men. My brother, four years my senior, had a large role in shaping my self-identity in the midst of loving hip hop. He understood the messages, and even if he himself represented, that is to say, embraced, those messages, he always talked to me about the type of girl I should not be. His concern included the types of places I could not go, the movies he was concerned about me watching, or even music he thought was too racy for me. He encouraged me to resist. Conversations between parents and daughters stemming from the lyrical content of the music as educative dialogue, is so critical because the influences are much broader than just music and television. Hip hop media opened the door for these parents to discuss identity, sexuality, drug use, individuality, standards of beauty, and more. Instead of stereotypical tropes serving only as an endorsement for reckless behavior, for the girls whose parents engage them in critical dialogue, these media representations serve as a buffer because the forms of dialogue these girls engage in with their parents helps the girls to view television and listen to music primarily for entertainment purposes. However, the findings also indicate that whether parents engage in direct, indirect, or hybrid conversations with their daughters or conversations that are more like interrogations, few questions are exchanged between these adolescent girls and their parent. Indeed the parents in this study are most often engaging in uncritical dialogue with their daughters/sisters. On the other hand, BYP served as a space for critical consumption of hip hop media. When asked, throughout the program and in the one-on-one interview, if they have the types of analytical discussions that we had in BYP,

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the participants almost aggravatedly, exclaimed, "No!" Mya once stated, "I don't know why you keep asking us if our parents talk like this. We don't talk like this any place but here. Not school. Not home. Only here" (Focus Group 2).

Utilizing ecological systems theory aided in keeping the individual context of each girl in mind while also situating her within societal conceptions of Blackness, girlhood, adolescence, Atlanta (as a popular hip hop media site), and the wider society. Aaliyah's lack of positive interaction with her mother, yet her ability to resist representing the monolithic discourse of Black womanhood indicates stronger systems at work in her ecology. As with several other participants, a large part of Aaliyah's ecology may be her own personal resources or what she received from the earlier years with her grandmother. In the face of family adversity her ability to persevere as a positive, personable, and driven young lady suggests the need for research to provide an arena that allows the voices of Black female youth, who stand out among the common discourse on Black girlhood, to be heard.

The parent-daughter dyads, presented in Figures 15 and 16 of Chapter 4 each have important implications for the school's role in supporting young people's critical media literacy and for creating spaces for critical interrogation of media influences on girls' racialilzed-gender identity. The parent-daughter relationship dynamic is also critical to understanding the ways in which mediating conversations can take place with parents, and these dynamics between parents and daughters also underscore the importance of the relationship between teachers and students, especially when students' parents are not media literate or are unavailable to support them. This is because youth desire interpersonal connections with their teachers to support their academic experiences.

Building strong relationships with the girls enabled us as facilitators/teachers to establish a creative critical media learning space.

While I explored how Black girls experience hegemony in hip hop media and their parents' role in mediating the influences in hip hop, I was also interested in if the girls racialized-gender identity might have implications for pedagogical intervention. Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) assert that, "as classrooms across the country become increasingly diverse, determining how to connect in significant ways across multiple lines of difference may be the greatest challenge facing teachers" (p. 88). While public schools' student population is rapidly increasing by Black and Brown students, the teaching faculty remains primarily White. These differences in schools' racial composition may be the cause of the lack of "robust learning opportunities" that cause, as Winn (2011) explains, many youth of color to "not develop the critical literacy skills that would enable them to critique their own experiences" (p. 110). Schools need to create collaborative and emancipatory spaces, and teachers need to be trained in media literacy in order to engage in the complex lives of young people.

According to Lipsitz (1994) "our discussions of youth culture will be incomplete if we fail to locate them" within the racialized-gender "social crisis of our time, but our understanding of that crisis will also be incomplete if we fail to learn the lessons that young people are trying to teach through their dance, dress, speech and visual imaging" (p. 18). Therefore, education needs to cultivate, on all educational levels, an understanding of the world and its institutions (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004). Hammer (1995) explained that educators, parents, and youth workers—adults—need to learn "along with our students" in an effort to "understand the complex codes of television,

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while analyzing and questioning pathological kinds of behavior like the glorification of violence (and the absence of ethics communicated by the programming)" (p. 36). Although I co-created a curriculum with Nina for our first unit on Historical Understandings, the second unit on Media Analysis was co-created by the girls. Collaboratively, we used our discussions in BYP to help us choose hip hop media to analyze. We chose issues to explore further based on the dialogue in the BYP sessions. We examined music videos and song lyrics the girls provided on the Favorite Song Worksheet (See Appendix F). Nina and I intentionally situated our pedagogy in youth culture and employed media literacy skills to teach the girls to be media literate.

Implications for Practice

Hammer (1995) implores educators to aid youth in becoming analytical, while still enjoying their television shows, to enable them to translate "these critical insights into other kinds of learning and expression" (p. 36) and this is the method we used in BYP. We never criticized the girls for listening to or watching the media that they did, we, however, implored them to be critical of all the messages they were consuming and to question the motives behind why those messages were being disseminated. Allowing the girls to introduce an image, song, television show, or movie aided in creating the collaborative nature of the collective and also enabled Nina and I to learn from the girls as well as alongside of them.

Nina and I were intentional and deliberate in creating this emancipatory learning environment, and we were the type of students we wanted the girls to be. We asked them questions, we asked for clarification, and we were always willing to admit that we did not

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have an answer to their questions. As a collective, we talked together, cried together, and fellowshipped together monthly outside of our meeting space at the university. Not only was the collective active for fourteen weeks when it was initially supposed to operate for ten weeks but afterwards we also maintained monthly fellowships (gatherings) throughout the summer before the girls went away to college. These fellowships were opportunities for Womanist "kitchen-table" dialogue, as described by Phillips (2006):

> "The table is an invitation to become part of a group of amicably comprised of heterogeneous elements and unified by the pleasure and nourishment of food and drink." (p. xxvii)

As I type this section, I am receiving group text messages from Milan, Aaliyah, and Sy asking for the collective to meet over the Thanksgiving break, when they will be home for the holiday. Beyond Your Perception is not only a collective, it is a sisterhood. However, this sisterhood was only created through the deliberate intention of Nina and myself, to make BYP a collaborative and emancipatory space in which to teach Black girls to become media literate through the critical Womanist thinking about media they engage with, and to teach them that they can, and should, create counter-narratives to challenge or resist hegemonic stereotypes in their lived experience.

Hill (2009) implores teachers to "resist the urge to position themselves sole arbiters of culture when engaging in critical dialogue with students" (p. 123), but instead understand that students enter the classroom not as culture deficient, but with culture abounding. Therefore, teachers must build on the culture that students bring to the classroom. Creating collaborative and emancipatory spaces for Black youth, specifically Black girls, enables students to engage in classroom dynamics and learning, as well as offer their voices. Schools serve as a great space in which to discuss, analyze, and write

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about the context of the students' lives and utilizing hip hop as a pedagogical tool can also serve to open the door for other possibilities.

In order for educators to utilize culturally relevant pedagogy, I contend that teacher education programs should include media literacy education for pre- and in-service teachers. Teacher educator Paul Gathercoal explained in his presentation at "Summit 2000: Children, youth and the media beyond the millennium":

> "Since the commercial media define much of the educator's world, it is difficult for educators to know how to address the media. Teachers have never been taught how to 'teach the media.' Largely media education is ignored because no one has addressed it in the past and so many educators think it must be something that parents and caregivers need to address in the home. Media studies programs are necessary for developing in students the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to be responsible citizens in a free society." (p. 4)

In order for youth to become media literate, teachers must first understand the role of media as an influence in the lives of their students. Teachers must also learn how to decipher and decode the messages implicit within various media forms. Moreover, gaining the skills of critical media literacy will also aid youth in critiquing the social conditions of their everyday lives. Beyond Your Perception was participatory, practical, and collaborative and as a result bridged the gap between the theory and practice of critical media literacy. The work of our collective has strong implications for culturally relevant pedagogy and teacher education. Using hip hop as a pedagogical tool, Land and Stovall (2009) state, "…hip hop potentially teaches educators about the way in which young urban folk negotiate identity" (p. 3) and may be a medium by which youth come to, or are taught to, critique educational disenfranchisement. Just like the BYP

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participants created counter-stories to the hegemony of Black womanhood, hip hop stands as an option to be a counter-story to traditional school curricula.

For these girls, instead of stereotypical tropes serving as an endorsement for reckless behavior it served as a buffer because the girls' dialogue with parents aided in the girls, primarily, viewing television and listening to music for entertainment purposes. Further, the dynamic of the interaction between parent and youth is critical to the ways in which conversations are taking place and how they are being had. The implications for the dynamics between parent and daughter are also critical in the relationship between teachers and students in that youth desire interpersonal connections with educators to better receive their lessons and instruction. Building strong relationships with youth can enable facilitators to have a greater impact in their lives.

Significance for Education Policy and Research

The significance of this study is its effort to provide empirical data that can support the use of hip hop media as a pedagogical tool. Researchers must consider the social context in which African American youth, specifically girls, are socialized and educated. When parents and schools condemn hip hop as a cultural movement, these two socializing agents fail to equip students with the knowledge that they can, and should, be critical consumers. Understanding school life requires that we examine youth culture as contemporary adolescents continue to construct themselves and communities outside of the classroom. "Teaching through a Hip Hop-inspired pedagogical and media literacy approach is culturally responsive pedagogy with possibilities for social action in that teaching through a culturally relevant framework is restructuring classroom politics" (Love, 2012, p. 103).

The schooling experience of Black pupils focuses almost exclusively on the disproportionate number of Black males excluded from school. While the academic needs of boys of color is a valid concern, examination of government data indicates that they ought to also extend to Black girls, who are approximately twice as likely to be permanently excluded from school compared with the total school population and their white female peers (Rollock, 2007). The problem is a structural one, not one that rests on black girls or women. Schooling for black boys, however grim, is different from the schooling experiences of black girls, although not entirely dissimilar from their male counterparts. Since much emphasis has been placed on the black boy in schools, because of their trouble-maker status, black girls are frequently left out of the black educational or the schooling of girls narratives. Evans-Winters (2005) states that "in social science and educational research African American female adolescents' experience, in particular, have been left out, whited out (subsumed under white girls' experiences), blacked out (generalized within the black male experience), or simply pathologized" (p. 9). A review of the literature shows that when examining gender in schools, researchers usually study white females. So in the investigation of studies conducted on youth, illuminating their race or gender, black girls are most normally excluded. Being excluded from research and the black educational narrative also leaves these young women on the outside of initiatives to help them develop positive gender-racial identity. Few efforts including clubs, organizations and mentorships are being created with black adolescent girls exclusively in mind. While some opportunities do exist for black girls, there has been more of a push to create initiatives for black boys and initiatives for girls are for all girls, not specifically for the developmental needs of black girls.

Black girls in educational and social research are victims of exclusionary practices. Being excluded from research and the black educational narrative leaves Black girls on the outside of initiatives to help develop self, academic, and racialized-gender identities. One such initiative is the My Brother's Keeper Initiative, which according to the White House website, aims to "address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential." The site goes on to share that "through this initiative, the Administration is joining with cities and towns, businesses, and foundations" in order to connect youth to "mentoring, support networks, and the skills they need to find a good job or go to college." Girls do not have different needs than boys. They too require mentorship, support networks and the skills and tools to be gainfully employed. There is an opportunity gap in communities of color but that gap does not just affect the boys of the community; it affects their female counterparts as well. Equal opportunity should be gender neutral and the My Brother's Keeper Initiative should include creating opportunity for Black and Brown girls.

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJ-DP) from 1991 to 2000 the arrest of girls increased more than boys for the same offenses and by 2004 girls accounted for 30% of juvenile arrests. Further, the new Unlocking Opportunity for African American Girls report released by the National Women's Law Center and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund found that Black girls represent less than 17% of all female students but are 31% of girls referred to law enforcement and about 43% of girls with a school-related arrest. Additionally, according to the Girl Scouts annual report, in 2009, 8.1 percent of Black girls ages 16-24 were high school dropouts as compared to 10.6 percent of Black boys in that age group. Also, in

2011, eighth grade girls had better reading scores, on average, compared with boys but eighth grade boys were slightly more likely to be proficient in math than their female counterparts. The report also states that in 2010, there were 130 women enrolled in college for every 100 men. All of these statistics validate the importance of investing in the holistic wellbeing of Black girls.

More research must be conducted that enables the voices of Black girls to be heard. This is not to create overarching generalizations, but to hear the unique issues that Black girls face whether they live in poor or middle-class environments or are raised in single or two-parent homes. There is a paucity of research that provides a platform for Black girl voices, therefore, more studies, which center Black girls, must be conducted. I do not, however, suggest that this research is conducted dogmatically, but in a collaborative and safe space that would enable the girls to be more at ease to discuss and analyze critical issues while developing and/or maintaining a positive identity. This type of safe space can be created through a dialectical approach which includes a critical and historical analysis of Black women in society. Additionally, understanding the ecology— the interplay of contexts surrounding youth—will situate the experiences of African American females in the context of their environment. Further, the ecological approach views African American girls' school and home socialization experiences as interwoven processes that contribute to their academic outcomes. Beyond Your Perception utilized an approach that was participatory, practical, collaborative, emancipatory, contextualized, and critical and as a result, bridged the gap between theory and practice thereby creating liberatory implications for culturally relevant teacher practice. The facilitators of this collective also recognized the connectedness of the ecological systems in the lives of

these participants. Although this collective case study was primarily conducted on the level of the microsystem, based on the findings conclusions can be drawn from other levels of the ecological systems theory I tailored for this study. While it may seem unrealistic to suggest additional priorities when educators already feel so much pressure to raise achievement scores, these parent-daughter conversations and the conversations that took place in BYP have implications for schools. By incorporating an historical analysis of marginalized people in what students are learning, schools can aid students in becoming more critical about hip hop influences.

Freire (1970) discussed a pedagogy of the oppressed, which is a "social praxis where we learn to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Akom, 2009, p. 56). Keeping with the Freirean tradition of student-centered and problem-posing education, educators can use transformative and social action approaches within education. For example, BYP was Freirean in that it was: participatory, youth-driven, and it foregrounded gender, race, sexism, and other social differences within its design and implementation; collaborative, as both a co-learning and co-facilitating environment, multidisciplinary, and it encouraged a praxis of critical thinking and action. As this study indicates, girls are central to the paradigm and not peripheral. The work of BYP stands as an example of why initiatives like My Brother's Keeper should be extended to include girls. Especially if we are discussing the urban landscape, we should utilize all resources to intervene in the lives of Black and Brown boys and girls. My Brother's Keeper, as a political initiative, has the ability to transform inequality and address many of the educational and social problems our youth face. However, the current pattern of racial inequality should

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not be addressed by excluding the present gender inequalities. All youth of color need to experience creative activities in which to engage the power structures and hegemonic notions of people of color and women to enable them to construct positive, or deconstruct harmful, definitions of self.

Schools also play a critical role in youth's understanding of hegemony and counter-hegemonic realities. Education begins with the experiences of people, and either reinforces or challenges the existing social forces that keep them passive and unengaged in the shaping their individual and collective lives (Wallerstein, 1987). Therefore, according to Lambright (1995), creating learning opportunities with the goal of generating dialogue, calls for a teacher's

> ". . .art of intervention and art of restraint, so that the verbal density of a trained intellectual does not silence the verbal styles of unscholastic students. The intent is to create dialogue that gives voice to rigorous thinking about possible meaning…. are structured to take the student thought from the unclear to the clear, from the unreasoned to the reasoned….from the unexamined to the examined." (p.32)

An example of this "rigorous thinking" was in BYP's creation of a mission statement. While this collective was a collaborative space, as the facilitators, Nina and I did not assist in the creation of the mission statement. This was a student-generated statement. BYP historicized the contemporary stereotypes within the curriculum. There was power in identifying the origins of the controlling scripts the girls were experiencing in hip hop media. Demythologizing the foundational stereotypes which have been cast onto the bodies of Black women was liberating for the participants. Though the participants did not use the names of these scripts, they were familiar with their contemporary forms in the media. Though the names are new, educating the girls regarding their origins disrupted these tropes. This disruption created a liberatory space to

understand the context of these images and I found the girls began to advocate for alternative representations. Many of the BYP participants began to vocally question the images, they were viewing on television, in music videos, or hearing about in music. Sy and Aaliyah's counter-stories are examples of how they processed misperceptions of Black women.

> The road to our future was paved in the past. Through understanding our heritage, we understand our history and ourselves and are able to ban together to spark a revolution; a revolution by Black women for Black women. (BYP Mission Statement)

The mission statement reveals through the voices of these girls how significant it is for social science researchers and educators to pay attention to the identities of Black girls, especially when considering classrooms and other spaces that can help girls engage in activities to make sense of their lives for themselves and to educate others about who they are. Through their collective voice, the BYP mission statement illustrates that through the BYP collective experience of activism, young Black girls understand the road to their future is paved in the past. In contrast to the ways that Black women and girls are portrayed through media outlets, they want to be clear in articulating that who they are is not who we may think they are—that who they are truly are is Beyond Your Perception.

Researchers must consider the social context in which African-American youth, specifically girls, are socialized and educated. African-American girls need a space where they feel comfortable resisting demeaning notions of Black womanhood. This collective provided the participants with the space to resist and the facilitators aided the girls in creating counter-narratives, or redefining who they were and wanted to be. Black girls need advocates to create, sustain, and maintain a Black girlhood. Brown (2009) said:

"Recognizing the intellect, humanity, and daily negotiations Black

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females make, regardless of age, under less than inspiring constraints underscores a political project of Black girlhood celebration. To be together as 'Black girls' creates the kinds of moments that allow us to change ourselves and the communities of which we are and are not a part—we, who we really are as Black girls, not being the problem." (p.20)

Parents and teachers must be media literate, and schools must engage in culturally relevant pedagogy that uses hip hop to engage students in critical media literacy.

This study also has strong implications for the biased discipline practices of many schools around the country. The attainment of school success is influenced by socialization and educational experiences within the school environment. Black female adolescents, particularly those in urban environments, are confronted with risk factors, such as prejudice, gender stereotypes, limited future job options, and inferior schools, which may inhibit their academic achievement (Belgrave, et. al., 2000; Leadbetter & Way, 1996). Essential to the discussion of their experiences, an analysis of the school environment is needed to better understand the obstacles Black girls may face.

Research is beginning to detail the school-to-prison pipeline that ushers girls into detention centers and jails through zero-tolerance policies that greatly increase their number of suspensions and expulsions. Urban pedagogies, according to Duncan (2000), "work through and upon adolescents of color" by focusing on discipline and behavior instead of "intellectual rigor and the development of meaningful skills" (p. 30). As previously noted, while Black girls represent less than 17 percent of all students, they are 31 percent of girls referred to law enforcement and 43 percent of girls with a school related arrest (NWLC & NAACP LDEF Report, 2013). While more data may be required which specifically focuses on school-based policies and the effects of discipline policies particularly on Black girls the evidence we currently have which highlight the

inequalities present for Black girls should propel more efforts to develop them holistically. The My Brother's Keeper Initiative is one example of a focus on Black and Brown boys at the exclusion of their female counterparts, and needs to be expanded to include Black and Brown girls.

Morris (2007) examined teachers' perceptions of African American adolescent girls' school behavior in an urban school setting, and found that educators focus more on the behavior and attitudes of Black girls than their academic development. It is problematic for the academic success of Black girls if educators judge them based on their presentation of self instead of their intellectual abilities. Collins (2000) and other Black feminist scholars suggest the gender socialization experiences of White and African American females differ greatly especially in terms of the ideals of what it is to be feminine. Therefore, as Lindsay-Dennis (2009) notes, "the difference in the socialization experiences of African American girls and some White female teachers often creates culturally incongruent learning environments" (p. 24). Winn (2011) continues, " Both students and teachers become imprisoned by the idea that Black and Brown bodies are in need of constant policing and surveillance, and that youth should seldom, if ever, be heard" (p. 111).

The idea of policing was evident when I arrived at the high school (CPA) to recruit the girls for BYP. The front doors of the building were locked. I had to ring a buzzer and a voice came over an intercom asking me who I was and the nature of my business. After being buzzed into the building, I walked through metal detectors. The policing of student bodies is explicit. Officers walk on the school grounds and up and down hallways. Not only must youth be able to critique the popular culture in which they

engage, they must also have the tools to question their environment and experiences. Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera (2010) explain that "school disciplinary practices used most widely throughout the United States may be contributing to lowered academic performance among the group of students in greatest need of improvement" (p.60). Instead of working solely on discipline and control of students of color, educational focus needs to revolve around the development of meaningful skills and intellectual rigor.

Future Research

Among urban educators, future research would seek to develop their ability to understand and build upon their students cultural identities to create culturally relevant pedagogy. Viewing media literacy as a means for social reconstruction, this work suggests the need to examine how teacher education programs can include media literacy requirements. It is my contention that the inscription of stereotypes from the media onto the bodies of urban youth can obstruct the development of authentic relationships as the self-representation of urban youth may be inauthentic, as well as, the ideas teachers have about urban youth. Such a research project would seek to explore the relationship between teachers and urban students, and the role of the teachers' knowledge about media and popular culture in creating in/authentic teacher-student relationships. Using mixed methods in evaluating the effects of critical pedagogy on youth identity development and cultural studies for teacher preparation, this research would explore what is important for educators to know and understand about youth participation in popular culture.

Additionally, a project in citizenship education, carried out through a hip hop pedagogical process, could include work with families and youth, specifically girls, to

focus on media communication in order to enhance parents' media literacy, including their knowledge of the politics of hip hop media consumption. This work would explore the oppositional potential of popular culture and would also seek to explore how community members, peer groups, and families serve as mediating influences in adolescent identity development. Since education is more than just schooling, this research would delve into the social aspects of education that involve community, families, and popular culture as socializing agents. Various research projects are needed to deepen our knowledge of how Black girls make meaning of popular culture and through the inclusion of multiple groups and perspectives in order to get a fuller picture of how youth and teachers read the messages of popular culture.

Furthermore, the evidence of what the BYP participants gained from the collective suggests that girls have the ability to teach teachers and parents how to be media literate. This study sought to explore the role of parents as mediators. However, a course on critical media literacy for youth may provide the avenue for them to be mediators for their parents.

Conclusion

As both Miss Brown and Mrs. Johnson observed, there are many young people without mentorship and role models, and it should be the work of educators to ensure that the academic, ethnic, and gender identities of our youth are positively affirmed. While the importance of parenting cannot be understated, the power of media influences can also never be underestimated. Examining the origins of hip hop and rap music, reveal that these forms of cultural expression were a place and space for youth voice and a platform to communicate the needs of the neighborhood (Rose, 1994). While commodification of

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hip hop obstructs the truths of the struggle of the community, popular culture as an educative space can enable educators to utilize hip hop as a pedagogical intervention to teach critical media literacy.

While it is argued that rap artists need to aid in shifting the narrative, the review of the literature indicated that the takeover of hip hop by executives outside of the community share in the responsibility of the images portrayed about Black men and women. A variety of media, including the film industry, nightly news, and newspaper articles, present the "urban gangsta" as the prevailing stereotype of urban and inner-city youths in America (Dance, 2002). Not only do these images skew the perception of outsiders of the inner-cities, it also distorts the perception of those within the inner-cities. One might be characterized as a "gangsta" by the media, and thereby begin to fulfill the role of "gangsta" provided by the media, like the film and music industries. These images and roles extend far beyond the inner-cities, however. This "gangsta" mentality is prevalent among suburban youth, and reaches across the seas to the youth of various countries. This "gangsta" imagery also extends itself to video games and prime time television. The characterization thrives because many individuals' only exposure to urban youths comes from the nightly news or feature films (Dance, 2002). The media sculpts these youths into captivating, violent, and sexually aggressive images.   When youth adopt, embrace, or represent these images, they limit, and possibly skew, their own futures, thereby continuing and maintaining American systems of social stratification. A number of educational researchers have found that schools and other educational institutions perpetuate and reinforce the dominant narrative of Black racial inferiority by misrepresenting Black people in curriculum and other modes of educational discourse.

Shujaa (1993) notes, "schooling is a process intended to perpetuate and maintain the society's existing power relations and the institutional structures that support those arrangements" (p. 331). Hill (2009) states, "one of the primary functions of modern schools is to sanction particular forms of knowledge that privilege the interests of dominant groups" (p. 359). Popular culture represents a site of education situated outside of the traditional context of formal educational institutions; however, it serves similar educative purposes. Educators should implement hip hop pedagogy in the classroom not only to engage their students but to also incorporate materials and ideas that are important to the youth. As the unique needs of Black girls should be recognized and addressed, educators must explore the myriad educational experiences that youth encounter. Corrigan (1979) implores schools and educators to "widen their understanding of how we are taught, how we learn, and how we know what we know from the text of popular culture" (p. 79). Popular culture is an educative site, so it is important for those involved in work with youth to understand how youth make sense of their varied identities, especially through the context of hip hop. Hip hop media makes it easy for youth to view degrading images of themselves through music, videos, television, social media, and magazines so there should be a space for youth to gain the critical media literacy skills necessary to analyze and challenge these images. Dimitriadis (2001) states:

> "understanding youth culture and school life today demands that we look past traditional disciplinary frameworks toward more interdisciplinary ones, including those offered in cultural studies and its iterations in applied disciplines such as communication and education." (p. xxi)

Miss Brown was adamant that spaces like BYP are necessary "because unlike Aaliyah, there are so many Black girls who do not have a mentor, do not have somebody that can talk to them." Thus, "I wouldn't feel comfortable because I don't [want] Aaliyah

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to influence somebody else with [her] music because [she] may have a friend would accept it because [she] is listening to it." This parent was clear that even if the music was unable to have a negative influence on her daughter, based on the values she was instilling in her home, that influence still has the potential to come from her daughter simply in her uncritical engagement with it in the presence of others who may not have the same spiritual values, from home, and the mentorship that BYP provided.

All of the parents in this study alluded to the notion parents need to dialogue with their children about the messages that rap is sending. Schools can aid in this process by becoming sites in which youth, specifically Black girls, have a space to deconstruct these images and reframe the narrative for their own identity development. Schools have the ability to aid youth in becoming media literate by analyzing the forms of media that youth consume. That the girls in this study to continuously reiterated that there was no place like BYP in their lives spoke volumes for the collective we created, but more than that BYP demonstrates the need for girls to have a safe environment in which to learn, think, and share their life and experiences, to be reaffirmed, and to understand that the scripts they find themselves in are a part of an historical objectification of Black women and who they are or strive to be is truly beyond your perception.

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SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS & DISCUSSION GROUPS PROTOCOLS

One-on-One interviews

Self -Awareness
(1) What does it mean to you to be a black girl?
(2) Which is more important to you, your race or gender? (Probe: Why?)
(3) What are some of the challenges that Black girls face?
> a. In school?
> b. At home?
> c. In your neighborhood?

Socialization
(1) Who has taught you about becoming a Black woman?
(2) Where do you receive messages about what it means to be a Black woman?
(3) Who is a role model for you?
> a. What is it about them that makes you admire them?
(4) Who is a person you look up to?
> a. Why do you look up to them?
> b. In what way(s) would you like to be like that person when you grow up?

(5) Who would you identify as a positive Black female role model in your life?
> a. What makes you admire this person?

Hip hop media
(1) How old were you when you first began listening to rap?
(2) Who is/are your favorite artist(s)?
(3) What is your favorite song out right now?
> **The particular artist(s) are not the focus of interest but rather the artist(s) and song(s) they choose provides the opportunity to probe deeper into the lyrical content, video imagery, and behavior of said artist(s).*
(4) What do you think the artist is trying to say?
(5) What particular part of the song sticks out for you?
(6) What do the underlying messages of the song seem to be?
(7) What do you think about those messages?
(8) Does it seem like the artist is talking about a real life situation, like something that could happen to you or your friends?
(9) Have you or your friends ever been in a situation like the one he/she is talking about?
(10) Do you see yourself in the song?
(11) Do you think the song represents who you are and what your life is like?
(12) Do you watch rap videos?
(13) What do you think about the women in the videos?
(14) Do you and your parent(s) listen to the same artist(s)/songs?
(15) Do you talk about the music with your parent(s)?
> ***I will probe further to be sure that siblings and other relatives are included in this discussion.*

(16) Describe Black women that you hear about in music.
    a. Is it positive or negative? Why?
    b. Are these views of Black women similar to who you are as a Black female?
(17) Describe Black women that you see on television.
    a. Is it positive or negative? Why?
    b. Are these views of Black women similar to who you are as a Black female?
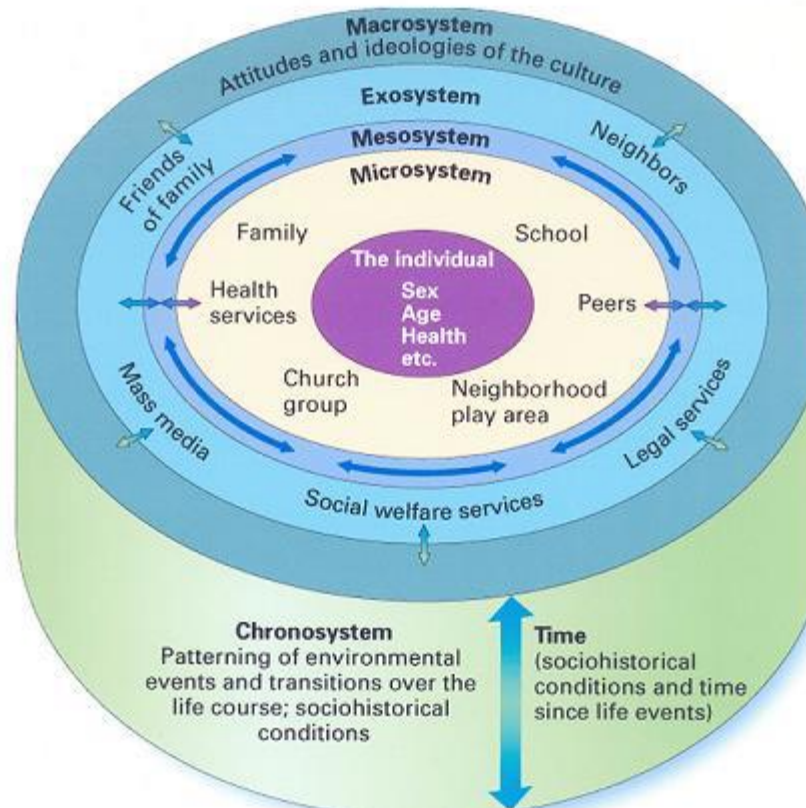
Parent-daughter interviews
    Parents
(1) Do you like hip hop?
(2) Do you listen to rap music?
(3) What is your experience with hip hop?
(4) Did your parents listen to the music?
(5) Do you ever watch rap videos?
(6) Do you listen to the same artist(s) that your children enjoy?
(7) Do you talk to your children about the music that they listen to?
(8) Do/how do you talk about the ways women are presented in the music and videos?
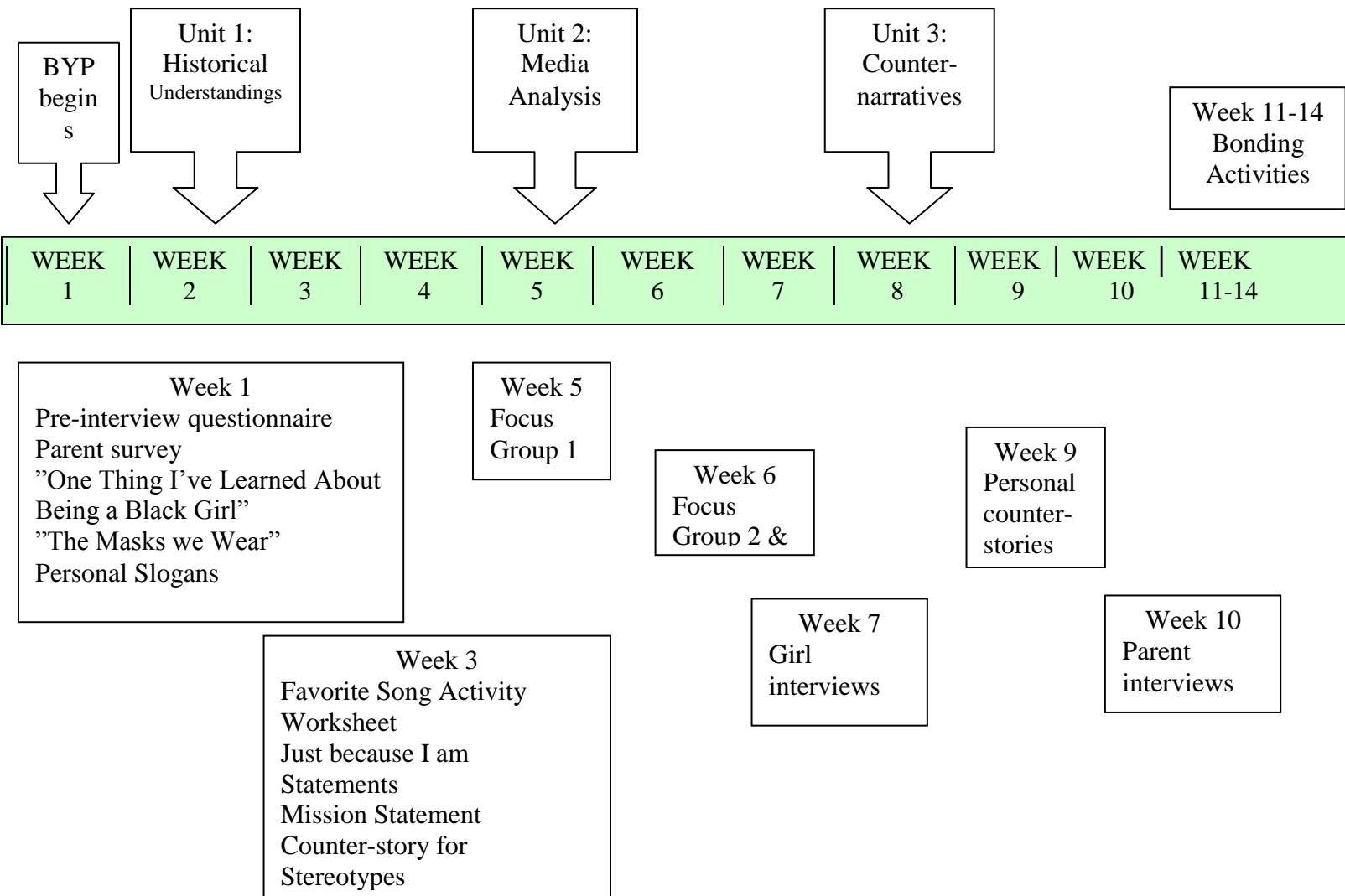Sex is prevalent? Drug use is glorified?

PROBES
* What do you mean?
* I'm not sure that I am following you.
* Would you explain that?
* What did you say then?
* What were you thinking at the time?
* Give me an example.
* Tell me about it.
* Take me through the experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 104).

APPENDIX B
ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

http://jeremypmyers.wordpress.com/2011/11/23/youth-ministry-is-holistic/

TIMELINE OF DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

| BYP begins | Unit 1: Historical Understandings | | | Unit 2: Media Analysis | | | Unit 3: Counter-narratives | | | Week 11-14 Bonding Activities |

| WEEK 1 | WEEK 2 | WEEK 3 | WEEK 4 | WEEK 5 | WEEK 6 | WEEK 7 | WEEK 8 | WEEK 9 | WEEK 10 | WEEK 11-14 |

Week 1
Pre-interview questionnaire
Parent survey
"One Thing I've Learned About Being a Black Girl"
"The Masks we Wear"
Personal Slogans

Week 3
Favorite Song Activity
Worksheet
Just because I am
Statements
Mission Statement
Counter-story for
Stereotypes

Week 5
Focus Group 1

Week 6
Focus Group 2 &

Week 7
Girl interviews

Week 9
Personal counter-stories

Week 10
Parent interviews

APPENDIX D
Group Confidentiality Agreement

This form is intended to further ensure confidentiality of discussions during the course of the critical media literacy group, Beyond Your Perception. All members will be asked to read the following statement and sign their names indicating that they agree to comply.

I promise that I will not communicate or in any way disclose publicly information

discussed during the course of this group that could be tied to any specific member of the

group. I agree not to talk about material relating to this group with anyone other than my

fellow BYP sisters, and the facilitators, Sherell and Nina. I will be my sister's keeper; my

sister, myself!

Name (please print): _____

Signature:

_____

PARENT SURVEY

Daughter's Name: _____

(1) Do you like hip hop?

(2) Do you listen to rap music?

(3) Did your parents listen to rap/hip hop music?

(4) Do you ever watch rap videos?

(5) Do you listen to the same artist(s) that your children enjoy?

(6) Do you talk to your children about the music that they listen to?

(7) Please list the three songs (and the artist who sings them, if you know) that you've enjoyed listening to the most in the last few weeks (they're numbered, but they don't have to be in order of your favorites, just list them).
1.

2.

3.

(8) What do you like most about the songs: the lyrics, the beat, the artist, the video, etc?

Song 1   Song 3
* Lyrics   * Lyrics
* Beat   * Beat
* Video   * Video
* Something else: * Something else:

Song 2
* Lyrics
* Beat
* Video
* Something else:

APPENDIX F
FAVORITE SONG WORKSHEET

Please list the three songs (and the artist who sings them, if you know) that you've enjoyed listening to the most in the last few weeks (they're numbered, but they don't have to be in order of your favorites, just list them).

1.
2.
3.
For each song, what it is about the song that you like the most?

Song 1
• Lyrics
• Beat
• Video
• Other:

Song 2
• Lyrics
• Beat
• Video
• Other:

Song 3
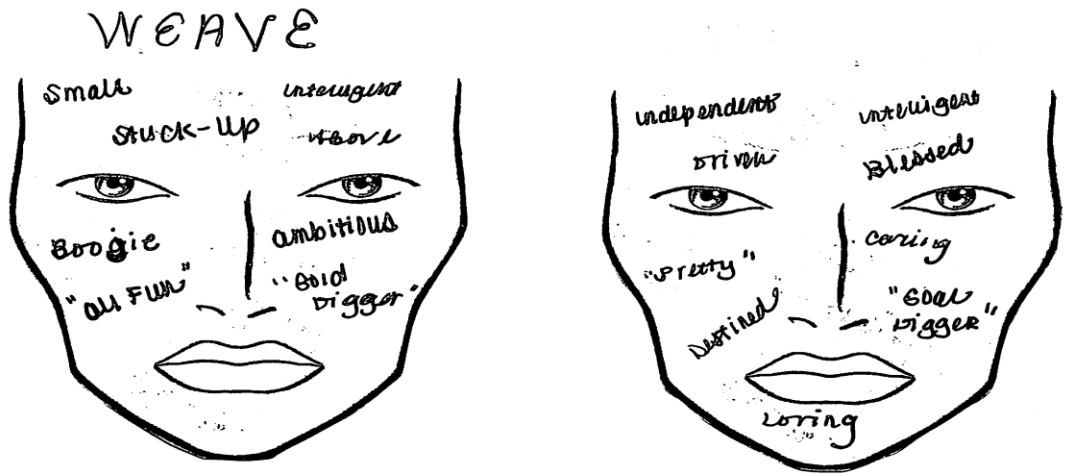• Lyrics
• Beat
• Video
• Other:

For each song, write down anything that jumps out at you about the song - the part you remember most or that keeps getting stuck in your head, or something that seems related to our discussion so far:

Song 1:

Song 2:

Song 3:

Sy	It isn't the dip in my upper lip that tells you the depth of my thoughts, or my heart, or my soul. That dip is simply a diagonal line that tricks the average person into believing they have me figured out. Then there is the minor arc that is less than 180º that can't even begin to describe the complexity of my inner being. It makes the average person think a little harder and that's usually when they have me bent. Then there is the crease that separates what you probably think I am from what you know I am. You start to grin because you think you have spelled supercalifragilisticexpialidocious right but you missed 7 letters. But then, you are met with a drop, not a dip. A dip isn't deep enough to describe how you have picked me apart in your mind. You didn't just detach me from my clothes or hair, but you detached me from my flesh, my being; because the drop made you think a little harder, made you do a quadruple take, tilt your head to the side, squint your eye, and second guess yourself more than you have second guessed life. That drop hurts you. It wounds you because its depth is equivalent to a quadratic equation with infinite x's, it's everlasting! I am not the fullness of my lips but the capacity of my mind.

Aaliyah	The statistics against my race doesn't define me. My skin color doesn't make me who I am, my skin color is just that, a SKIN COLOR. But since society wants to depict me in every negative connotation by my skin color then I think I should inform them that I am a black female that, for the most part, makes straight A's. I am a black female that managed to get into an Ivy League private school. I am the same black female that will become a well-known psychiatrist and author, helping mend the problems of the same people in society that think my skin color defines me. I'll open up my own practice and when I'm well on my feet, I'll give back knowing that I didn't get to this point by myself. But you see they say "black people are stingy with money", so. I'll have a great husband, a man that's all mine, no side chick status like they play black girls in media. Damn it I'll have a nice picket fence around my luxurious house that black people aren't supposed to own because we're stuck in the slums. I'll get a dog, walk it around my fancy neighborhood that white people are only supposed to exist in and I'll kick my feet up on my front porch one day, looking back and smiling about how far in life I've made it, all while being BLACK!

Nina was born and raised in the mid-West. Her family life allows her to bring a very unique perspective to her work. She was part of an open adoption in which she was raised in an affluent Midwestern city during the school year by a white woman, and spent summers with her Black biological parents in a neighboring, low socioeconomic city. Her father, a drug dealer, often abused her mother, which Nina witnessed. This life her parents were a part of is largely reason why she came to be in an open adoption. And it is her experiences between the affluence with her adopted mother and the street life she was exposed to with her biological parents that shapes her world view and allows her to see life and people in a very open and compassionate way.

I met Nina as a fellow doctoral student in my department. We hit it off in our discussions about Black girls, the work we both used to do, and the work we hope to do one day. Like me, Nina was a former educator, who was certified in Teach For America. She did not have positive experiences teaching in Philadelphia, her first assignment, and she later became a project coordinator for homeless youth in

Washington D.C. Her experiences while a project coordinator are a major factor that led to why she helped to create and co-facilitate this BYP. While she has always been active in Black women's community circles, she became passionate about the project of sisterhood and solidarity among Black women while working as a youth-led community organizer. After many failed attempts to organize youth around key political issues they were facing, she decided to stop working and start actively listening--a feat that transformed her definition of what it means to teach and learn. Together with young Black women, the simple yet profound acts of sharing and caring developed a transformative love that inspired the young women into action; taking on projects addressing issues of domestic violence, sexual harassment, course offering discrimination, discipline policy reform, and youth homelessness. Since then, Nina's work aims to walk with young Black women on the path of healing and community engagement through radical pedagogical love.

Source: Pedagogical Reflection

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My race and gender are inextricably connected. Growing up

my Blackness and my girl-ness were emphasized in different

ways. I grew up as a military brat on Air Force bases and

cities that were predominately white. However, I was raised

by parents who were from the Chocolate City (Washington

D.C.), and they were careful to ensure that my racialized-

gender identity was subtly reaffirmed. This was done in

various ways. Many of my friends who love "The Wizard of

Oz" are always shocked when I tell them that I have never

seen the movie. I have seen one or two scenes, but that was

walking through the Base Exchange (a store on a military

base). My parents introduced me and my siblings to "The

Wiz," the version of "The Wizard of Oz" with an all-Black

cast. With Michael Jackson as the Scarecrow and Diana Ross

as Dorothy, that movie still remains one of my favorite.

Further, for birthdays and Christmas, I never received a

White Barbie or white dolls, my parents ensured that I had

Black Barbie's, Cabbage Patch dolls, and other dolls of

color. This is another subtle way that my parents reinforced

my racialized-gender identity.

     I worked as an elementary school teacher for five

years. Many initiatives that I found in my school and the schools of my fellow educator peers were focused primarily on Black males. This was quite alarming to me because several of my female students were having behavioral issues because of the relationship with their fathers. As example, I had one female student who was well-behaved and attentive in class when her father was actively involved in her life. During his periods of absence, her behavior was markedly different, as well as her attitude and academic performance. This prompted me to have a conversation with her father, when he returned to from an absent period.

When I began my doctorate program, I found that the word "urban" or the term "urban education" seemed to be synonymous with Black and Brown males. Within my doctorate program, we were reading about researchers who were trying to "save" Black males. So I left the classroom and became a full-time graduate student seeking answers to questions like: Why are there no initiatives for Black girls? Why was it assumed that Black girls are not experiencing unique issues as well in these "urban" environments? If Black boys need "saving," why don't Black girls?