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# **Hip-Hop Development™** **Bridging the Generational Divide for Youth Development**

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**Abstract:** Hip-Hop culture in the lives of youth can not be ignored. This research is based on the premise that youth workers who expect ongoing successes must increase their Hip-Hop culture competence. The study examined the knowledge of and attitude towards Hip-Hop by educators who participated in a Hip-Hop 101 workshop. Their perceptions relevant to the importance of Hip-Hop awareness and application for positively influencing youth behaviors were also explored. Results revealed that workshop participants significantly increased their Hip-Hop knowledge. They also demonstrated significantly more favorable attitudes toward Hip-Hop and its use for youth development. Findings suggest that the workshop promoted an environment conducive to bridging the generation gap between youth who embrace Hip-Hop, and educators who have a less favorable view. This research provides insight into Hip-Hop Development™ as a core component for establishing the kinds of youth-adult partnerships necessary for today's Hip-Hop generation's self-growth, skill enhancement, and leadership development.

## Introduction

America's youth represent a distinct group with their own unique popular culture – a culture within which Hip-Hop recurrently permeates (Hicks Harper, 2000). Consequently, the large majority of young people who exist within Hip-Hop's macrocosm are influenced by the culture's inescapable force in their lives (George, 1998; Hicks Harper, & Harper, 1999). Statements like: "It's the closest thing to perfect – perfection," "it saved my life," "it can be positive," and it "is my spirit" represent the optimistic sentiments about Hip-Hop from many youth who are enrolled in the schools and programs that youth workers are trying to reach, engage, develop, and prepare for success in American society (Hicks Harper, 2006). Youth workers include all individuals who work for, with, and always in the best interest of young people. This includes educators, parents/guardians, policymakers, clergy, coaches, community leaders and others because they represent the pool of youth stakeholders in the field.

How can today's youth workers do their very best job in the field of youth development and engagement, if they are not prepared with the Hip-Hop culture competence required for "truly" understanding the culture and its prominence in the lives of their target audience? According to Karen Pittman (personal communication, May 10, 2004), Co-founder and Executive Director at The Forum for Youth Investment, "I don't know how you can get very far in thinking about those [youth development and engagement programmatic] strategies without having, certainly acknowledging, the force that Hip-Hop is, and looking at ways to use it."

For youth workers, all this adds up to an art form that, properly channeled, holds boundless opportunities to reach youth. Hip-Hop's commercial success provides a natural hook for programs seeking to get kids thinking about the future. The influence of the culture...coupled with its strong roots among the urban poor make it an enticing vehicle for youth engagement. (Kelly, 2003, p. 15)

The research presented in this article examined the knowledge of and attitude towards Hip-Hop by educators who participated in a middle school-based prevention program. Their perceptions relevant to the importance of Hip-Hop cognizance and possible application for positively impacting and influencing youth behaviors were also explored.

## Background

Hip-Hop Development<sup>tm</sup> (HHD) is new terminology in the field of youth work. Coined by Dr. P. Thandi Hicks Harper in 2006, it represents a contemporary and emerging theory of change in the fields of youth development and youth engagement. The foundation of this school of thought emphasizes the role that Hip-Hop culture can play in constructively engaging young people, thus leading them to positive personal, social, educational, and spiritual development. According to Hicks Harper (2006), HHD recognizes Hip-Hop as:

- An important integral part of Youth Development and Engagement Models;
- A "new" strategy/tool which overlaps existing approaches in the field of youth work;
- A catalyst for reaching youth where they are to facilitate making the right choices, revitalizing their neighborhoods, and influencing policy;

- A means for allowing youth to bring their realities, ideas, choices, and communication styles to the forefront for positive change;
- Playing a vital role in the development and engagement of youth with or without organizational or adult structure; and
- Working for engaging, organizing and mobilizing youth in urban, suburban, and rural neighborhoods regardless of intent.

Pittman (2006) responds to the inevitable apprehensions:

Hip-Hop Development? Many people my age (over 50) would consider this term an oxymoron. How can this loud, violent, misogynistic, materialistic culture contribute to the young people's positive development? Shouldn't youth workers be encouraging other forms of expression? Shouldn't parents be concerned if the programs their children frequent encourage these aggressive art forms? Shouldn't we all be concerned if prominent foundations, like the Annie E. Casey Foundation, are dignifying this culture by funding field research? The answer to the last three questions is a resounding no. Far from an oxymoron, Hip-Hop Development may be a redundancy. (p. ix)

"Hip-Hop is my anti-drug. It lifts me up when I am down and it calms me down when I am excited. I don't need to use drugs to enjoy myself," says a 14-year old African-American honor roll student who attends a large metropolitan middle school. The school has an enrollment of nearly 1,000 students and the bulk of them share a positive view of Hip-Hop, the dominant youth popular culture (Allen, 1989; Farley, 1999; George, 1998; Hicks Harper, 2006). On the other hand, many professional youth workers, parents, and teachers share a negative view of Hip-Hop – one that has been formed by commercialized misogynistic rap, profanity-filled music lyrics, and acts of sexualized and violent behavior seen in music videos. "I don't want my children to listen to it and I will not allow it in my house," says the parent of a 16-year old African-American high school honor roll student. "They'd better leave that Hip-Hop on the streets where it belongs," agrees a Maryland-based youth worker. Hence, there appears to be a cultural and generational divide between many adults and the Hip-Hop generation. This research examined the extent of this gap in a sample of middle-school professional staff, including its consequences and implications.

Funded in part by the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), the present study's focus was specifically on educator/youth worker knowledge, attitude and receptivity of HHD as a means to effectively engage young people in a substance abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention program. This cutting-edge and original research has clear implications for youth development practice and programming because of similar views among the adults who work for and with youth in their respective fields and the young people they engage for successful development.

This current article describes:

1. Background information on the development and significance of Hip-Hop culture;
2. The school and community collaboration (including the study's related literature) which led to the adoption of HHD as an integral component of a substance abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention program for middle school youth;

3. A case example of a middle school taking part in a pilot study utilizing a HHD framework;
4. Strategies used to explore teachers' Hip-Hop knowledge and attitudes;
5. Methods used to evaluate the immediate impact of an in-service teacher education workshop;
6. Findings from the study; and
7. Implications of the present research for further work bridging the generational divide in youth development and engagement practice and programming.

### **What is Hip-Hop Culture?**

Hip-Hop is a vast and complex system of values and art which has reached worldwide prominence within diverse publics. It is not only a youth popular culture, but can legitimately be called middle-aged. Although gaining considerable prominence in the early 1980s, Hip-Hop's contemporary roots stem from the early 1970s decade. The culture is now over 30 years old. Hip-Hop's roots are in ancient African traditions, however, the culture's contemporary presence evolved from the cultural and artistic expressions of Black and Puerto Rican youths living in inner-city South Bronx, New York communities. The cultural orientation has grown from localized passionate expressions of hope, despair, joy, and pain during a time of social, political, economic, and criminal anarchy, to a profitable multi-billion dollar industry with mass appeal (Stewart, 2006) and worldwide distribution.

Hip-Hop defines the parameters within which the culture's original art forms exist. B-boying, (break-dancing), graffiti, fashion, dee-jaying, and rap music are the original arts which are manifested in Hip-Hop culture. Its "formal features" (e.g., color, peer centered, novel, technology driven, creative, action packed) give additional communicative strength and appeal to these arts. Formal features are elements and characteristics that are illuminated via communication formats, and may serve as the basis for effective messaging to, with, and among young people. Hicks Harper and Harper (1999) present one listing of Hip-Hop formal features, however no list is infinite and youth workers (along with youth) are encouraged to develop their own. According to Hicks Harper (2006), Hip-Hop is:

**Boundary-Less** – Hip-Hop is not age, socioeconomic status, race, gender, sexual orientation, nor geographic location specific.

**Positive and Negative** – Hip-Hop can be violent, misogynistic, fun, engaging, real, drug-free, abrasive, emotional, political, corporate, expensive, cheap, inclusive, and educational.

**Environmentally Unbiased** – International, rural, urban, suburban, inner-city, schools and universities, spiritual institutions, corporations, foundations, governments, and homes are examples of environments within which elements of Hip-Hop culture exist.

**More than Music** – Hip-Hop is cultural, political, spiritual, corporate, entrepreneurial, intellectual, social, artistic, economics, and mental.

**Music Within Musical Genres** – Styles and elements of Hip-Hop can be found in gospel, jazz, country, blues, rhythm'n'blues, rock, neo-soul, bluegrass, reggae, and alternative music.

**Communication** – Poetry/Floetry/Spoken Word, visual art, fashion, music, media, rap, verbal and non-verbal coded jargon, slang, technology, and kinesthetic movements all describe messaging mediums within the Hip-Hop culture.

### **School and Community Collaboration**

A community coalition was formed to address substance abuse and HIV/AIDS problems within its large, urban, and mostly African-American community in Prince George's County, Maryland. Called the Substance Abuse Treatment, Education and Prevention Network (STEP Network), the coalition successfully vied for the federal grants supporting this study. Students, parents, professional youth workers, teachers and administrators, healthcare professionals, law enforcement officers, civic leaders, businesses, faith leaders, and public officials comprised the group.

STEP Network members determined that effectively addressing substance abuse and HIV/AIDS problems in their community would require starting their prevention efforts with the county's young population. They also recognized that successful outcomes would require youth "buy-in." While building the prevention program around themes of hip-hop culture seemed a logical approach, some STEP Network members were skeptical. They expressed concerns about the association of their program with the negative messages often promoted by Hip-Hop culture, and specifically in rap music. Not only had these Network members heard music and seen videos that were offensive, but many believed that social science research only supported a negative view of the culture.

In fact, some research does suggest that rap music would not be appropriate for use as a component of preventions for youth. For example, Jones (1997) suggested that rap music is high in socially questionable content, including drug and alcohol talk, profanity, and gambling. Similarly, Peters, et al. (2003) found that rap music glamorized substance use. Moreover, other research has found linkages between some rap music and deviant thoughts and behaviors among youth, including drug use and violence (Anderson, Carnagey, & Eubanks, 2003; Chen, Miller, Grube, & Waiters, 2006; Johnson, Jackson, & Gatto, 1995; Miranda, & Claes, 2004).

However, a collective voice challenging the totally negative perception of Hip-Hop culture has emerged over the course of the last decade. In fact, the STEP Network's youth and young adult participants, who admitted listening to rap music having positive messages, challenged the totally negative perception of Hip-Hop culture. They emphasized that not all Hip-Hop music is negative and named specific artists (e.g., Lauren Hill, Fred Hammond, KRS-One, & NAS) who promote positive and socially conscious themes.

Researchers have documented the promotion of positive and socially conscious themes in some rap music and by some Hip-Hop artists (Cummings, & Roy, 2002; Martinez, 1997; Tyson, 2003). For instance, Martinez (1997), argues that some rap music is an expression of social resistance to bigotry and racial oppression, self and community empowerment, and social critique. Others have noted that constructive and optimistic lyrics found in some rap music, particularly when delivered by artists admired by their young listeners, can have the effect of indoctrinating youth with a positive frame of reference with respect to their racial self-concept, sense of belonging, and education and health outcomes (Cummings, & Roy, 2002; Hicks Harper, 1993; Tyson, 2003).

Coinciding with the growing awareness of positive attributes of Hip-Hop culture has been its use in social science and human services research with youth development and engagement programs (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004; Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2007; DeJesus, 2005; Hicks Harper, 2006; Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, 2007) and in health promotion and disease prevention, including smoking prevention (Susman, Parker, Lopez, Crippen, et al., 1995), cardiovascular disease prevention (Stolley, 1997), obesity prevention (Fitzgibbon, et al., 1998), violence prevention (Bruce, & Davis, 2000), substance abuse prevention (Hicks Harper, & Harper, 1999) and HIV/AIDS prevention (Stephens, Braithwaite, & Taylor, 1998). To further explore the feasibility of using Hip-Hop as a medium for education and prevention efforts with youth, the STEP Network sought expert advice from P. Thandi Hicks Harper, President of the Youth Popular Culture Institute, who writes:

Regardless of one's point of view, there is no question that Hip-Hop is a dominant and pervasive influence in the lives of America's young people. In light of this reality, it becomes imperative that those who work for, with, and in the best interest of youth have at least some understanding of the popular culture so that they may effectively explore and implement culturally appropriate... strategies (Hicks Harper, 2005, p. 6).

The STEP Network reached a consensus to use HHD as the framework to build its substance abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention program. Its members recognized that many teachers' possible negative views of Hip-Hop and/or lack of understanding and knowledge about its features and characteristics could be counter productive to the program. As a result, STEP Network members successfully advocated for a 4-hour Hip-Hop 101 training for teachers and staff of the new program's cooperating middle school. The workshop was designed to examine and improve teachers' attitude toward Hip-Hop, and to increase their knowledge and understanding of Hip-Hop as a potentially effective educational and prevention tool for motivating youth to choose healthy lifestyles. We report here on the immediate outcomes of this in-service workshop.

### **The Cooperating Middle School**

The participating middle school in the study was located within the same community as the Step Network and had a student population of nearly 1000 students, almost evenly divided between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Ninety-one percent of the students were African-American, 6.1% Hispanic, 0.8% Native Indian, 1.5% Asian, and 0.6% White. The school had 64 professional staff, including teaching and administrative teams. As indicated in Table 1, the professional staff was mostly female (73.4%) and predominantly African-American (75.0%). More than half of the teaching staff (53.0%) had completed at least a master's degree, and most (69.0%) had more than 6 years of teaching experience. Staff members 40 years of age or younger (64.0%) outnumbered those older than 40 (36.0%). The school had a mandatory uniform policy and offered a comprehensive program, providing both curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for students to not only master core skills in mathematics, language arts, science and social studies but also to develop socially and spiritually.

## Methodology

### Design

An independent group pre/post-design was used in the study. While the entire professional staff of the middle school was invited to participate in the 4-hour Hip-Hop 101 in-service workshop, only 37 teachers (57.8%) participated. These teachers anonymously answered a two-part survey consisting of questions about the teachers' demographic characteristics and 18 questions measuring their knowledge and attitude towards Hip-Hop culture. Twenty-four teachers opted to not attend the in-service workshop, citing conflicting obligations as their primary reason (e.g., attending graduate courses). They anonymously answered the same survey questions given to the teachers that took part in the workshop and served as a control group.

### Procedures

The Hip-Hop 101 in-service training is a lively, interactive, multimedia workshop designed to increase the Hip-Hop culture competence of professional youth workers, educators, health professionals, policy makers, and others who work with young people. Participants share information and related experiences as they study and examine Hip-Hop culture, from its emergence in the 1970s to its current status in the American and worldwide mainstream. Hip-Hop 101 aimed to facilitate educators' understanding of Hip-Hop popular culture and its impact on their students' everyday lives, in addition to providing ideas and opportunities to brainstorm how the culture can be effectively used for positive youth development and engagement. The workshop's innovative communication formats included music, video, animation, a live deejay, and guided group participation. Experts in youth popular culture served as workshop facilitators/leaders. HHD was introduced to some, and served as an enhancement and/or reinforcement of existing knowledge to others.

The workshop began with a pre-test to determine participants' initial Hip-Hop attitude and knowledge level. Presentations and activities in the workshop proper:

- Defined Hip-Hop culture and promoted related dialogue and discussion;
- Distinguished between negative and positive Hip-Hop characteristics/formal features and clarified their use as marketing, educational, and informational tools;
- Reflected on what made adult participants feel "hip" as a way for them to understand the feelings of Hip-Hop youth;
- Encouraged participants to reminisce about their adolescence as they took a "guided trip down memory lane;"
- Provided an opportunity for participants to develop educational and entertaining group "raps," and to creatively perform them for their colleagues using nuances of their own adolescent years, as well as emulations reflecting their perceptions of the current Hip-Hop generation's attitudes and behaviors;
- Suggested ways to increase participants' Hip-Hop culture competence outside of work environments (i.e., read popular culture magazines, go to movies targeted to youth audiences, review Hip-Hop websites students may visit); and



- Instructed participants on ways to creatively facilitate learning in the classroom and to incorporate their new knowledge about Hip-Hop culture in their efforts to motivate youth to choose healthy lifestyles.

### Measures

Teachers' attitudes and knowledge concerning Hip-Hop were measured using the Hip-Hop 101 18-item pre-post survey (Hicks Harper, & Rhodes, 2004) developed for the purpose of the study. The survey contained eight items pertaining to the participants' attitudes toward Hip-Hop, including the following statements:

- "Hip-Hop can be an effective communication strategy in adolescent substance use prevention."
- "Parents should not permit their teenagers to listen to Hip-Hop music/videos because it fosters negative behaviors and attitudes."
- "It is important for school teachers to have some knowledge of Hip-Hop culture."

Teachers responded to these items by rating each on a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1=strongly agree to 5= strongly disagree). Raw scores were summed and then calculated into averages, with some scores requiring reverse scoring. A higher score corresponded to a more favorable attitude towards Hip-Hop.

The ten items measuring Hip-Hop knowledge included statements such as:

- "Black youth listen to Hip-Hop music more than youth of other racial or ethnic groups?"
- "Last year, Hip-Hop mogul Tupac Shakur began serving a life sentence for the murder of popular Hip-Hop artist Suge Knight."
- "Hip-Hop culture and rap music are basically the same."

Teachers again responded to questions on a 5-point Likert scale, (ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = disagree strongly). Scores were summed, with higher scores indicating greater knowledge of Hip-Hop culture.

## Results

### Descriptive Analyses

Preliminary analyses were undertaken to examine selected characteristics among the middle school's professional staff. Descriptive information on the entire professional staff, including in-service participants and non-participants (i.e., controls), is presented in Table 1. Results revealed few significant differences between the in-service participants and controls. For both groups, the majority of teachers was female, African American, 40 years old or younger, and had 6 or more years of teaching experience. However, participating teachers as a group completely mimicked the racial/ethnic diversity of the school's entire professional staff, while the non-participant group included only blacks and whites. Furthermore, the participant group tended to have completed higher levels of education (Master of Arts/Master of Science degrees or higher) than controls.

**Table 1**

Comparison of Selected Demographic Characteristics for Middle School Professional Staff as a Whole vs. Workshop Participants vs. Non Participants

Characteristics	All Professional Staff (Population)		Workshop Participants		Non-Participants	
	N	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	47	73.4	31	83.7	16	59.3
Male	17	26.6	6	16.2	11	40.7
Total	64	100	37	100	27	100
<b>Race</b>						
African American	48	75.0	25	67.6	23	85.2
White	11	17.0	7	18.9	4	14.8
Asian	3	4.7	3	8.1	0	0
Hispanic	1	1.6	1	2.7	0	0
Other	1	1.6	1	2.7	0	0
Total	64	100	37	100	27	100
<b>Age (years)</b>						
21-30	18	28.1	10	27.0	8	29.6
31-40	23	35.9	13	35.1	10	37.0
41-50	10	15.6	8	21.6	2	7.4
51-60	13	20.3	6	16.2	7	25.9
Total	64	100	37	100	27	100
<b>Education</b>						
Some college, no degree	3	4.7	1	2.7	2	7.4
BA/BS degree	27	42.2	13	35.1	14	51.8
MA/MS degree or higher	34	53.1	23	62.2	11	40.7
Total	64	100	37	100	27	100
<b>Years of Teaching Experience</b>						
0-2	9	14.1	4	10.8	5	18.5
3-5	15	23.4	9	24.3	6	22.2
6-10	20	31.3	11	29.7	0	0
>10	20	31.3	13	35.1	16	59.3
<b>Total</b>	64	100	37	100	27	100

### **Differences in Teacher Attitudes and Knowledge**

The primary aim of the study was to explore the extent to which Hip-Hop 101 increased teachers' knowledge of Hip-Hop and fostered more positive attitudes about the culture, including its potential usefulness in substance-abuse and HIV prevention efforts targeting youth. The hypothesis was that teachers would evidence more knowledge of and favorable attitudes towards Hip-Hop and its use as a programmatic tool for youth (HHD) after teacher participation in the workshop.

Analyses of variance procedures (ANOVAs) were performed on pre-test data to examine Hip-Hop attitude and knowledge differences between teachers who did and did not participate in the workshop. The significance level ( $p$  value) for the tests was set at .05. In Table 2, pre-test results indicate no significant differences between participants and controls on measures of Hip-Hop attitudes, ( $M = .015$  vs.  $M = .016$ ,  $F(1, 63) = 28$ ,  $p > .05$ ), and Hip-Hop knowledge, ( $M = .016$  vs.  $M = .016$ ,  $F(1, 63) = 0.03$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

**Table 2**

Variations in Pre-test Teacher Attitudes toward and Knowledge of Hip-Hop Culture

<b>Measures</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Hip-Hop Attitudes</b>					
Hip-Hop 101	37	.015 (.003)	1, 63	.277	.601
Control	27	.016 (.004)			
<b>Hip-Hop Knowledge</b>					
Hip-Hop 101	37	.016 (.001)	1, 63	.033	.857
Control	27	.016 (.002)			

Following teacher participation in Hip-Hop 101, paired-sample t-tests were computed to compare their attitudes and knowledge concerning Hip-Hop culture before and after their participation. Results are shown in Figure 1. Participants demonstrated significant increases in their overall knowledge of Hip-Hop culture ( $t = -13.66, p < .001$ ) by the end of the workshop. In addition, in-service participants demonstrated significantly more favorable attitudes toward Hip-Hop ( $t = -29.59, p < .001$ ) and its ability to work as a tool for the personal, social, and educational development of youth. Teachers who participated in the workshop provided the following comments:

- "This workshop was very informative ... I am leaving with a new frame of mind about Hip-Hop."
- "This seminar has enlightened me in regards to Hip-Hop as I know it, and I will pay attention to it in a different perspective now."
- "I had believed all Hip-Hop/rap was negative, therefore eliminating a strong area that I could use to communicate with my students. I will allow them to teach me Hip-Hop while I teach them science."
- "I found this extremely enlightening. Since my children are all adults, I don't feel the same connection with today's youth [culture]... Many good suggestions for how to get back in touch [with youth] were given and I will follow them."

### **Concluding Discussion**

By and large, today's young generation embraces Hip-Hop as its culture. Yet, for many professional youth workers, teachers and parents alike, Hip-Hop culture connotes a negative, anti-social lifestyle (Chen, et al., 2006; Miranda, & Claes, 2004). Despite the controversial nature of Hip-Hop, many youth development and engagement, education, and prevention experts have advocated its use as an effective vehicle for enhancing youth development efforts, facilitating cognition, and promoting healthy lifestyles among America's most at-risk youth (Hicks Harper, & Harper, 1999; Stephens, Braithwaite, & Taylor, 1998; Tyson, 2003).

This article reports the efforts of one metropolitan community to inform middle school teachers' and administrators' knowledge of and attitudes toward Hip-Hop culture. Specifically, a 4-hour Hip-Hop 101 in-service workshop was designed to increase their knowledge of Hip-Hop, to

promote a more positive attitude toward the culture, and to explore ways in which Hip-Hop could enhance what educators were already doing to assist in positively developing youth inside and outside of the classroom environment.

Results from the current investigation revealed that Hip-Hop 101 was very successful. Because the teachers who attended the in-service workshop did not differ from non-attendees with respect to selected characteristics or initial attitudes and knowledge of Hip-Hop culture, we are confident that changes in their attitudes and knowledge are directly attributable to the workshop. Findings suggest that the 4-hour in-service workshop promoted an environment conducive to bridging the generation gap between middle school students who embrace Hip-Hop, and teachers and administrators (youth workers) who have a less-than-favorable view of it. Based on the findings of this study, we conclude that HHD has the potential to serve as a core component for establishing and maintaining the kinds of youth-adult partnerships required for the self-growth, skill enhancement, and leadership development of today's Hip-Hop generation of youth.

The findings from this study have clear implications for youth development practice and programming. We contend that findings on pre/post responses will likely be similar if professional youth workers in the field of youth development and engagement were to represent the participating group. The participation of these youth workers in workshops similar to Hip-Hop 101 would not only dispel the myths about Hip-Hop, but illuminate its potential value for engaging youth, therefore leading to positive youth development. The practices and programmatic efforts of America's youth workers would have more meaning, relativity, appropriateness, and appeal because the field's stakeholders would have a clearer understanding of youth values, creative skills, natural abilities, styles of processing information, social milieus, predilections, and fundamental world views. Consequently, more informed strategic planning and programmatic decision making, along with non-traditional and imaginative opportunities for youth leadership will result. It is critical to know one's target audience for maximizing impact. Only then will truly bridging the generational divide become a reality in youth development.

This pilot study engaged the entire teaching and administrative staff of a large, urban middle school within a large east coast metropolitan area. Therefore, the study's results are likely generalizable to similar learning environments. Nevertheless, future research should test this assumption by directing efforts towards replicating the results of this study with larger samples. Future assessments should also investigate whether changes in teachers' knowledge and attitude relevant to Hip-Hop culture actually result in improved communication between this population and middle school students, and whether growth in both areas are translated into more usable and effective teaching practices. Moreover, subsequent research should investigate whether these outcomes are sustained over time.

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