SPIRITUALIZING HIP HOP WITH I.C.E.: THE POETIC SPIRITUAL

NARRATIVES OF FOUR BLACK EDUCATIONAL

LEADERS FROM HIP HOP COMMUNITIES

by

Alexis C. Maston

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
with a Major in Adult, Professional, and Community Education
May 2014

Committee Members:

　　Jovita Ross-Gordon, Co-Chair

　　John Oliver, Co-Chair

　　Ann K. Brooks

　　Raphael Travis, Jr.

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As the copyright holder of this work I, Alexis C. Maston, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is first dedicated to my Lord and personal savior Jesus without whom this study would not have been possible. You are Alpha, Omega, the beginning and the end, and I went on this journey because you directed me to. Secondly, I dedicate this to my paternal and maternal grandparents, Fred and Emma Jean Maston, and Jacqueline Perkins, what you did years ago in your own lives made it possible for me to obtain this great opportunity. Thirdly, this dissertation is dedicated to Hip Hop communities worldwide who have always carried the essence of spirituality; this dissertation will uncover some of that truth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First off, I would like to acknowledge my co-researchers/collaborative DJ's who helped to make this dissertation a reality. You all are going big places and I am happy to be a part of your lives to see your growth and development. To my dissertation chair, Dr. Ross-Gordon, thank you for taking a gamble on my topic and stepping into unknown waters by serving as my lead chair. Without your constant check-in's and true dedication to the work I would have never been able to write this. To my co-chair, Dr. John Oliver, thank you for allowing me to be Alexis "the hip hoppa" and "woman of faith" in this process and pushing me to be a grounded scholar. Dr. Travis, thank you for opening a whole new world to me of Hip Hop and individual and community empowerment, we have only just begun. Dr. Brooks, thank you for telling me that I could write and embracing the notion of poetic narrative analysis. There is no way possible to show my true gratitude to my entire committee, it is beyond words.

To my sistahs in college who helped me through this PhD process; Dr. Genise Henry, Dr. Rosiland Oliphant and soon- to- be Dr. Karen Lunkin, thank you for your words of encouragement, prayers, and diligence to keep me moving forward. Dr. Miguel Guajardo and Dr. Monica Valadez, thank you for being leader's in qualitative inquiry reform, and helping me to re-imagine inquiry and practice. To Barbara and Charles Morrison, a couple who had an insurmountable effect on life, you both planted seeds of ideas in me that I could be whomever I chose to be when I grew up, thank you for being great foster parents. Special shout to my best friends and confidants: Kim, Hector and

Juan Pablo for your love, humor, prayers and wisdom through this process. To Ruth O'Rourke, a spiritual mother, friend and prayer partner, words cannot express my gratitude only love can, thank you. To Prophet Lauro Adame who told me in 2007 that I would get a Ph.D., thank you for releasing those words. To Dr. Alexis Hall, meeting you in 2008 in Gainesville, Fl was the beginning of my doctoral journey; it reminded me of the words of destiny over my life, thank you for helping me with my entrance process. Dr. Cynthia Sims, thank you for encouraging me to apply to the PhD program, exposing me to conferences and being a great cheerleader, you mean the world to me. To my twin brother Allen Maston, this is your degree too!!! To the Maston family, thank you for your love and support. To Diann Gordon, Zenobia Joseph and Dr. Elizabeth Belasco, thank you for your help in the editing of this work.

To all of my friends and colleagues who have shared this space with me, cohort 10 especially, *we started from the bottom now we here.* For the various other people who loved me, fed me, theorized with me, pushed me forward and prayed and fasted for this to come into fruition. I will never forget, and that's a promise.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored how four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities used their spiritual narratives to inform their individual and community empowerment practices in their workplaces, communities and personal lives. Their acts of spiritualized empowerment were driven by esteem, resilience, growth, community and change. This arts-based collaborative study which was situated in the fields of adult education and educational leadership included myself and three other collaborative DJ's (co-researchers) who hailed from Hip Hop communities. We developed our individual and collaborative spiritual narratives by using poetic narrative analysis wherein the transcripts and other data such as spiritual REEL life maps were developed into poetry and then further analyzed. Data collection methods were ciphers, freestyle interviews, blogs, and document artifacts. Using the Individual and Community Empowerment (I.C.E.) framework (Travis & Deepak, 2011) five mini-narratives were derived from the analysis of the various data sources: *spiritual parenting, spiritual progression, the profane is spiritual the church is missional, hustle or live trying and new waves of digital.* Lastly, we arrived at new frameworks of understanding for future inquiries of those from these communities: Hip Hop educational leaders, Hip Hop methodologies and Hip Hop spirituality were theorized upon at the completion of the study.

I. SPIRITUALIZING HIP HOP WITH I.C.E: THE POETIC SPIRITUAL NARRATIVES OF FOUR BLACK EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

In the early 1970's an unknown phenomenon and urban artistic movement, later to be named Hip Hop, emerged out of the Bronx, New York (Dimitriadis, 2009). Factors such as urban disfigurement, joblessness, racial tension, gang activity, lack of support and communal resistance (Chang, 2005) created a socio-political climate that caused an oppressed urban youth to counter the effects of that climate through a manifestation of artistic expression. At this time, Hip Hop embodied Black and brown youth who developed four specific art forms referred to as Hip Hop artifacts. These Hip Hop artifacts included, Dj'ing, bboying, mc'ing and graffiti, which later became a combined culture called Hip Hop (Chang, 2005; Emdin, 2010). The Hip Hop culture was a way of life and embodiment of urban communities that prompted individuals who sought to have a voice amidst oppressive environments to be responsive to the socio-political climate in the United States through artistic expression (Chang, 2006; Emdin, 2010).

Currently, Hip Hop is not just music, and the four artifacts with which it originated are not just symbols (Chang, 2005, Rose, 2008). Instead, "…it is …a mind-state, a confidence, a swagger, and a commitment… an overall way of being" (Runnel-Hall, 2011, p.80). This way of life and being has mainly been positioned in a youth context. However, due to its coming of age in the last 40 years, Hip Hop is now ingrained in the identity and worldviews of many adults, particularly Black educational leaders who grew up in largely urban communities. Yet, literature has ignored these adults and their narratives, some of which are built upon spiritual foundations and have guided them in their individual and community empowerment practices. This

dissertation is dedicated to these educational leaders and their spiritual narratives. I embarked upon this study in order to understand how the traumatic and encouraging life experiences that led to individual and community empowerment are ingrained within a Hip Hop lifestyle, and how Hip Hop is an epistemology and a frame for life…my life and the lives of others, specifically Black educational leaders who come out of similar communities who are described themselves as embodying the culture of Hip Hop. Here it is important to note that this dissertation, similar to Kitwana's (2003) work, is not only focusing on the music component of the Hip Hop culture, but rather on individuals who were raised within the Hip Hop generation and cultural milieu who reside within what might be considered communities. Also, it is important to note that I am drawing from Paulo Freire's(1998) notion of spiritualize wherein he states individuals who are from oppressive backgrounds have the ability to make spiritual these daunting experiences.

Framing of Chapter One

Once while attending a youth church service event, the minister of music informed me that he knew that the Hip Hop culture was a beat culture; therefore, he brought his beat machine to accommodate the style of music that the youth enjoyed. He knew that in order to get their attention a beat had to precede the lyrics of the songs he would sing. Hip Hop music is arguably driven by the beat, and the lyrics follow this procession. Therefore in a Hip Hop fashion, and in order to frame and set the pace of this dissertation, this document began with the beat and the strongest component of the study, which is the methodological structure. Following the beat, the important lyrics were laid down, which were the background context, relevant literature, purpose statement, research questions, theoretical framework and a concluding chapter summary. This

format, embracing a Hip Hop culture is my remix to the traditional dissertation structure. By doing this, my desire is to achieve an authentic dissertation that is built upon tenets of culture, spirit and race (Milner, 2006)

As a result of remixing chapter one, the purpose statement, research questions and theoretical framework arrive in the latter pages of this chapter due to my leading with the beat, or the methodology on the front end of the dissertation introduction. Chapter One also includes an ample amount of vivid spiritual narratives illustrated in poetry, storied form and journal entries, which were important in order to allow this study to be grounded in an individual and community empowerment framework (Travis and Deepak, 2010) driven by a collaborative and artistic approach to narrative inquiry (Chase, 2005; Hall, 2001; Kurtz, 2012).

Methodological Structure

Culture, Spirit and Race Methods

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) have long called for researchers to disrupt their traditional methodologies and arrive at a more imaginative stage of inquiry. This includes redefining, redesigning and remixing research to include unconventional perspectives, methods, and analysis. Even still, dominant ideologies pervade academia and make it difficult for doctoral students and faculty of color to truly enact these unconventional forms of inquiry. Due to this, we have been conditioned to understand "academic research" as that which involves a limited enactment of creative and artistic methodologies that speak to our diverse identities.

Even still research that is built upon the tenets of culture, spirit and race as instrumental components in the methodology and analysis of empirical studies (Dillard,

2000; Tisdell, 2003; Milner, 2006) is finding its way into the academic arena.

Dissertations (Henry, 2013; Valadez, 2012) committed to the merging of art and science

to create spirit and heart led research (Lahman et al., 2011; Tisdell, 2003) are also

showing up at a faster pace in academia. These pieces of research are grounded in the

epistemological viewpoint that when researching people of color's life experiences,

studies must include collaborative and creative methods that speak to those who are

participating in their cultural and spiritual fabric (Dillard, 2006; Milner, 2006; Tisdell;

2003) which is rooted and built upon their Black identity as well as being from their

respective Hip Hop communities.

    For that purpose, and with the aforementioned in mind, art-based collaborative,

narrative inquiry and poetic narrative analysis were used to locate and understand the

spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders. This combined methodology of art-

based collaborative, narrative inquiry and poetic narrative analysis used in this study was

guided by our culture, (being a part of the Hip Hop generation), race (being a member of

the Black race) and spirit (being a person of faith, and believer that everything is God-

driven and God designed).

A Foundation for Art-Based Collaboration

    Two dissertations by Valadez (2012) and Henry (2013) were influential in the

development of the artistic methodological structure of this study. They encouraged me

to be bold, artistic, non-traditional and true to my beliefs in my research design. Using

tenets of critical ethnography Valadez (2012) developed a unique context of using "our"

instead of "I" and "we" instead of "me" throughout the writing, data collection and

analysis of her study. They (Valadez and her research partners) utilized collaborative

methods, alongside life maps, photographs and her personal paintings to understand their critical consciousness.

Also incorporating collaborative methods, Henry (2013) based her study on the spirituality of three Black educational leadership doctoral students within a quilted framework of darkened feminism and components of her own spirituality. Building upon this framework, these women incorporated autoethnographic spiritual life maps, poetry, and shared diaries to promote the development of six ethno-dramas representative of their personal and collaborative narratives of being Black doctoral students and exploring the role of spirituality in their experience and progress.

In both studies, the researchers positioned themselves within their study alongside their collaborative researchers. This was due to their reflective and critical awareness of attempting to better understand their holistic and spiritual selves alongside their research partners. In this process, they troubled the backdrop of traditional qualitative research and added to it their diverse perspectives by incorporating collaborative research methodology, which consisted of sharing power to co-develop and cultivate stories of change (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010; Valadez, 2012). These dissertations provided me a springboard to use words in this document like "we" and "us" when speaking of the collaborators. They also provided useful frameworks for me to draw from in positioning some components of this study.

Art–Based Collaborative & Narrative Inquiry

Hip Hop is built upon collaboration and mixing and merging to create and recreate narratives. Due to the desire to be authentic to Hip Hop, in order to locate our spiritual narratives, art-based collaborative approaches have been utilized. The art-based

collaborative approach positions those who participate in a study as co researchers, co-authors and co interpreters and allows them to artistically display their stories though mediums such as poetry, painting, music, performance and so forth (Hall, 2001; Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2007; Vannini, 2012). This methodological approach allowed power to be shared amidst the group instead of being solely located in one person (Patton, 2010).

The process involved myself and a group of co- researchers who collaboratively worked together to merge raw stories of individual narratives until we had joint ownership of the study and created larger constructed narratives (Kurtz, 2012; Patton, 2010). Using this method, we worked together to interpret and understand data and to develop several narrative poems accompanied by other artistic forms including a spiritual REEL life map. Our ability to co-create narratives that focus attention on the individual as much as the community aligns well with the ideas expressed in the Individual and Community Empowerment framework (Travis & Deepak, 2010) as it moved from the individual "me" to the joint "we" (Travis, 2012) to include a more collaborative lifestyle and approach. Here, the voices of the co-researchers were heard and not stifled by an authoritative lead researcher. Rather, they were uncovered by my being in the role of a group facilitator in the beginning stages and then a member of the study as it progressed. The goal then of this type of inquiry was not to persuade or prove a particular narrative. Rather it was predicated upon helping stories get back to their original place and to have a positive impact on the communities from which they emerge (Kurtz, 2012).

Collaborative DJ's/co-researchers. As the foundation for this study is created, it is important to introduce the co-researchers/ collaborative DJ's who participated in this

research. A DJ is a person who samples, spins, remixes, and composes pre-recorded music at a party or gathering (Chang, 2005; Rose, 1994). A DJ is also one of the historical art forms and artifacts of Hip Hop culture (Emdin, 2010). Historically, a DJ is used in reference to a disc jockey, or one who plays records at a party but this name has also been stated to mean delivering justice (KRS-One, 2003) by artistically playing records that showcase the narratives of those who have been silenced and, because of which, they metaphorically deliver justice to these people by privileging their voices alongside their communities. That is how I perceive myself: as one who delivers justice toward the soundtrack of life. So for this study, a collaborative DJ refers to two or more people who mix, sample, spin, remix prerecorded music (their spiritual narratives) and create a masterpiece (shared narratives) that represents their lived experiences.

Spiritual Narrative Data Representation

Historically, in Black church communities spiritual narratives are testimonies or praise reports guided by God that have been represented in poems, diaries, sermons, songs, letters and speeches (Black, 1999; Witherspoon, 2008). In her dissertation on the spirituality of Black women principals, Witherspoon (2008) used spiritual narratives as a mode of inquiry. In this context, she documented their autobiographical histories showcasing how with diverse ontological and epistemological standpoints, they negotiated their identities. Following suit with this idea of spiritual narratives, similar artistic components were woven throughout this study. The bulk of the narratives were situated as poetry in the data analysis and representation.

Spiritual Narrative Poems

In the *Bible*, Ephesians 2:10 defines people as God's workmanship. The Greek translation of workmanship is *poema*, which means a spoken work of art. In essence this depicts people as God's living poems (Lee, 2012). From this lens, we found it agreeable to situate the stories of the collaborative DJ's into poetic narratives better known as research poetry (Lahman et al., 2010) or poetic transcription (Glesne, 2010). This method involves using a research question as a road map to sift through various types of data and literature and being "spirit led" in choosing words, sentences, passages and phrases to create "found poems" (Glesne, 2010; Lahman, 2011; Prendergast, 2006; Richardson, 1997;Weems, 2012). "These siftings will be generally metaphorical, narrative, and affective in nature. The process is reflexive in that the researcher is interconnected with the researched, that the researcher's own affective response to the process informs it "(Prendergast, 2006, p.3). In this process, "...research poets listen to the stories that participants tell and find the poems within them, this whittling away of words to the heart of a matter delivers a powerful message that may equally intrigue and excite" (Lahman et al., 2011, p. 9). Ultimately, they locate the heart of the story (Lahman et al., 2011), and through poetic narrative analysis, the special and strange moments often negated in regular narrative analysis are brought together. In this approach, research poets highlight dreams, déjà vu's, repetition and preordained moments as rythmidic themes and not just circumstances or happenstance (Randall & Mckim, 2004). This nontraditional method of data representation and analysis allowed for the spirit, beat and lyrics of these spiritual Hip Hop narratives to come alive and speak across generations of race, class and gender as showcased in the self-created poem "the mis-education. "

My HipOgraphy

The Mis-Education

Was birthed amongst the dust and the embers

So no one else remembered

Six kids, foster homes

Crack pipes, broken home,

And broken bones

So I chose education

Like plans on cellular phone,

Had to change zones

So I could change me,

So I could be free.

At the same time, "The Message" was released, which was the first political rap song by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Fives the Hip Hop movie "Wild Style," was released, that would bridge all of the components of Hip Hop together, later to become what is now known as Hip Hop culture. 1982 was the year that I came into this world, born a twin. The birth of myself and my twin raised the total number of children to four, and my mother already had two children by another man. By the time I was two years old, my mother left my father to marry another man. This backdrop was the entrance into a traumatic childhood, which is described in the poem above, these experiences created a need in me to find a spiritual refuge. While "*The Message*" was discussing the social inequities that existed in several Black communities, my own social inequities were being experienced consisting of, as mentioned earlier in the poem "The Mis-Education," broken

bones, crack pipes and foster homes. Although the message was not understood then, as an adult woman, this message and that year are constantly reflected upon. This reflection prompts the realization of the impact of Hip Hop in my life today. Additionally, there is the understanding of the deep spiritual implications coinciding with my Hip Hop identity, worldview and the community which I am from.

Where I'm From

Blame it on where I'm from Centreville, IL

Four hours from Chicago

Yeah when the sun sets

My city rocks and when the moon sets

It rolls/ from dark murky Mississippi river I rose

And the situation could have been bleak

Last week ten men murdered same place

Different time all young and Black

And beautiful and blind

And they say that the murder rate has increased

This summer time

As opposed to being the number one in 2009

After being subjected to what I would call extreme pressure the first 14 years of my life, my grandparents, who lived in Centreville, Illinois, a subdivision of East St. Louis, Illinois and whom I had never previously met became my stability. I moved to Centreville, IL. Centreville is a small, Black majority, impoverished town of less than 30,000 people. The town suffers from urban blight. The landscape contains vacant or

burned down buildings, underdeveloped land and is infested with truck stops and strip clubs. Per capita, East St. Louis has the highest crime rate in the nation (American Fact Founder, 2012). Despite these adversities, I pushed through to accomplish my dreams. I finished high school and continued with my Bachelors in Administration of Justice/ Sociology and Masters of Science in Education. I grew up as a part of what is now considered the Hip Hop Generation, and I embraced Hip Hopness (Emdin, 2010) as a part of my identity. I have often personalized it stating, "I am Hip Hop" (Emdin, 2010). Hip Hop culture is interchangeable with the Hip Hop generation, community and movement; therefore, I may use different names that mean the same thing in this study.

According to Kitwana (2003) the Hip Hop generation is synonymous with Black young adults who were born after the civil rights movement from 1965-1984. He states that the term Generation X is more applicable to the White experience. He provides that the worldview, work ethic and hunger of these young Black adults is specific and manifests as a shared identity. While I agree with some of this, I still think the definition is limited. Therefore, for this dissertation, building upon Kitwana (2003) and with the help of several other scholars (KRS- One, 2003; Petchauer, 2007; Rose, 1994; 2012; Travis & Bowman, 2012; Travis & Deepak, 2010; West; 2003), I conceptualize Hip Hop as: A global multi-generational Afro-centric identity and worldview, not only contained in music or language, but also manifested in a diverse array of art forms, social expressions and practices towards individual and community empowerment.

Hip Hop Communities

The setting of this dissertation was four inner city Hip Hop communities in the United States. For the purpose of this study, the term Hip Hop communities are

11

synonymous with urban inner cities where Hip Hop culture, identities and worldviews exist in a much larger proportion than other neighborhoods (Emdin, 2010). According to Emdin (2010), those who grew up in these Hip Hop environments were automatically engrafted into the culture based upon their being immersed in it; that is; they did not have any choice in the matter. Within these neighborhoods exist disparities that descend from the impacts of hegemonic systems that created systems of poverty (KRS One, 2003; Williams, 2007). These systems helped to create impoverished communities that were inclusive of violence, drugs, gangs and several other inner city identifiers (Williams, 2007). Examples of these communities may be found in the inner cities of East St. Louis, Illinois; Chicago, Illinois; Miami, Florida; and Tampa, Florida. There are several other sites that could be included, but I have mentioned the above areas because the collaborative DJ's are from these places, and they seek to shed light on the disparities that exist within them and further the work that they are doing to help advance these particular places. While the aforementioned identifiers are prevalent in many Hip Hop neighborhoods that this qualitative study is not meant to overgeneralize or make blanket statements about ALL of the communities.

Background Context & Relevant Literature

"It was all a Dream"

In the beginning of the year 2012, I had a dream that caused me to wake-up in tears. In this dream, I was teaching the honors Hip Hop and Youth Development course at Texas State University. During class, some students from the high school I attended as a teenager came into the classroom with guns and began shooting at the students. They shot students and then proceeded to shoot at me while I was hiding underneath a table.

12

Although they aimed their guns directly at me, they paused and did not shoot. The police were called, and then the dream flashed to another scene where I was crying while I explained what was happening to the co-teacher of the course. When he asked me why I was crying, I said that I had not told the class the truth. When the dream ended, I reflected upon the meaning. What was the truth Alexis?

I came into my doctoral studies knowing that I wanted to study the adult Hip Hop culture, specifically those who came from inner cities, but what was the purpose of it all? What was the point of this dream? What was the connection with my past high school community and my current experience as a co-teacher and doctoral student in a predominately white institution? Here is what I realized: both of these experiences were spiritually interconnected. What I discussed in this predominately White class concerning my Hip Hop community had the ability to metaphorically produce death or life. While many students in the class were just cultural by-standers and lovers of Hip Hop music, I was actually born into this cultural milieu. Therefore, I had a responsibility to showcase the multiple narratives about my community, careful not to just perpetuate the media representation of Hip Hop but to add a nuanced viewpoint that investigated the experiences of those from Hip Hop communities at a deeper level. "When we make an observation we have an obligation" (Asante, 2008, p.1). Thus, I use this dream as an obligation and catalyst to address the powerful aspects within the culture, many of these that have spiritual implications. For me, these spiritual implications are the sole reason that I have taken on a leadership position. Within this position, I represent the culture as well as being a light, making a difference and preparing adults and youth in the generation to do the same in their respective communities.

Enter Lupe Fiasco

On MTV, rap artist and activist Lupe Fiasco cried on public television because he was dismayed about the murder rates in his hometown of Chicago. He felt that while he was doing as much as he could to be a good role model by his encouraging music and philanthropic efforts, he was still losing many friends to drugs and violence. He felt that his work in the community was fruitless and that he was the only one saved. I approach this research with similar sentiments to Lupe Fiasco's example alongside my dream and reflections about where I have come from, and my responsibility as an educational and community leader to use this awareness in supporting the challenges that face several Hip Hop communities.

<center>**The Spiritual Awakening**</center>

Within this chapter, the experiences mentioned are grounded in a deeply spiritual foundation. My own awakening came about from reflecting upon a dream, while Lupe Fiasco's came to him while looking back and reflecting on an experience that happened in his hometown of Chicago. These experiences have spiritual implications that must be examined at a closer level to cast a shadow on the current negative stories that presently exist about those who hail from these environments. While one cannot fully dismiss the ramifications that are problematic within these places, the instances illustrated above provide ample reason for scholars and practitioners to work toward understanding this generation, the communities that surround them and the use of spiritual narratives to influence greater individual and community transformation.

These experiences have allowed me to begin questioning and seeking answers about how multiple learning communities can embrace individuals like myself and others

<center>14</center>

who find themselves removed, yet still connected to struggling Hip Hop communities, and an unwavering faith and spirituality that guides them in their everyday practices. Amidst all of the violence, misogyny and negative attributes that can exist within the community from where I came from, I have used these experiences as catalyst to become an educational leader who serves the people**.**

Misunderstood Leaders

As a Black educational leader who grew up in a Hip Hop community, I have been confronted with problems of disconnection and misunderstanding in the places I have served in a leadership capacity. Based upon my Hip Hop worldview, Hip Hop identity and the Hip Hop community that I come from, I have found that I have often been viewed in a stereotypical light from the moment that I walk in. As Witherspoon (2008) proposes this discriminatory behavior can "systematically and institutionally" assault my spiritual and cultural epistemology and ontology as unworthy of being identified within the learning space where inclusion is embraced. Where there should be light, a negative forecast of Hip Hop has overshadowed my spiritual purpose to promote individual and community empowerment and the various ways I have chosen to showcase that empowerment. Thus, I began questioning myself, the Hip Hop community that I grew up part of, and whether anything good could come out of such communities and/or out of Hip Hop. As a result of my questioning, I have understood a need to voice my Hip Hop and spiritual narrative alongside others like myself who have been silenced when entering various communities of practice that have little understanding of the merger of Hip Hop and spirituality and thus less tolerance of those who operate from this worldview. As such, there is a need for research that uncovers the multilayered narratives that exist

15

within adult Hip Hop culture. A part of this conjecture is the spiritual narratives of Black educational leaders who were raised in Hip Hop communities and who incorporate spirituality to promote individual and community empowerment.

Problem Statement

The majority of Hip Hop literature discusses youth narratives and disregards the narratives of adults who grew up in Hip Hop communities and specifically for this study, those who are Black educational leaders. Furthermore, much of the mainstream media's focus has portrayed this culture as nihilistic, purposeless and a detriment to society (Chang, 2005; Rose, 2008), and this viewpoint seems to trickle down into the workplaces that these leaders serve. Yet, some autobiographical Hip Hop narratives convey opposing thought and convey the understanding that there are deeply spiritual experiences connected to adults who grew up in Hip Hop communities (Asante, 2008; Common, 2011; KRS One, 2003) that are coupled with developmental dimensions of individual and community empowerment inclusive of self-esteem, resilience, growth, community and change (Travis & Deepak, 2010). These spiritual narratives have been silenced within the broader context of scholarship. As a result, lacking are the empirical studies that address the phenomenon of spirituality and Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities and how it can be useful in understanding these leaders and their communities.

Purpose of Study

Adult education scholars have cited spirituality as being a natural element of adult developmental narratives (Tisdell, 2003); these can be cited as spiritual narratives. Furthermore, scholars in the fields of Educational Leadership and Adult Education are

recognizing inner city Hip Hop communities as important sites for research (Beachum &

Mccray, 2011; Guy, 2004; Land & Stovall; 2006; Price, 2005; Prier, 2012) stating that if

we continue to disregard these places we will ultimately lose a generation of people

(Ladson-Billings, 2010) who encompass an abundance of gifts (Block & McKnight,

2010). For that reason, there is a need for research that unearths the multi-dimensional

identities of adult members of Hip Hop culture around the world and how spirituality

plays a part in their personal, professional and spiritual lives and specifically in this

context, Black adults who identify as educational leaders. Thus, building upon the

research that discusses the dynamics of educational leaders from Hip Hop communities

of Runnel-Hall (2011) and Bridges (2010), this dissertation sought to delve deeper into

the analysis of these leaders and uncover how spirituality informs our personal narratives

and individual and community empowerment initiatives.

　　　Thus, the purpose of this dissertation was twofold: to uncover and highlight the

spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders and to provide a counter story to the

current Hip Hop culture literature as "young, nihilistic and purposeless" by showing how

these narratives empower these leaders individually and within their local communities.

Theoretical Framework

Journal Entry-The process of finding a theory that would fit in this study has been one of

great trial and error, mix and match and fitting. Every time I found one that I thought

would work it did for a little while and then I found several components of it that are not

representative of the Hip Hop culture. After a semester of doing this back and forth I

found the theory right under my nose, it was the theory of a dear colleague and friend

with whom I co-taught the Hip Hop course that I dreamed about mentioned earlier in this

text…..aha! The alchemistic journey of returning back to your original destination of departure to find the treasure right where you began.

Individual and Community Empowerment

This study incorporated an overarching interdisciplinary theoretical framework called the Individual and Community Empowerment framework "I.C.E" (Travis & Deepak, 2010; Travis, 2012. This interdisciplinary theory was useful for this study because it was created to better understand the developmental narratives in Hip Hop culture, that is, the essential components that accompany individuals from Hip Hop communities' growth progression. Spiritual narratives can also exist within these developmental narratives and theoretical dimensions. Spiritual narratives are ordinary life narratives guided by one's religion or spiritual worldview where it is acknowledged that spirituality is always present and woven into their everyday lived experiences (Witherspoon, 2008).

For this study, the process of this development was situated within five dimensions: self-esteem, resilience, growth, community and change (Travis & Deepak, 2010). The five components of this theory were important to this study because they showcased how the educational leaders from these Hip Hop communities used these components in conjunction with their spirituality to promote change in themselves and their surroundings. While this theory was specifically geared towards youth, the themes are also transferable to adult culture. Travis (2011) articulates that narratives from Hip Hop communities may add to the discourse of lifespan development. This is consistent with Tisdell's (2003) viewpoint that spirituality is an integral part of adults'

developmental narratives and in how they live, love, and create meanings in their past, present and future lives.

The main assumption of this theory is that the developmental narratives within Hip Hop culture are also aligned with one's individual and community empowerment initiatives (Travis, 2012); these can also include spiritual narratives. This model provides a platform for these narratives to be situated and serves as a tool for social justice intervention for the individuals immersed in this culture and the communities that they value (Travis, 2012). This theory is discussed further in Chapter Two.

Research Questions

The following research questions are grounded in the Individual and Community Empowerment framework (Travis and Deepak, 2011; Travis, 2011; 2012). The research questions that were used to understand and uncover our spiritual narratives were:

1.) What are the spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities?

2.) How have the spiritual narratives of these leaders influenced their personal growth and development?

3.) How do the spiritual narratives of these leaders influence community empowerment?

Significance of Study

The introduction of the spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities fostered insight on leaders who operate from a cultural and spiritual standpoint. As such, it aided in providing insight into the preparation, hiring, development and mentorship of leaders with similar experiences. Further, by doing this

19

research, I hoped to shed light on how the spiritual narratives of these leaders are coupled

with their community empowerment initiatives and as a result, provide a counter story to

the negative stereotypes that pervade many Hip Hop communities and individuals who

situate themselves as part of the culture. Lastly, this type of research has enhanced a

growing body of multi-disciplinary research on Hip Hop culture/communities/generations

specifically in the fields of Educational Leadership and Adult Education and to create a

compelling argument for the use of nontraditional research methods in dissertations and

other academic scholarship.

<div align="center">**Spiritualizing Hip Hop**</div>

Research suggests that educators must look to the historical foundations of Black

Americans to understand the intersection of their spirituality, aesthetics and religious

experiences and how these are applicable to educational leadership (Dantley, 2003;

Sawyer, 2000). Black history solidifies a communal foundation in religion and

spirituality before the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Furthermore, starting from the

oppression that was experienced in slavery through now spirituality and/or religion has

often been woven into the grand narrative of the Black experience (Dantley, 2003;

Dillard, 2006; Milner, 2006; Witherspoon, 2008).

Hip Hop is an embodiment of Black culture everywhere (Dyson, 2003): therefore,

spirituality is also woven into the layers of the Black race epistemological fabric.

Research indicates that for many Black educational leaders, culture and spirit in some

form is a part of their foundational roots from childhood and serves as the internal

grounding of their epistemologies (Dantley, 2003; Dillard, 2006; Milner, 2006).

Therefore, some of the leaders/change agents who hail from sometimes oppressive "Hip

Hop" neighborhoods have the creative ability to "spiritualize" the world and in which

take inherently ugly situations and make them beautiful by intervening with practices

grounded in social justice (Freire, 1998, p.53) in spite of their experiences. In other

words, they have the ability to look at oppressive things from a spiritual vantage point

and see the good out of what is deemed negative. With this lens, these leaders are driven

to social justice initiatives (Dantley, 2003) and to be change agents within the

communities they serve. These stories are often negated and lost in the larger society due

to the mass-cultural leaning towards commercialization (Rose, 1994). Yet, as a Black

educational leader who grew up in these dual communities of a Christian faith and Hip

Hop, I see many themes within Hip Hop and spirituality that converge. Therefore, this

dissertation seeks to inform the existent research by offering the spiritual narratives of

four Black educational leaders (one being myself).

Spirituality

Spirituality is a life-filled path, a spirit-filled way of living… A path is not goal oriented.

A path is the way itself, and every moment on it is a holy moment; a sacred seeing goes

on there (Fox, 1991, p, 11),

When researching the word spirituality it became apparent to me that there are

several definitions for this word. Above we see Fox's (1991) definition, which is really

rich and gave me another way of viewing in the context of this dissertation. Yet, for this

study, I use a definition of spirituality that fits within the context of research on

educational leadership, as evidenced in the work of professor and scholar Noelle

Witherspoon, and within recent work in the field of adult education, as showcased in the

work of professor and scholar Elizabeth Tisdell (2003). In her dissertation on the

spiritual experiences of Black principals, Witherspoon (2008) framed a merger of religion and spirituality entitled religo-spirituality which is built upon the idea of that for Black people there is an inseparability of spirit and soul driven by long tradition and history of spirituality and religion in the African American community that is evident in their everyday practices. Elizabeth Tisdell's (2003) research is also useful for this definition. Her research conveys that spirituality can be situated within an artistic context, and for Black people it may be driven by their religious affiliations. Thus, for this study, spirituality is conceptualized as "… a sense of the connectedness of history, as well as the interconnectedness and unity of life and a sense of transcendence through what many define as a higher power"(Tisdell, 2003, p.2) that drives one's values, meanings and practices within their communities (Dantley, 2003; Tisdell, 2003; Witherspoon, 2008). This definition can also extend to Hip Hop communities and the educational leaders who come from them.

Definition of Terms

Arts-Based Collaborative Research- An arts-based collaborative approach positions those who partake in a study as co researchers, co-authors and co interpreters and allows them to artistically display their stories though mediums such as poetry, painting and music. This methodological approach allows power to artistically be shared amidst the group instead of being solely on one person ((Hall, 2001; Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2007; Patton, 2010; Vannini, 2012).

Collaborative DJ's- KRS One (2003) frames the word DJ (traditionally disc jockey) as deliverers of justice. Building upon this term and combining the tenets of arts based collaborative research; I call the collaborators in this study Collaborative DJ's.

Educational leader- Drawing from Northhouse (2010), an educational leader is anyone who serves in an educational setting in public, community or university and who provides guidance, instruction, and direction to a group of other individuals to achieve a key result.

Hip Hop Communities- Hip Hop communities are synonymous with urban inner cities where Hip Hop culture, identities and worldviews exist in a greater majority than other neighborhoods (Emdin, 2010).

Hip Hop Worldview- A mind-state, a confidence, a swagger and a commitment… an overall way of being" (Runnel-Hall, 2011, p.80) that is driven by Hip Hop based components such as arts, music, dress and speech (KRS One, 2003).

Poetic Narrative Analysis-Turning interview transcripts into poetry and creating narratives from these (Glesne, 2010; Lahman et al., 2011).

Remix –the art of taking samples from pre-existing materials to combine them into new forms (Chang, 2005)

Spirituality- "… a sense of the connectedness of history, as well as the interconnectedness and unity of life and a sense of transcendence through what many define as a higher power"(Tisdell, 2003, p.2) that drives ones values, meanings and practices within their communities (Dantley, 2003; Tisdell, 2003; Witherspoon, 2008).

Spiritual Narratives- Spiritual narratives are ordinary life narratives guided by one's religion or spiritual worldview acknowledging that spirituality is always present and woven into their everyday lived experiences (Witherspoon, 2008).

Hip Hop Artifacts – Hip Hop culture is comprised of four historical elements/artifacts these are mc'ing (master of ceremonies, may be one who raps, or speaks at a party); djing (one who spins records); bboying (one who dances in a Hip Hop fashion including

breakdancing, pop lockin, or other new urban dances like the Nae Nae or South Dallas

Swaggin); graffiti (one who draws or tags (Emdin, 2010)

Chapter Summary

This dissertation examines the role that Hip Hop and spirituality play in shaping

the narratives of four Black Hip Hop educational change agents from Hip Hop

communities or inner cities, who work in K-12 or higher educational settings in

leadership capacities. This research seeks to uncover how Hip Hop culture and

spirituality serve as an integrated positionality in how these leaders construct reality,

perform their identities and through which act out their praxis (Freire, 1998). For this

study, there was an emphasis upon arts based collaborative methods inclusive of narrative

inquiry and poetic narrative analysis. Furthermore, these components were housed

within an individual and community empowerment framework. I began this dissertation

by writing my own spiritual Hip Hop narrative in poetic and narrative form; I attempted

to add validity and authenticity to the research. Towards the end of Chapter I, the

dissertation terms that were used in this study have been listed. Lastly, a road map was

provided discussing the way the dissertation was developed.

II. REMIXING THE LITERATURE

I was born into poverty, raised in the sewage streets always be a part of me, they made me the truest and even when my days were the bluest/never ran from adversity instead I ran to it/fear ain't in the heart of me/ I learned just to do it/ you get courage in your fears right after you go through it (T.I, 2011)

Framing the Literature Review

The reason for this dissertation was based upon my need to address both my spiritual ontology and Hip Hop worldview. Therefore, it is important that all the pieces of it are aligned with this methodological standpoint from start to finish. Consequently, the literature review was also very non-traditional and authentic to this way of knowing. Thus, drawing from the bricolage technique, which consists of the artistic reworking into a scholarly context material containing fiction, poetry, drama, music and visual art (Wibberley, 2012), and by adopting some of the methods which other literature reviews in other dissertations have employed (Henry, 2013), such as weaving deeply connected text, such as spiritual songs, prayers, art and poems together to crystallize and inform the literature, this follows suit in what I call a remixed literature review.

Remixed Literature Review

The idea of a remixed literature review is grounded within a curriculum theory viewpoint contending that text can be any living, breathing, cultural, historical and physical artifact (poem, prayers, and songs) able to create viable sources of literature and data collection (Braszile, 2000). As such, in order to provide Hip Hop authenticity and reliability certain colloquial literature that may include my own personal story, poems, songs, films and journal entries were woven into the literature review alongside scholarly

literature. This grey literature became the data foundation that in this document that binds it together. In Hip Hop, a remix is the art of taking samples from pre-existing materials to combine them into new forms (Chang, 2005).

The Path

For this literature review, I initially began with a Google scholar search to provide insight about the topic. I began by typing in Hip Hop, spirituality and Black educational leaders. From this search, random, loosely connected literature and three useful dissertations emerged. Next, I proceeded to use the Texas State University library database where I incorporated EBSCO, Academic Search Premier and Proquest to locate scholarly journal articles, dissertations and books. For the search using these databases, I used terms including "Hip Hop," "Hip Hop culture," "Hip Hop generation," "Spirituality," "Spiritual Narratives" "Black educational leaders" and "Adults" and "Individual and Community Empowerment".

In the first section of this literature review, I discuss empirical and theoretical studies that undergird this dissertation.   Secondly, I the spiritual narratives are discussed. Thirdly, the five components of the individual and community empowerment theoretical framework are specified. Next, there is an in depth discussion of a Hip Hop perspectives inclusive of a Hip Hop worldview, identity and stereotypes. Then, an explanation of Hip Hop and spirituality follows. Lastly, the picture of the conceptual framework that was built from this literature review is previewed.

<center>**Relevant Empirical and Theoretical Literature**</center>

Hip Hop and Adult Education

   There are a few adult education scholars who have included Hip Hop in conjunction with their popular culture literature (Tisdell, 2003; Redmon-Wright & Sandlin, 2010). There is only a limited amount of literature that specifically addresses adults and Hip Hop culture (Guy, 2004; Price, 2005; Hanley, 2007) or takes into account how being a part of this culture impacts adult development and life experiences. Guy (2004) and Price (2005) support this notion by being the first to address Hip Hop in adult education calling upon adult educators to view Hip Hop as a serious cultural movement in urban communities and beyond. Hanley (2007) adds to this idea by addressing the need for K-12 teacher's professional development to focus on understanding Hip Hop culture. She says this can provide a transformative learning experience in the classroom that could elicit critical reflection for both student and teacher. Redmon-Wright & Sandlin (2010) also call to attention Hip Hop (music) as being useful for critical reflection in the adult education classroom. Yet, the conversation stops there without any real analysis of how and why Hip Hop impacts the lives of adults from various cultures, and for the purpose of this study, Black adults. Although Price (2005) promotes taking the culture seriously, his sentiments seem to be at the surface level and disconnected from adults who actually are an active part of Hip Hop culture/communities. Consequently, his scholarship, while valid to the field, seems to mirror Guy (2004) and Hanley's (2007) shortcomings or oversight in that they do not discuss how Hip Hop impacts adults' worldviews, identities, or lifestyles. Furthermore, they continue to frame it just as a site for critical reflection for adults and youth but not as a valid lifestyle for these individuals

<center>27</center>

that carries spiritual implications that can include individual and community empowerment initiatives. As a result, while useful in building the foundation for this study, these theoretical pieces only provide surface level discussions about adult Hip Hop culture. Due to this, this study will speak to this gap specifically in the context of Black educational leaders, Hip Hop, spirituality and narratives.

Educational Leaders and Hip Hop

While there is a lack of traditional adult education literature that addresses adults and Hip Hop culture, a number of dissertations in other fields of study have loosely discussed the Hip Hop worldviews and life histories of these individuals, particularly those who are within educational settings.   For instance, educational professionals (Runnell-Hall, 2011), teacher leaders (Bridges, 2009), and parents (Munn-Joseph, 2007) have been included in the literature. These were useful to this literature review because they helped to form the foundation for the study and to also address the need for more studies that discuss Black leaders from Hip Hop communities in educational roles.

While Runnell-Hall's (2011) qualitative dissertation did not research only Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities, the majority of her participants were people of color. Her study used grounded theory to discuss the pedagogy of 23 Hip Hop educators in their mid 30's to 40's. Findings indicated that the participants brought Hip Hop practices and worldviews into their workplaces that were built upon social justice. Additionally, each participant shared similar attributes, political involvement, community involvement and artistry (Runnell-Hall, 2011). Their Hip Hop practices fostered vulnerability, cultivated strength, encouraged critical thinking and allowed for diverse social identity. In her implications, this study touched upon the idea that growing up Hip

Hop gave these leaders a spiritual connectivity with the culture that pushed them towards social justice initiatives for others within the generation.

Munn-Joseph (2007) completed a qualitative study of eight Black parents in their 30s-40's who self-identified with Hip Hop. Through in-depth interviews, key similarities were found in their personality traits consisting of authenticity, directness and racial pride. Major themes that emerged were the participants' abilities to transform rather than conform to dominant ideology. Finally, this dissertation addressed how all of these traits were informed by a Hip Hop worldview. This dissertation provided a look at individuals who situate themselves as adults within Hip Hop culture and who use their Hip Hop identity to connect with younger children in the generation. As such, it provided a glimpse into the life of a Hip Hop adult and added their voices to the literary conversation.

While not looking at "educational leaders" in the traditional sense of the term, Bridges' (2009) dissertation used critical race theory and life history to analyze the pedagogies of nine Black teachers who grew up as a part of the Hip Hop generation. In this research, he examined their social, political, educational and cultural experiences in connection to Hip Hop culture and how these impacted their beliefs as educators. His findings indicated that these non-traditional Hip Hop perspectives and experiences deeply guided them as educational leaders and helped them to foster interconnectedness with their students, particularly Black males.

While the aforementioned studies were useful in understanding some of the worldviews, life histories, pedagogies and beliefs of these specific educational leaders, they did not explore at any length how spirituality played a part in their personal,

educational and political narratives. Even still, these studies were useful in understanding how Hip Hop played an integral role in some Black educational leaders' lives. Looking deeper, I was able to discover more information that discussed Black educational leaders and spirituality.

Black Educational Leaders and Spirituality

Afrocentric literature justifies the claim that those of African descent have spirituality embedded and embodied within their phenotypes. Recently, in the field of educational leadership, Black scholars have highlighted the theme of spirituality within Black educational leadership. These themes have dealt with prophetic and critical spirituality (West, 2003; Dantley, 2003), feminist spirituality (Hooks, 2003, Okpalaoka & Dillard, 2011), Womanist spirituality/theology (Kirk- Duggan & Hall, 2011; Witherspoon& Mitchell, 2009) and social justice spirituality (Capper and Dantley, 2010, Reed & Johnson, 2010). Yet, this understanding of the importance of spirituality to the Black experience is often overlooked and disregarded in academia, as well as within the system worlds of the schools. Raboteau (2000) suggests that the spirituality of Black educational leaders cannot be estranged from social justice action. Rather, Black leaders like Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks at the core of social justice and the impetus for several historical movements lead spirituality. Witherspoon (2008) suggests that the confines of education have uninvited the conversation of Black spirituality, religion and educational leadership and conveys a message of exclusion rather than inclusion. Blacks often find themselves forced to suppress their spirituality and are driven into silence. This ordeal denounces the true essence of Black spirituality, which is to uplift a generation.

Informed by historical spiritual narratives, slave narratives, and fictional works of Black authors, like Alice Walker, Witherspoon's (2008) dissertation researched the *religio-spirituality* (for her this included the merger of spirituality and religion that was ingrained in the lives) of four Black women principals using spiritual narratives as a mode of inquiry. In this context, she documented their autobiographical histories showcasing how they negotiated their identities, despite diverse ontological and epistemological standpoints, and incorporating six tenets of womanist theology radical subjectivity, traditional communalism, redemptive self-love, critical engagement, appropriation and reciprocity, and spirit love (Mitchem, 2002).

In the dissertation, *A Knock at Midnight: A Pedagogy of Womanist Spirituality*, educational leader Valerie Moss (2011) merges spirituality and education to discuss her and her mother's experiences as Black teacher/educational leaders. She uses womanist theology to unpack this journey wherein she draws from the works of Weems (1993). She creatively integrates auto-ethnography with *Bible* narratives. Employing the methods of spiritual autobiography and narrative inquiry, she uniquely tells their story. In her narration, she illuminates the stories, voices and experiences of Black women and highlights their "courage, intelligence, persistence, heritage, persecution, hopelessness, unity, abuse and devotion" (p.2). By doing this, she provides a counter story of survival and endurance predicated upon the belief that freedom is through and from the divine, by which all challenges in the Black community can be healed. Findings indicated that these Black educational/teacher leaders used their religion and spirituality as a combined worldview to promote their pedagogy, practice and everyday livelihood.

When accessing the literature on Hip Hop and adults, educational leaders and Hip Hop, and Black educational leaders and spirituality, it becomes evident that while much work has been done to interject the voice of spirituality and faith into the literature that there is still need to look at this from a cultural, spiritual and racial dynamic (Dillard, 2006; Milner, 2006) and include more research on diverse groups of educational leaders and spirituality. Therefore, there is need for an empirical study that combines all of the aforementioned factors. Combined with my interest in the influence of Hip Hop on the identities of Black educational leaders, this merger can then be an attempt to understand the spiritual narratives of Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities.

Theoretical Framework

Individual and Community Empowerment Revisited

Amidst Hip Hop culture that many view in a negative light, a paradigm shift is taking place. Within Hip Hop communities, a greater spiritual emphasis is emerging that addresses social injustice with a counter narrative of personal growth and development and community well-being (Travis, 2012). Hip Hop's individual and community empowerment characteristics embody principles of the *ubuntu* concept, which moves from concerns of the individual "me" to the collective "we" (Travis, 2011). While useful in deconstructing the current narratives that surround Hip Hop communities, this spiritual repositioning has been demonstrated in several facets from higher education classrooms (Petchauer, 2012) to community outreach (Bynoe, 2004) and in several other emerging endeavors. The emphasis is on deconstructing the current dysfunctional, unhealthy, problem focused narrative to include facets of personal growth and development, social justice, spirituality and community (Travis, 2011; Emdin, 2010; Prier, 2012).

One way that Hip Hop serves these individuals in a spiritual capacity is the responsibility they feel to give back to their perspective communities. Yet, the media often ignores these noteworthy attempts. Several of these spiritual attempts are aligned with the individual and community empowerment dimensions that exist in Hip Hop culture (Travis, 2012) which are also seemingly disregarded in the wider landscape of things. These empowerment themes often emerge as individuals mature socio-politically, and in such, there begins a process of "feeling better (self-esteem), doing better (resilience), being better (growth), having a better sense of belonging (community), and advocating change for better conditions in communities they belong to (change)" (Travis, 2012, p. 8).

These five components are also closely aligned to the adult development theory, which is identified as "the systematic change within an individual or a group of individuals that results from dynamic interaction of heredity and environmental issues" (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 298). According to Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007), adult development can be experienced both socio-culturally and psychologically, and these experiences can be situated within identity, the importance of work, the family life cycle, physical development, health and aging. Similarly, the individual growth and development of the four collaborative DJ's in this study was noted through their spiritual narratives.

The ICE framework was traditionally situated as a theory for adolescent youth; however, for the purposes of this study, these tenets were investigated discussing them from an adult perspective. Overall, Travis & Deepak (2010) articulated that some of the individual and community empowerment themes when seen from a Hip Hop vantage

point can be deemed as negative (risky) or positive (non-risky) but they still have

empowerment components within them, which in time can serve as a catalyst toward

better growth and development of those who situate themselves within this culture.

Empowerment

The overarching theme that undergirds the ICE framework is empowerment.

Travis (2012) defines this as "…the process by which individuals develop the

consciousness, skills and power necessary to envision personal or collective well-being

and understand their role within opportunities to transform social conditions to achieve

that well-being" (p.8).

> …The empowered individual is less likely to feel hopeless or helpless; less likely
>
> to feel victimized; less likely to perceive continued adversity. The empowered
>
> individual is actively working to fulfill their perceived potential by using their
>
> existing knowledge, positive attitudes and interpersonal skills. At the community
>
> level, empowered adults and youth work to envision change in the broader social,
>
> political and economic system and their role in creating positive change' (Travis,
>
> 2012, p.8).

The five dimensions of this theoretical framework are self-esteem, resilience, growth,

community and change and discussed in detail below.

Self Esteem. Self-esteem remains a popular research topic especially as it pertains

to Black communities (hooks, 2003). Some literature has addressed the lack of self-

esteem of Black people due to extrinsic issues such as social status, racism and

stereotypes linked to skin color (hooks, 2003). Others have made mention of the levels

of high self-esteem held within the Black community, specifically those within the Hip

Hop community (Travis, 2012). The first tenet of ICE is self-esteem and is associated with one "feeling better" about him/herself (Travis & Deepak, 2010). Travis (2012) contends one can become empowered by a strong connection to the person's cultural and ethnic identities/symbols/ customs and can develop feelings and emotions giving the individual a strong sense of self-achievement and awareness (Travis, 2012) even in oppressive settings. Travis (2012) cites the Hip Hop community as having four ways of showcasing one's self esteem which are 1) the ability to navigate life challenges; 2) the ability to reject societal restraints; 3) the ability to be a hard worker/hustlers and master skills in one's life craft; 4) the ability to succeed in one's life goals in oppressive, exploitative situations. For these individuals, their self-esteem comes from cultural and ethnic pride being a part of a strong people who have persevered during tumultuous times.

A major factor in the historical development of self-esteem in Black people has been the Black church (hooks, 2003). The Black church has allowed Black people to cope with some of the impacts of societal racism that paint them as not beautiful or intelligent (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011), and the church replaces that with the fact that they are "fearfully and wonderfully made" in God's image (Psalms 139:14, NIV). Further, they may be encouraged with the biblical and proverbial sentiment that being fearfully and wonderfully made, they are endowed with God given purpose and future infused with success (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV). While those who are from Hip Hop communities and embrace a certain level of Hip Hop identity have often felt ostracized by the brick and mortar church (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011), many still rely upon its central tenets to be authentic in their self-image and lifestyle. For instance, in the last

five years there has been a large majority of *Hip Hoppas* embracing their cultural identity by wearing their natural hair in afro's, dreadlocks and braids. This spiritual and political action speaks to hooks' (2003) notion that Black self-esteem is tied to social action and by embracing it, one demonstrates one's true identity. In the song "*Murder to Excellence*" Jay Z and Kanye West (2011) allude to feelings of self-esteem and pride when they state: It's all Black I love us. This feeling of pride for being from the Black race no doubt came from the ability to make it in dire situations and perpetuates their high levels of self-esteem.

Resilience. Travis and Deepak (2011) cite resilience as a secondary dimension of the ICE framework and place it alongside *doing better*. In this category, resilience means the ability to reflect upon one's personal life story, which may embody the tension of hardship, and the individual may become empowered. Here the encouraging benefit stems from the ability to voice one's experiences either bad or good. Sometimes these feelings are anger and/or pain experienced or witnessed (Travis, 2012). Secondly, resilience includes one's ability to cope or overcome adverse and traumatic conditions and being able to move beyond them. Here, resilience is associated with words like expressive, coping and survival (Travis, 2012). Black people come from a lineage of stories of resilience, having had to make it through many and varied struggles and continuing to move forward in spite of the obstacles (Witherspoon, 2008). This resilience is demonstrated in songs in the Black church like "How I Got Over" and "I Don't Feel No Ways Tired".

Similar to these examples are the narratives that evolve from Hip Hop communities, which are spiritual and packed with resilience. For instance, Hip Hop

activist, rapper, actor and business man Common (2011) explains his own spiritual

narrative of resilience wherein he discusses being raised in the inner city of Chicago,

which was immersed in gang violence, drugs and financial hardship. He states that it was

with the Lord's guiding and favor that allowed him to make it through that rough place.

Another example of resilience is conveyed in the lyrics of rapper and political advocate

Pharaoh Monche

> They said, please do not run to fast/ stay off of the leaves/ do not play in
>
> the grass or climb in the trees/ you can't breathe, let alone you get stung
>
> by bees/Lord Jesus your chest might freeze up/13 months old with a lung
>
> disease/ that almost took my life twice brought me to my knees/ a system
>
> not designed for you to achieve/ Police squeeze library lies/ teacher
>
> deceives/ but rose to the top of my class like a cream/ I'm clear it was a
>
> miracle with way I whetted the rhythm/spiritual looking back at it a lyrical
>
> exorcism/ half of the Afro-American dream (2012)

Here Pharaoh discusses his health issues and how growing up teachers dismissed him yet

how he rose from the bottom and made it to the top. This is a picture of resilience and

how those who are within the Hip Hop community have the ability to emerge through

dire situations and stand in spite of the issues that prevail.

   Growth. The third dimension of the ICE framework is growth. This component is

described as the individual being better and being able to identify and embrace a positive

thriving lifestyle (Travis, 2012). Growth may be demonstrated as one thriving and

flourishing in the person's respected communities in lieu of unpleasant situations (Travis

& Deepak, 2010). Critical reflection can also be connected to one's growth and development and transformational learning in Hip Hop culture (Guy, 2004).

For instance, a picture of growth/ transformation is the experience of rap artist and entrepreneur Jay Z who post 30 dresses in a suit, runs a multibillion-dollar industry and is married with children. The interesting component to Jay Z's story is that his behaviors once mirrored the Marcy projects from which he came. That is, he did things that could be deemed in a negative light, and he was associated with people who embraced a similar risky lifestyle. But at some point, he decided that lifestyle was not for him. Jay Z referenced his own faith walk in leaving that life behind stating, "I had to get off the boat so I could walk on water" (2006). In this statement, he referred to Peter in the *Bible* getting off the boat to follow Jesus and compared Peter's departure to his own "getting off the boat" with individuals who were living in the past so that he could follow his dreams. This is a picture of growth, and it is similar to the idea of transformational learning. Transformational learning may also be referred to in terms of a life-changing event, which pivots an individual in a different direction (Meizrow, 1995). Here it seems to be similar to the Greek word Metanoia or in English, repentance meaning "…a change of mind, a reorientation, a fundamental transformation of outlook, of an individual's world and his/himself … [in connection with] …loving others and the universe" (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

These are not unique characteristics that Jay Z exhibits. On the contrary, there are several others in the maturing Hip Hop community, who regardless of negative media portrayal, live successful lives. Even still, as there are a growing number of adults that rise above the norm in Hip Hop culture, they continue to be pegged as highly immature

(Gordon, 2005) and lacking adult credibility. Another example of growth in Hip Hop is Lauryn Hill's faith process in which she asks "to find a peace of mind" in ridding herself of all of the things that she participated in pre awareness. From this place she begs the other members of Hip Hop to come a long on a journey of self-renewal and spirit revival. Another example of this is displayed in Big Krit's song *the Vent*

> Tryna take heed for what I say in my songs/forgive me if I ever ever steered you wrong/Most people stop for signs/ but I've driven through it/If it don't touch my soul/ then I can't listen to it/The radio don't play the s*** I used to love/or maybe I'm just growing up/I never seen a star on a red rug/if I wanna see stars I just look above to the heavens (Big Krit, 2011).

  He discusses how with age and development he changed his previous viewpoints as a rapper which mainly consisted of pimps and hoes, cars and clothes, idol gods, golden calves, and louie scarfs (2011) to a more spiritualized perspective. Here he addresses taking responsibility about his immaturity in his previous songs, which in his opinion mentally placed him and others behind bars. From this statement we recognize how growth caused Big Krit to become more cognizant about what he said to his community and how it impacted their growth and development. Growth can be articulated in various facets ranging from educational attainment to job readiness to building strong relationships. These things are discussed further as we move into community.

Community. The importance of belonging and being able to identify with a certain community is a dominant theme within Hip Hop narratives and music (Travis, 2012). This brings us to the third theme within I.C.E referred to as community, which Travis & Deepak (2010) define as having a *better sense of belonging* to one's community

39

of choice. In rap songs, it is customary to hear a person make reference to the community with a sense of solitary or honor. For many who hail from these environments, just stating the name of the community is valid enough to elicit a response of admiration. For instance, in his music rapper and teacher Dee 1 often makes reference to being from New Orleans in his music, he does it to the point where we understand that he wants to give love to the place he was raised and the people who helped in the process. Furthermore, he seems to want to showcase that something good can come out of a community that was stricken with a tragedy like Hurricane Katrina and the events surrounding around it.

Referencing community and the aforementioned sense of belonging, Rose (2008) cited the Chronicle of Philanthropy, stating that due to their commitment and dedication, African Americans give back 25 percent more of their discretionary income to their home communities than other races/ethnic groups do in their communities. Hip Hop consists of a large majority of African Americans and therefore these are also are a part of this demographic of individuals who give. Adult Hip Hop artists like Common, 50cent, Russell Simmons and Queen Latifah have used their power for community based strategies, funding scholarships and self-help initiatives to create social change (Rose, 2008). Furthermore, others who are a part of the adult Hip Hop culture have also embarked on similar efforts, such as in ministerial roles (Kylloen, 2007), in community activism (Bynoe, 2004) college students (Petchauer, 2007) and other dynamic capacities.

While the aforementioned studies reference adults, the scholars writing about this topic often speak to the youth culture they serve as Hip Hop, instead of from an auto-ethnographic perspective that divulges their own experiences as part of the Hip Hop

community. Adding to this tension, it seems that the commercialization and machinery of Hip Hop culture seeks to paint the culture as solely youth in an attempt to continue to "dumb down" and narrow its cultural relevance to adults and society as a whole. The media is representative of this machine, as it has vastly contributed to both the negative and positive attributes that encompass the Hip Hop community as a whole.

Change. The change dimension refers to change for better conditions within the communities in which they belong (Travis & Deepak, 2010). Change is built upon being aware of, and thinking critically about, social injustice and organizing and planning how to change these situations (Travis, 2011). Travis (2012) articulated change as one using his/her voice to improve conditions within the community the person values.

Going back to Asante's (2008) delineation in "It's Bigger Than Hip Hop," that once you make an observation you have an obligation, several members of the Hip Hop generation have joined in their own spiritual obligation by exercising their political action (Asante, 2008; Common, 2011; Kirk Duggan & Hall; 2011; KRS One, 2003; Simmons, 2011). For instance, for several years Russell Simmons has been a well-known contributor to the Hip Hop community. In his recent book, called *Super Rich* (2011), he details his spiritual journey of becoming a millionaire and realizing that this achievement did not make him happy. He goes on to discuss the true values of happiness, which are found in one's spiritual journey and consist of realizing one's God given purpose and walking that out accordingly. He goes on to state that once one realizes his/her purpose in life amidst the superficial, the individual finds friendship, love, joy and compassion. For Simmons, his spiritual purpose is aligned with being a change agent in the Hip Hop community. He showcases this through his organization of the Hip Hop summit wherein

41

he serves as an active chairman. On the Hip Hop summit website, the mission statement

reads:

> Founded in 2001, the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network (HSAN) is dedicated to
>
> harnessing the cultural relevance of Hip-Hop music to serve as a catalyst for
>
> education advocacy and other societal concerns fundamental to the empowerment
>
> of youth. HSAN is a non-profit, non-partisan national coalition of Hip-Hop
>
> artists, entertainment industry leaders, education advocates, civil rights
>
> proponents, and youth leaders united in the belief that Hip-Hop is an enormously
>
> influential agent for social change which must be responsibly and proactively
>
> utilized to fight the war on poverty and injustice
>
> (http://www.hsan.org/content/main.aspx?pageid=7).

Here we notice that Russell Simmons' spiritual purpose shines through along with his

political purpose, which is manifested through the work he does in the community.

Hip Hop Overview

Hip Hop Worldview

With the social and political norms shifting, the metaphysical understanding of

Hip Hop by this generation is different than their "baby boomer" predecessors. The

young Black community has what Kitwana (2003) maintains is a Hip Hop mindset. Kirk-

Duggan and Hall (2011) maintains that Hip Hop is ontology and epistemology as well as

a reputable way of understanding self and others. Petchauer (2007) respectively calls

what Kitwana (2003) referred to as a Hip Hop mindset as a Hip Hop worldview. For him,

this is an epistemological standpoint that encompasses shared beliefs, perceptions and

knowledge that are influenced by the cultural art form of Hip Hop.   A Hip Hop

42

worldview is one that embraces change, creativity and is about being open to inclusion and social justice. Those within the Hip Hop culture have a Hip Hop consciousness (KRS One, 2003). Petchauer's (2007) phenomenological study of fourteen Hip Hop intellectuals in a university setting indicated a nontraditional perspective in how the participants engaged the world within a Hip Hop mind frame.

Petchauer's (2007) understanding of a Hip Hop epistemology lines up with ethnic identity theory and may be useful in understanding Hip Hop's structure and how one may situate it within a cultural context. Similar to Kitwana's (2003) definition of Hip Hop generation, ethnic identity is the conscious or unconscious way individuals identify with those with whom they feel a common bond due to shared traditions, behaviors, values and beliefs (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011). Theoretical literature indicates that these socio-cultural components can also have a vast impact on the development of adults who identify with Hip Hop (Guy, 2004; Price, 2005). Today Hip Hop lives in multifarious representations including socially conscious rap, R& B sampling, spoken word, clothing, Afro-centric hairstyling, subversive language, and marketing embodied in film, art, photography, music and technology (Braszile, 2009; Chang, 2005).

Hip Hop Identity

Identity is a main element of Hip Hop culture that allows individuals to understand themselves and others. Hip Hop serves as a building block for individual and collective identity (Jeffries, 2011). Hip Hop sociologist Rose (1994) asserts that Hip Hop's conglomeration of tenets have created spaces for people of color to produce alternative identities. These identities generate a counter story to the dominant culture

43

that has been imposed upon them. Rose (2008) concludes that Hip Hop serves as a

support mechanism in difficult and obstinate environments. In the case of adults within

Hip Hop culture, these communities can exist within school, work, and home or many

times in social media environments (Petchauer, 2007). Dimitriadis (2009) purported that

the creative practice of Hip hop and the messages constructed within it are the processes

of identity formation by which youth and young adults conceive themselves, others and

the world around them. This process of identity formation has the potential to be woven

into the environments within the culture that Hip Hop subsists (Dimitriadis, 2009).

Therefore, one's Hip Hop identity becomes the cultural capital that emerges in the

individual's everyday life; thus becoming an everyday pedagogy that helps to inform

their conceptual frameworks, ideologies and epistemologies.

Hip Hop Films

Popular culture is central to the identity development of adults, and Hip Hop, in

all of its forms, plays a huge role in the adult development of those within this culture

(Redmon-Wright, & Sandlin, 2010). The presence of Hip Hop culture is often displayed

in films, documentaries, television, and reality television and is instrumental in the global

proliferation of Hip Hop culture. Movies like *Boyz in the Hood* , *Juice, and Menace II

Society* were integral in developing Hip Hop identities (Stewart, 2009). Stewart (2009)

maintains that early Hip Hop films such as *Wild Style* (1982) helped to connect and

establish into a conjoined culture the then disconnected underpinning elements, Djing,

Mcing, Graffiti Art and break dancing. *Wild Style* (1982) positioned Hip Hop

practitioners, i.e. musicians, dancers and artists, to portray their narratives and art form as

a means of showcasing what the artistic movement was that existed in 1980's urban

44

culture. Yet, even among movies that have powerful motivational themes within them and have served as a foundation for the culture, some have aided in the misrepresentation of the culture as well. (Rose, 2008; Stewart, 2009).

Media Mis-Representations

In essence, the media reinforces the images and values of the dominant culture by reproducing traditional values and norms (Braszile, 2009). This force has been the main conduit to the spread and misrepresentation of Hip Hop culture, adding negative and positive themes (Chang, 2006). Black Entertainment Television (BET), Music Television (MTV), and Video Hit One (VHI), are television stations that have been significantly important factors {elements?} in the propagation of the culture and its fashion, art, music, and language. Due to the fact that the same overarching mogul, Viacom, owns these corporations, they release the same misrepresentation of Hip Hop culture (Rose, 2008). These representations include, but are not limited to, depictions of scantily clad women, drugs, gang violence and materialism, and many times the protagonists in the media are Black (Jeffries, 2011). Kirk-Duggan and Hall (2011) make the claim that the demonization of Hip Hop culture is directly correlated to the historical demonization of Black people as over sexualized and ignorant. Hip Hop intellectual Michael Dyson (2009) added to this argument with a historical analysis regarding the relationship of the mistreatment of women and Hip Hop articulating that "It is not that Hip Hop has helped mainstream the misogyny that it's artists *invented.* [On the contrary] It's that the ancient vitriol toward women has been amplified by young Black males" (p. 130). Later he questioned dominant culture and asked "If there is a genuine concern for the role of rap in ruining young Black women's lives, then why hasn't there been a greater media coverage

of past attempts by Black Hip Hop leaders" (p.131) to effect social change ?. These attempts of positive activism include but are not limited to, conscious Hip Hop music, Hip Hop health fairs and Hip Hop Father's Day marches. However, they receive little recognition because these efforts have been masked by the stereotypes that surround the culture. Even when some of these efforts are reported some people may be so overwhelmed by the negative reports and images that the triumphs from the community can easily be forgotten.

Stereotypes

Within Hip Hop there are expressions of sexist, racist, homophonic, and capitalist constructions (Braszile, 2009). Yet, the American system in which Hip Hop is housed has these themes embroidered within its very own fabric (Rose, 2008). To this end, any critique on Hip Hop must begin with a critique on the effects of capitalism (Williams, 2007). Educators cannot dismiss the negative components surrounding Hip Hop culture. Yet, at the same time we must be aware that, like any other art form, Hip Hop mimics the larger society that it reflects (Braszile, 2009). It is with this lens that educators can move to authentic progressive conversations and hopefully break down the stereotypes of Hip Hop that exist therein.

The stories within Hip Hop music are oftentimes consistent with the aforementioned stereotypes surrounding Hip Hop culture and seemingly glorify these themes. However, Black music is historically built upon telling the stories experienced within the communities of those who perform it (Dyson, 2007). Being an integral part of Hip Hop culture and grounded within Black expression, rap is no different in this act of storytelling. At this juncture, Hip Hop narratives have been a direct result of America's

racial and oppressive climate towards the Black community, and within this repressive environment, ghettos were generated (Rose, 2008). In essence, when these stories are negated, this community's voice is silenced. Even still, there are non-authentic stories that have contributed to the obstruction of the true state of Hip Hop in its authentic forms and representing genuine Hip Hop neighborhoods. In suburban neighborhoods, Non-Black Hip Hoppas often try to mimic the commercial media stereotype propaganda in an attempt to recreate this "ghetto reality" (Kitwana, 2003). Access to social media devices such as YouTube, Facebook, Google plus and Twitter have globalized this "ghetto reality" and induces negative themes associated with Hip Hop and ultimately Blackness (Kitwana, 2003; Travis, 2012). Taking the argument one step further, once this stereotype is received outside of America, due to systems of intersections of marginalization within their environment, Global Hip Hop is impacted at a more extreme rate (Kitwana, 2003). Herein, is the dilemma of stereotypes and misrepresentations of this culture. The globalization of these distortions of Hip Hop, which essentially points the finger back at Black and Brown communities nationwide, results in more tension within these neighborhoods.

To this end, while critics of the culture often blame Hip Hop for promoting and creating violence and a ghetto culture, destroying values and demeaning women (Rose, 2008), Kirk-Duggan and Hall (2011) argued that this oppressive systems driving force is the worldwide patriarchal system. They contend that the "broadly construed patriarchy means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in all social systems family, religion, politics, economics, wealth, authority, status and self-image" (p.21). As such, if Hip Hop is identified as a cultural institution,

47

then major identifiers exist within Hip Hop demonstrating that the patriarchal system has major roots within the problem (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011). Unfortunately, Hip Hop as a culture and community, many times has become the industry scapegoat for such matters without consideration of the preexisting social-political powers that contributed to Hip Hop's cultural emergence. However, Hip Hop culture cannot stand idle and continue to feed the preexisting, oppressive system (Rose, 2008) because some of the accountability must return to the community. Adding to this assumption, KRS One (2003) called for Hip Hop culture to take some responsibility for the current state of Hip Hop. Furthermore, while it has been highly propagandized by media to move beyond the norm, and prophetically step into a new direction, KRS One describes the way to do this as looking at Hip Hop narratives through a spiritual vantage point.

Hip Hop & Spirituality

Spiritual Narrative History in the Hip Hop Community

There is a large connection between Hip Hop and spiritual narratives. Currently, up to three generations have grown up within Hip Hop culture. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that the current generation would express its spirituality in conjunction with the culture in which it has grown up (Kitwana, 2003). One of the earliest mentions of spiritual narratives is detailed in the historical context of Negro/slave spirituals. These spirituals played an important role in the individual and collective lives of slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as reflected in slave narratives (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011; Witherspoon & Mitchem, 2009). Similar to spiritual narratives, Negro spirituals consisted of song, dance and poetry that addressed the complexities of oppression and spoke about their God's ability to bring them out of bondage. Overall, these seemingly

48

simply worded spirituals consisted of stories of freedom and jubilee in the land of promise (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011). Furthermore, many of these spirituals had hidden messages and thus were political in their essence. Here we begin to understand that "…narratives can take a number of forms, each useful as a vehicle for learning" (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007 p. 210). One example of a narrative is a spiritual testimony, which is "a declaration by a witness of a proof or fact" (Webster, 2011). The act of testifying is highly regarded in the Black church as being a testament of God's undying love and favor. These stories often bring hope and faith to those who may be floundering, and they can be motivating to those who hear them.

In Hip Hop communities, these narratives and testimonies may appear to be quite different; however, they share a similar foundation of fighting for justice in a world filled with injustice (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011). Particularly, for the Hip Hop generation, in conscious music there has been an outcry for deliverance. KRS-One (2003) and MK Asante (2008) speak to this outcry in their spiritual theories of Hip Hop.

Urban Inspirational Metaphysics

KRS One's (2003) theory of Urban Inspirational Metaphysics is an ontological mindset inclusive of a collective consciousness that embodies Hip Hop culture. Being a nontraditional type of metaphysical ideology that is "all about unlearning" (p.23,) this forms the dominant cultures' ideology and restoring one's own identity. This viewpoint is geared towards a collective community ideology and an in-depth spiritual, mental and physical awareness of urban reality (2003). This theory is easily applicable to the situations of those who are from the inner city. For KRS One, "If it does not relieve human suffering it is useless" (p.31). This ideology suggests underpinnings to Cornel

West's (2003) idea of prophetic pragmatism, which speaks toward the collective critical and spiritual engagement, and healing of individuals, specifically Blacks in the inner city. In this context, to explain their spirituality, urban metaphysics draws upon the experiences of those who are inexperienced in their understanding of their individual experiences, or their perception of the logic and reasoning of the urban environment.

In this theory KRS One (2003) argues that the rules and regulations of traditional spirituality are useless for Hip Hop communities. He argues that marginalization has rendered everyday Hip Hoppa's to seek new ways of knowing and question the traditional (2003). "…within the inner city, many people believe in God, yet do not believe in themselves" (p. 61). Here he introduces Urban Inspirational Metaphysics as a way to understand the spiritual outlook of those who are from Hip Hop communities. With this theory, he calls for spirituality towards religious inclusivity and discipline. He argues that in order to become spiritually aware, one must have an awareness of the God which one serves (p.26).

This doctrine seems to emulate Freire's (1999) and hooks' (2003) idea that spirituality is founded upon love and social justice. Furthermore, this theory connects to West's (2003) notion of spirituality being akin to a Coltranian *love supreme,* translating into a guttural cry towards humanity to become loving. By having our own prejudices and ideologies die, we can make alliances in an attempt to emancipate and empower others and ourselves. KRS One (2003) goes on to say, "We must examine our own spiritual lives to see what drives it fear and guilt or faith and love. Traditionally in the Black community social justice and spirituality are correlated with love and faith "(p.37).

Post Hip Hop

With the maturing of Hip Hop culture, those who ascribe to this understanding may be headed towards tenets of Post Hip Hop. We learn from adult development theories that with time and age spiritual growth does occur (Tisdell, 2003). While the mainstream viewpoint of Hip Hop culture focuses on the negative aspects, there are positive representations within this culture such as political venues like the Rock the Vote campaign. There are mentorship programs associated with Hip Hop artists such as, The Roots, Common, Queen Latifah and Lupe Fiasco serving schools and community centers. In essence, these individuals, all over the age of 25, represent what Asante (2008) defined as the Post Hip Hop generation. Within this framework, he concluded that the axiology, epistemology and metaphysical viewpoints of the old Hip Hop generation (Kitwana, 2003), though relevant for the 30'something youths of 80' and 90's, has since been phased out and is not relatable to today's Hip Hop culture. The Post-Hip Hop generation has been misrepresented by the visceral tensions glorified by mainstream rap, these being misogynistic, homophobic and high consumerism. Asante (2008) posited that,

> The term 'post Hip-Hop' describes a period of time -- now -- of great transition for a new generation of Blacks… in search of a deeper understanding of themselves in a context outside of the hip-hop monopoly. Post hip-hop is an assertion that encapsulates my generation's broad range of abilities and ideas and incorporates recent social advances (i.e., the women's movement, gay rights) that hip-hop has refused to acknowledge or respect. Post hip-hop is not about the death of rap, but rather the birth of a new movement propelled by a paradigm shift. (p. 2)

51

Hip Hop's globalization has caused a prototypical shift revolutionizing Hip Hop culture and advancing it toward a new movement called Post Hip Hop culture. The Post Hip Hop culture exists in several facets. It can be demonstrated in spoken word venues, which are essentially venues for Hip Hop poets. A production capturing examples of these poets is *Brave New Voices* (2010; 2011). The Home Box Office network (HBO) provided a view into this diverse culture that is grounded in critical literacy, social reform and action. The principle of this show was to provide a platform for the brave to poetically speak about their lived experiences. Rarely were the poet's selections about the stereotypes surrounding Hip Hop culture, such as money, cars or *hoes.* On the contrary, these poets support the mental, spiritual and physical advancement of their communities (Bynoe, 2004; KRS One, 2003). In many ways, Post Hip Hoppers are making a battle cry that is less about music and more about new ways of expression, understanding and creativity (Asante, 2008). It is with this battle cry and other similar ones that many Hip Hop leaders are emerging to the forefront of global issues that have often been ignored. While Asante (2008) makes a good point about the different generations that have emerged out of Hip Hop community. I feel as if that many of the themes he lists as *post* were already in existence when Hip Hop came on the scene. It's important to take a pause here and to make clear that Hip Hop's early roots began with socially conscious roots, but also with the purpose of having fun (Stewart, 2009).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework below is positioned in two digital turntables most often used by DJ's at a party. Each turntable is representative of a record, which can hold several songs. As mentioned above, these songs could be viewed as narratives. In the

middle of the turntable is an MP3 player, and this MP3 player symbolizes the literature

that informed this study. One turntable has on it the theoretical framework of this

proposed study and is entitled: the Individual and Community Empowerment framework

mix tape. This consists of the five components of ICE, which are esteem, resilience,

growth, community and change (Travis & Deepak, 2010). The second turntable holds the

Spiritualizing Hip Hop mix tape consisting of themes from Hip Hop and spirituality that

emerged from the literature.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework "The Turn Table"

Chapter Summary

The literature review chapter provided this proposed study with a mixture of grey

and academic literature that added to the conjecture of understanding individual

components of the spiritual narrative of Black educational leaders from Hip Hop

communities. In this chapter, the relevant theoretical and empirical studies related to the

topic were presented, considered and situated to this proposed document within those

boundaries. After which, each dimension of the I.C.E framework was discussed and

connected into Hip Hop and adult development text. Following this, the Hip Hop

overview and Hip Hop and spirituality were contemplated regarding their contributions to

the topic. Lastly the conceptual framework was unveiled, which adds a visual

representation to the literature and narratives securing the components of this study.

III. ARTS BASED METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the qualitative research methods used to understand the spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities in this study. Additionally, these methods illuminated the intersection between spirituality and leadership positions. The use of qualitative methods provided the landscape to creatively uncover these spiritual narratives in a multidimensional way. (Guba & Lincoln, 2008). As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe, the ninth moment of qualitative research opened the door for introduction of new epistemological frameworks inclusive of culturally authentic and creative ways of doing inquiry. In the case of this study, qualitative research provided in-depth and nuanced strategies to interpretively collect, analyze, and articulate data collection (Patton, 2010). Most of all, this methodology gave power to our individual and shared narratives. That allowed for spiritual meaning to be gained from participants' lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Furthermore, studies of this type do not seek replication or duplication; rather, this research aimed to create new frameworks of understanding. For these reasons, the use of qualitative methods in this proposed study offered a revolutionary way to embark upon arts-based collaborative research inclusive of narrative inquiry and poetic analysis. Due to the fact that this study used a newer methodological approach, no dissertation model existed. Thus, I created my own.

Chapter Layout

In seeking to understand four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities, this study addressed three research questions: 1) What are the spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities? 2) How do the

spiritual narratives of these leaders influence their personal growth and development? and

3) How do the spiritual narratives inform these leaders' practice to influence greater

community change in their workplaces and beyond?

This chapter describes the research methodology that includes the following

areas: (a) nature and historical context of inquiry, (b) description of collaborative

DJs/study's collaborators, (c) multi-spaced ethnography, (d) data collection methods, (e)

data representation and historical context, (f) data analysis methods, (g) crystallization,

(h) ethical considerations, (i) conceptual framework of methodology, and (j) chapter

summary.

Nature and Historical Context of Inquiry

Arts-Based Collaborative

Arts-based collaborative methods were the basis of this qualitative study. As

mentioned in Chapter One, this technique included a group model that positioned every

researcher in the study as an equal player in each artistic mode of the study including data

collection, analysis, interviewing, and data representation (Hall, 2001; Liamputtong &

Rumbold, 2007; Vannini, 2012). Using an arts-based approach to address the lives of

four community development activists, Hand (2009) articulated that the choice of an arts-

based methodology artistically provided a counter-narrative that captured (gave depth to)

and articulated knowledge in a multifaceted way. Furthermore, an arts-based

methodology helped to springboard this study as a living form of inquiry.

As mentioned previously, collaboration plays a big role in Hip Hop communities

and the Individual and Community Empowerment Framework (Travis, 2012). When

several artists come together to make a song, the listener appreciates how collaboration

plays an integral part in Hip Hop songs as each contributor's verse joins together to sing the chorus. Similarly, I envisioned the collaborative DJs and I working together to create this study.

Healing in the Arts-Based Methodology

There is a certain level of healing that is connected to collaborative arts-based research approaches (Hall, 2001). Artistic collaborative research provides a catharsis for those impacted by traumatic experiences. Coupling these approaches with narrative healing through storytelling, individuals can return to their respective communities and help to heal others using what they learned in the process (Rosstier & Clark, 2010). Hall (2001) said, of the arts-based collaborative research approach, "[I]f we are interested in supporting, facilitating, or creating new processes for collective knowledge generation through learning and action, we can look to communities and movements for inspirational ideas on how to do participatory research" (p.175). This realization led me to situate the collaborative DJs' multifaceted artistic epistemologies and identities – including my personal spiritual narrative and background as a spoken word artist – of the Hip Hop movement and communities through a spiritual narratives methodological frame.

Spiritual Narratives

The spiritual, as of late, has come to the forefront in various fields of adult education and educational leadership as researchers sought to understand individual everyday practices in conjunction with religion/spirituality and society (Dantley, 2003; Dillard, 2006; Milner, 2006; Witherspoon & Mitchem, 2009; and Witherspoon, 2008). Understanding this paradoxical secular and sacred harmonized presence and absence in

57

researchers' everyday modern lives included an assessment of social worlds and experiences beyond the four church walls where religion/ spirituality made an appearance. Ammerman & Williams (2012) suggest that seemingly silenced or nonexistent studies indicated that spiritual narratives do exist in everyday lives—just take notice.

These studies privileged the experiences of non-experts/regular everyday people and located the many ways that religion and spirituality were interwoven into daily life experiences despite the well-known separation between church and state since the last half of century. Yet, spiritual and religious experiences still warrant deeper revelation and understanding where spiritual narratives consist of lived religion that denotes moving beyond neat belief structures and institutions while delving into the secular and sacred (Ammerman & Williams, 2012). This school of thought is based upon the assumption that lived religion in the 21st century is "no longer best understood as a common set of beliefs and institutions in which people participate in neatly-bounded ways" (Ammerman & Williams, 2012, p. 1). The focal point became paying attention to religious and spiritual characters, settings and stories and their relationships with interwoven components of spirituality (Ammerman & Williams, 2012). Spiritual narratives then happened in unpredictable places inclusive of the private, public, and routine as well as the cultural, economic, biological and political domains. Ultimately, these stories included the spiritual aspects of work, family, and other life aspects noticeable within the context of individual and community empowerment initiatives and Hip Hop communities.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry – a methodology used in social science, literary studies, and intellectual movements ranging from psychoanalysis to feminism – was used to understand the spiritual narratives of the four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities. This also included the incorporation of several forms of data that included interviews, life histories, transcripts, memoirs, and creative non-fiction (Wertz et al., 2011; Patton, 2002). Bruner (1987) and Polkinghorne (1988) --provided key insight and direction concerning the theoretical, philosophical, and historical components of narrative inquiry. This methodology emphasized stories as a form of social action reflecting human-experience through narrative research guiding the discovery of substance often ignored in traditional research (Chase, 2005).

Generally speaking, narrative inquirers contend that humans communicate their experiences through co-constructed accounts viewed, interpreted, and re-presented using storied forms (Chase, 2005). These forms of inquiry build upon the interpretive power of the narrative to help understand individual experiences, shape meaning, and give light to the intersections of lived experiences (Patton, 2010). Therefore, "narrative inquiry is not a set of techniques and procedures. It is about ways of thinking about inquiry, modes of exploring questions and creative approaches to offering constructed findings to the scholarly community" (Wertz, et al., p. 66).

Narrative and Hip Hop Communities

Historically, narrative and storytelling was a reality in Black inner-cities during, and after slavery when the enslaved were forbidden from reading or even learning to read. As a result the enslaved relied heavily on, and often utilized, oral storytelling—

particularly to tell *Bible* stories of liberation, freedom, and power (Merriwether-Hunn, 2010). Being rooted in Black culture poetic storytelling was also a catalyst for Hip Hop as a generation and culture (Rose, 1994). This evolution represents narratives from the poetic words of rap artist Grand Master Flash and the Sugar Hill Gang to Lauryn Hill and, more recently, Hip Hoppas like Jay-Z, LeCrae, Lupe Fiasco, and Kendrick Lamar who convey the message that they "write poems in these songs" (Lamar, 2012). These poetic and spiritual testimonials often come from a mode of survival that credits faith as the glue that holds them together. Here, narrative inquiry also offers an artistic way of representing traumatic experiences aligned with the Hip Hop communities. It, thus, serves as a testimonial or tool for healing and dealing with the repression, poverty, and exploitation experienced in these neighborhoods (Hartman, 2002). bell hooks (1994) offers that the telling of stories allows for a therapeutic soul revival, a redemptive act to heal broken pieces and traumas while insuring transformative learning—an unearthing process utilizing tenets of multi-spaced ethnography.

Multi-Spaced Ethnography

In this study, multi-spaced ethnography allowed researchers to explore the life experiences of multiple people across time, space, and place. The basis of this inquiry relied on the assumption that Hip Hop communities served as the cultural context for people physically disconnected from one another, living in separate states or locations. Macro power structures existed in association with a sphere of interrelated stories (Marcus, 1995). This occurred because many social-political issues drove factors such as poverty, oppression, and racism (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2010). For these reasons, multi-spaced ethnographers conveyed that complexities and dimensions of social phenomena

cannot truly be investigated and uncovered when focusing on a single site of inquiry

(Falzon, 2009). For instance, when I started going to college, I recall talking to people

who grew up in Chicago and becoming aware of that these individuals had similar

experiences as I had in Centreville, IL. This paralleled the idea of the collaborative DJs'

and I coming together from four separate places to share similar stories about their

respective Hip Hop communities.

For this study, I defined community beyond borders to include ideas and

experiences unique to the Hip Hop communities. To repeat a point mentioned in Chapter

I, Hip Hop reportedly was created solely in inner-city New York post-civil rights, but

other American cities experiencing similar disparities and oppression also developed the

posture of this art form, mindset, and way of life (Rose, 2008). Ultimately, the

collaborative DJ and I were separated by geography but belonged to Hip Hop

communities that provided us with similar experiences regarding oppression. Therefore,

using the idea of multi-spaced ethnography, we shared the same story although we lived

in separate places. Many of these experiences were associated with the socio-political

issues that surrounded communities expounded on in Chapter II.   As mentioned in

Chapter I, this study focused on stories emerging out of Hip Hop communities, inundated

with Hip Hop culture, located in certain inner-cities and places in Miami, Florida; Tampa,

Florida; East St. Louis, Illinois; and Chicago, Illinois. Each of these communities was of

interest because of constant rotation in news circuits regarding similar circumstances of

violence and poverty just to name a few. Furthermore, the collaborative DJs and I were

from these areas which were recently listed on the top 100 most dangerous cities in

America (http://www.neighborhoodscout.com/neighborhoods/crime-rates/top100dangerous/).

Co-Researchers/Participants

During a Hip Hop mix tape, it is customary for the DJ to say his or her name as songs play. I am reminded of growing up and hearing DJ Clue or DJ Drama speak behind many of my favorite Hip Hop songs. This tactic annoyed me because it seemed to interrupt the flow of the song, but I realized that it was a smart marketing technique that caused the listener never to forget the DJ who produced the song. As mentioned in Chapter One, DJ means delivering justice because those who DJ plays the music of those historically silenced (KRS One, 2003). With that said, I never want my audience to forget the names of the people who shared in delivering justice in the development of this study.

I invited three collaborative DJs to work in partnership on this study by first initiating purposeful sampling (Glesne, 2010; Patton, 2010). This particular style of sampling positioned collaborators into the phenomenon being studied as carriers of shared characteristics, experiences, and insight (Patton, 2010). Specifically, I chose these collaborative DJs due to their coming from Hip Hop communities, being leaders in educational or community sectors, and showcasing their belief systems as spiritual beings (Witherspoon, 2008). They drew upon principles of their faith and cited these as the guiding sources of their practices within their workplace and greater communities.

Other important factors were our spiritual history and prior relationships as friends. Building relationships/friendships with participants before commencing qualitative research can be a plus (Glesne, 2010). Interwoven stories of growing up as

part of a Hip Hop culture and within Hip Hop communities helped inform pedagogy and practice. Lastly, we shared a need to deliver justice back into the educational sectors and communities from which we hailed. Included in this study were the accounts of two women and two men. Their profiles and self-chosen DJ names are below.

DJ West African Prince (WAP) – a 26-year-old Black male born in Tampa, Florida – was raised in several inner-city neighborhoods within that region. With a background in history, he holds a master's degree in educational leadership and currently serves as dean at a predominately Black junior high school in Florida. He positions himself as a believer in the *Bible*, but he does not associate himself with any particular religion. Artistically, he is a historical poet and aspiring author.

DJ Konquerer – a 32-year-old Black female – was born and raised in the inner-city of Miami, Florida. Previously, she was a leader of a large Hip Hop-based Christian summer camp that served inner-city high school youth.   She holds a master's degree is human resource development and is currently employed as an administrator over six after-school programs in Central Texas. As a leader of her church youth group, she positions herself as a non-denominational Christian.

DJ Cross – a 30-year-old Black male born and raised in Chicago, Illinois – holds a master's degree in speech communication and currently teaches at three community colleges in Tampa, Florida. He advocates for community changes, runs a national social media campaign against violence in Chicago, and positions himself as a believer in Christ. Artistically he is a poet, teacher, and minister of the gospel.

DJ God's Def Poet (Me) – I am a 30-year-old Black female – who was raised in neighborhoods within East St. Louis called Centerville, IL. I spent ten years working in

leadership positions in higher education and K-12 sectors ranging from instructor of record to lead counselor to coordinator of career and technical education programs in Florida. I am currently a doctoral candidate. My hobbies include poetry, singing, and preaching to the Hip Hop generation.

Multiple Perspectives

As mentioned previously, this study sought to unearth the spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities. In this context, the spiritual narratives were grounded in our life histories that were interrelated with God though not all of the participants identified spirituality in the same fashion. Consequently, it was more useful to situate this study in more than one context of Christianity due to our religious experiences, Black-Christian-Spiritual perspectives, or the multiple context of "religio-spirituality" (Witherspoon, 2008). The co-researchers and I connected through our relationship with God and were less concerned with the customs and rules that exist in some denominations of Christianity.

For many, this mixture/conglomeration of Hip Hop and Christianity created a very nontraditional and unorthodox standpoint. In *Wake Up: Hip Hop Christianity and the Black Church*, Kirk-Duggan & Hall (2011) stated that the fusion of Hip Hop and Black Christianity mixed the profane and secular with the holy to arrive at a place where authentic identities emerged. A major factor in this collaborative research was the juxtaposition that promoted freedom and self-determination (Guba & Lincoln, 2010, p. 281). Perhaps this is what Watkins (2010) presented in his address on the attributes of a Hip Hop theology:

The Hip Hop 'hood theologian is a prophet who speaks truth to the powers within

the African-American community and outside it. They have reframed the gospel,

and this gospel is not limited to a Christian conversation or a church context.

Rather, they are looking at and have an appreciation for the veracity of other

religious traditions that live in the 'hood. They are inclusive and not exclusive

when it comes to their theological dialogue. The willingness to have multiple

theological conversational partners has given the Hip Hop 'hood theologian a

broader audience that appreciates their moving beyond religious tolerance to

theological inclusion. (p. 339)

Watkins' sentiments, thus, undergirded the multi-dimensional spirituality of Hip Hop

identities.

Relationship as a Researcher and Co-Researcher

Similar to Henry (2013) and Valadez (2012), my position in this study was that of

a researcher, "active participant and fully engaged co-researcher in the study" (Henry,

2013, p.64). In this context, it was important for me to inform the "empowerment

partnerships" (Patton, 2010) by recognizing all of us as power brokers. Due to its

implication that one person has the ability to invest power; the word empowerment has

often been disputed. In reality, the contrary is true; those who participate in the research

have abundant gifts that lend themselves to sharing or self-empowerment (Block &

McKnight, 2010; Weisman, 2010). These dual roles could have been complicated and

challenging. Even still, my role was properly negotiated—remaining both spiritual and

Hip Hop in the process of the study. Both of these communities appreciated, and were

grounded in, collaboration and equality. At the same time, I understood the dual role of

training my co-researchers/collaborative DJs in the methodological process. Yet, as Patton (2010) suggests, a researcher's participation in the study requires authenticity and genuineness. Being a friend and fellow member of the Hip Hop community established my authenticity.

<div align="center">**Data Collection Sources**</div>

Use of narrative inquiry called for the inclusion of various types of data-gathering methods. This arts-based study included group interviews referred to as ciphers, a collaborative DJ blog board, and Spiritualized REEL Life Maps. While interviews may be important factors in most qualitative research, in this inquiry they were seen as just a window into the data and therefore limiting.

Freestyle Interviews

Freestyle is a word used in Hip Hop that describes quickly and wittily discussing ideas and situations while rapping (KRS One, 2003).   Drawing from this term, freestyle interviews were analogous with one-on-one semi-structured interviews. In this process, there were guiding questions or exploratory topics less formalized and more flexible than the structured interview process (Merriam, 2009). Each collaborative DJ was interviewed twice for 45-60 minutes. In this one-on-one procedure, the collaborative DJs were asked broad, open-ended questions allowing them to discuss their life stories in a free-flowing way. One interview with each collaborative DJ took place before the group interview. Once interviews were transcribed and analyzed, they provided an avenue for reflection and initial analysis of the experiences shared by the DJs. The second follow-up interview took place a month later. These interviews used tape recorders and video cameras.   I

<div align="center">66</div>

allowed someone else to interview me twice and also used pieces of a former auto-

ethonography to help develop my narrative.

Ciphers

The definition of cipher is two or more rappers free styling together in an informal

context—battling or simply playing off of each other. In qualitative research

methodology, group conversations or purposed group conversation is the term for this

type of interaction (Merriam, 2009). Due to collaborative DJs living in states other than

the two interview locations, group interviews took place on June 21-23, 2013 over a

weekend in Tampa, Florida consisting of two 90-minute sessions though each DJ made

room for a two-hour time block based upon the intensity of the conversation or need to

talk longer (Glesne, 2010). As lead facilitator, I guided group interview sessions, inquiry

into deeper conversation, with four to five questions within the time frame.

Collaborative DJ Blog Board

It was important to set up an online site to assist the collaborative DJs in building a

community in cyberspace before the commencement of the study. This was parallel to the

multi-spaced ethnography standpoint in that boundless communities included virtual

spaces that built upon shared understandings, social justice initiatives, and identities

(Wiessner et al., 2010). Glesne (2010) discussed the advantages of virtual blogs stating

that this technique was useful in studies that incorporated multiple sites to help "establish

virtual communities with those sharing their specialization" (p. 133).

Hip Hop culture often uses technology as a tool to creatively express innermost

feelings (Kitwana, 2003). This study used Facebook's private chat function to set up

initial meetings and share virtual information. Each collaborative DJ uploaded certain

profile aspects and archival documents to the site such as written songs, poems, diaries, journals, pictures, or reflections that were important pieces in uncovering and understanding the spiritual narratives. This process allowed for collaborators to ultimately move forward in wide-awakeness (Greene, 2011), which produced a deeper reflexivity through use of this medium.

Initially, I planned to use Facebook more frequently but due to time constraints this became challenging. I found it did not play as large a role as anticipated. Overall, the Facebook blog was significant in gathering data for the study's spiritual narratives and document analysis. Each participant was required to read one another's profiles and posts. As the study proceeded, use of this social media blog/communication aided in contributors getting to know each other's background and provided in-depth information to analyze. Facebook use did taper off once the initial cipher was completed in Tampa, Florida.

Spiritual REEL Life Maps

A Spiritual REEL Life Map was comprised of the computation/collage of the pictures, songs, movies, poetry, and music that represented DJ collaborators' spiritual narratives to inform understanding of ourselves. Once completed, the pictures were analyzed for meaning and themes were extracted using a method consistent with social cartography literature (Leibman & Paulson, 1994) that allowed storytelling through multiple media facets. For purposes of this study, the method was constructed with still life photos then placed within a movie reel picture.

For instance, the movie *Precious* reminded me of my tumultuous upbringing; therefore, *Precious* was placed in the movie reel picture. Similarly, on Def Poetry Jam,

the poet Sunni Patterson performed a poem called "We Made It," which reminded me of resilience borne in the inner-city. Her poem was also placed in my movie reel. As a collaborator in the Henry (2013) dissertation study, I incorporated a similar data collection method in my own research. For this, I superimposed my life, and the other research partners' lives onto a digital movie reel diagram by incorporating pictures of movies, songs, and art in a format similar to a virtual collage represented in a linear fashion. Following suit with the poetic narrative analysis methodology; the life events represented in these reels were not consecutive. However, the reels were built upon different life events at different times. As such, this added to the artistic research component and provided a deeper interpretation of our spiritual narratives. In the data representation part of this study, each Spiritualized REEL Life Map accompanied the introduction of the DJ collaborators' poetic spiritual narratives.

Artifacts

Poetry, blogs, papers, and journals generated in the past were important artifacts in this study. Before the first meeting, the DJ collaborators and I shared documents across a social media site and email that strongly supported the spiritual narrative poems. In her ethno-dramatic dissertation, Henry (2013) used artifacts and research partners' doctoral program auto-ethnographic excerpts to aid in the study:

> The exploration of this authentic work contributed to our analysis of text that allowed us to view the language, and work to make meaning of it. Thus, the use of artifacts, particularly the auto-ethnography, gave a different lens of time within the educational space, climate and curriculum of the doctoral program. (p. 73)

Following Henry (2013), I used a similar methodology. These artifacts were analyzed along with other forms of data, and references to them are interwoven into the presentation of poetic spiritual narratives in chapters 6 and 5 of this document.

<div align="center">**Data Representation**</div>

History of Poetic Narrative Analysis

While poetry has been around since biblical writing, it has only been in the last twenty years that it has been seriously incorporated into discussions of qualitative research that are valued within academia (Prendergast, 2006). Poetic inquiry is often called an arts-based research method or approach (Guiney-Yallop & Wiebe, 2012; Prendergast et al., 2010). In this study, I employed poetic narrative analysis and representation to unearth the spiritual narratives of four Black Hip Hop educational leaders. The use of poetry within the analysis and the data representation solidified the foundation and historical context that emerged out of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Prendergast et al., 2010). As mentioned in Chapter One, poetry analysis also referred to: Poetic transcription (Glesne, 2010; Prendergast, 2005) and poetic representation and re-representation (Lahman et al., 2011). At the same time, narrative inquirers used poetic approaches to tell participants' stories (Glesne, 2010).

Therefore, since the collaborative DJs hail from arts-based Hip Hop communities, I took on an arts-based research approach to tell their stories. Kent & Cahnmann-Taylor (2010) added that "there are themes and patterns in human experience that can only be grasped in narrative renditions, beyond historical and anthropological nonfiction to include other verbal formats such as fiction, plays, and poetry" (p.24). Thus, poetic narrative analysis was used to understand and uncover collaborative DJs' stories. Patton

(1998) articulated that inclusion of poetry analysis and data representation provided a feeling dimension to the depth of the research—including a spiritual component (Tisdell, 2003). As such, this format seemed plausible for exploration of the spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities.

Prendergast et al. (2010) recognized three poetry categories utilized in the analysis of this study: literary, autobiographical, and participant-voiced poems. Researcher-voiced poetic forms uncovered our spiritual narratives. I used autoethnographical experiences inclusive of my field notes and journal entries then constructed participant-voiced poems from transcripts and other data collection methods. Using a collaborative research model, my research partners and I co-created poems by blending all research voices into a unit. Poetic research also existed in a tri-voiced poem model wherein our voices combined with the literature developed the narrative (Prendergast et al., 2010).

Framework for Analysis

During my doctoral course work, I developed a form of data analysis that I named poetic narrative analysis. As I began surveying the literature I found that other scholars used a similar technique but called it something different. Therefore, for this study, similar to other authors, I merged certain components of narrative inquiry alongside poetic transcription and inquiry (Glesne, 2010; Prendergast et al., 2010) to find the story within the data transcripts and artistic observations. "[T]he narrative analyst looks at how the storyteller links experiences and circumstances together to make meaning but also realize[s] that circumstances do not determine how the story will be told or the meaning that will be made of it" (Glesne, 2010, p.186). Glesne (2010) offered an intuitive,

experimental, imaginative process of data poem creation that includes form, word choice, storyline, feeling, complexity and depth, and time in the field. In comparison, Butler-Kisber (2002) cited the following process of analysis and poetry creation: 1) read and re-read transcripts, 2) locate large themes, 3) choose words, 4) cut and paste segments of conversations, 5) develop smaller themes, 6) write succinct versions, and 7) edit and member check.

Using the literature and previous experiences as a guide for this study, the collaborative DJs and I worked together to merge fragmented parts of data into a whole story. Though more than one methodology existed, the choices made in our analyses were both academic and artistic. My background as a spoken word artist and poet added greater depth to the creation of our stories as they emerged into a collaborative poetic form, but the analysis was subjective as noted by other poets. To begin the analysis, we followed a rubric that entailed the five components of the I.C.E Framework (Travis, 2012). This rubric helped us to navigate through and build upon spiritual themes listed in the conceptual framework. After which, we utilized the following procedures:

1.) Completely read through the data once

2.) Do a second read though and write main ideas alongside margins

3.) Write various thoughts and themes that emerge in a reflection journal

4.) Pause to ruminate and analyze deeper

5.) Re-read the reflective journal

6.) Create poems from main ideas, themes, and thoughts

7.) Edit and member check poems

The goals of narrative research must be consistent with coding and analysis. Consequently, as researchers we moved away from the traditional theme-oriented method of analyzing qualitative material (Chase, 2005, p. 424). The ultimate aim of this analysis style created interpretive descriptions of the rich and multilayered meanings of historical and personal events. Enacting this analytic method constructed, rather than discovered, knowledge. Due to our poetic analysis to create spiritual narratives, the size varied for each poem (spiritual narrative).

No precise way existed to tell personal stories. Rather, research poetry gave DJ collaborators choices to represent personal accounts based upon visual and oral performance effects (Davis, 2012). Adult education scholar and qualitative researcher Amelia Davis (2012) used poetic representation in telling the narratives of three adult education instructors and students. Using the participants' voices as a channel, she wrote the poems in three columns in an attempt not to privilege one voice over the other. Due to the fact that it is easy to get lost in long poems, several poems in this study ranged from 3 to 15 lines maximum. Similarly in this study, mixed lengths of poetic narratives were used for the purpose of retaining the meaning of the poems.

Once these poems were created I sent them back to the collaborative DJ's to fact check and essentially add to them if need be. The collaborative DJ's also developed their own poetry from the original transcripts that were used in the Self Esteem domain of Travis & Deepak (2010) I.C.E theory. More about this will be discussed in chapter four.

Crystallized Lenses (Trustworthiness)

"[W]e cannot create criteria to ensure that something is true or accurate if we believe that concepts are socially constructed" (Glesne, 2010, p. 49). In qualitative research,

terms like trustworthiness and crystallization were created as alternate terms for validity. St. Pierre (2011) argues that qualitative researchers miss the mark in attempting to add methods of validity to their research because there is really no way to validate a phenomenon. In agreement with both of these scholars' stances, I take on the crystallization idea of ethnographer/poet Laurel Richardson (1997). This approach, relies upon the idea of having multiple dimensions like a crystal prism. Richardson (1992) provides:

> In post-modern mixed-genre text, we have moved from plane geometry to light theory, where light can be both waves and particles. Crystallization without losing structure deconstructs the traditional idea of 'validity' . . . and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly, partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. (p.92)

Ultimately, narrative researchers are not seeking certainty from their readers. Instead, they are asking them to make judgments on whether or not the evidence and arguments convince them at the level of plausibility, credibleness, and trustworthiness of the claim being discussed (Polkinghorne, 2007). Examining multiple people and sites also strongly increases the level of trustworthiness in qualitative research because it indicates that these experiences take place in multiple spaces, which provide greater transferability upon completion of the study (Glesne, 2010). Even still, due to the nature of this work, Molar (2010) used member checking to inspect validity and trustworthiness. Using a similar approach in his research, Molnar (2010) sought the input of his colleagues, participants, and other critical readers to assess the validity of his poetry.

Ethical Considerations

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) was instrumental in assuring that this study was within the university's ethical guidelines of the research process and data collection. Yet, when considering ethical considerations for a study of this magnitude and type of inquiry, I questioned: Is being ethical hiding DJs' identity or giving them free reign to showcase their spiritual narratives? That is, people who come from where I come from are used to having their experiences hidden in the shadows and being silenced. An important piece of being a part of the Hip Hop generation is being translucent and open as noticeable in Hip Hop songs. These songs contain deep, passionate lyrics showcasing the most intimate details of people's lives. Thus, in some respect, the study required a balanced agreement. The best way to do this was to share all information with the collaborative DJs. I understood that their identities could have been revealed but the process could have been longer with IRB, and due to time constraints I thought it would be better to go a different route.

Informed consent in this study provided information concerning trustworthiness, identity sensitivity, data, research responsibility, and participatory process systematic procedures. Studies have been done with participant identities revealed. However, this action was clearly described in the IRB approval request and permission to share identities. Therefore, pseudonyms were used in this study, effort was made to share each detail that existed in the IRB's process to provide assurance that the research collaborators were well versed on the process.

Ethics of Representation

  It is customary in qualitative research that includes arts-based methodology to take particular care in its data representation. "[A] general ethical guideline is that research participants should be able to read, observe, or somehow engage with the art and discuss its representation before it goes to the wider public" (Glesne, 2010, p. 180). When an artistic study is done it is normal for collaborators to want to disseminate it into the general community/public (Glesne, 2010). Each of the selected co-researchers displayed an interest in sharing his/her story with the world. As the facilitator and friend of each DJ, I guarded against violating personal privacy and made collaborative DJs aware of the use of this data if it were to be considered in future research projects. In an attempt to protect the privacy and identity of each collaborator, pseudonyms were used. Before the onset of this study, the collaborative DJs were made aware of the data that was privy to the research committee. Furthermore, and following their consent to participate in this study, the collaborators were briefed on the ethical considerations mandated by the IRB approval granted for this study.

Conceptual Framework for Methodology

The conceptual methodological framework consisted of a several components:

```
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│   Arts-Based Collaborative      │
│            ⬇                    │
├─────────────────────────────────┤
│      Narrative Inquiry          │
│            ⬇                    │
├─────────────────────────────────┤
│   Poetic Narrative Analysis     │
│            ⬇                    │
│  -----------------------------  │
│                                 │
│   Poetic Spiritual Narrative    │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
```
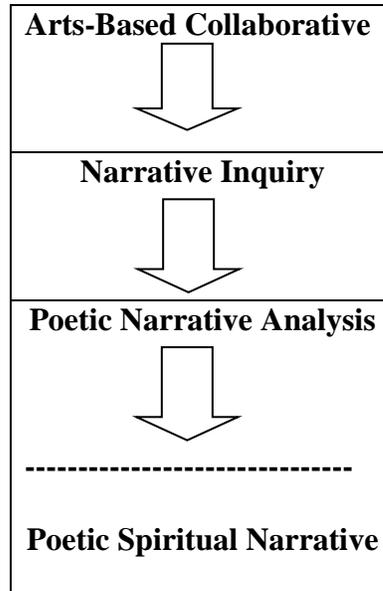
Figure 2. Conceptual Methodological Framework

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the methodological approaches used to conduct the study were

discussed. The collaborative approach mixed alongside artistic modes of inquiry aided in

delivering a solid foundation for this project.   Conjoining methodological information

included a detailed research plan, questionnaire, and study agenda provided in

Appendices A-C.   Within this chapter the collaborative DJ's were also introduced. The

next three chapters will include individual poetic spiritual narratives, combined spiritual

narrative and implications for future research.

IV. INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL NARRATIVES

This chapter presents the spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities. The Individual and Community Empowerment framework undergirds each collaborative DJ's Hip Hop spiritual narrative within the context of self-esteem, resilience, and growth dimensions (Travis & Deepak, 2010; Travis, 2012). Each of these dimensions is situated within the individual domain of his theory. The research questions guiding this analysis were:

1. What are the spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities?

2. How have the spiritual narratives of these leaders influenced their personal growth and development?

Each collaborative DJ wrote an autoethnographic poem and chose images that represented their lives to place in his/her symbolic spiritual REEL, allowing for deeper analysis of collected data. Documental artifacts (e.g., emails, journals, blogs, poetry, and previously written songs) enhanced and supported the collaborative DJs' spiritual narratives. Visuals represented in the reel were interwoven in each poem and explained in textual analysis. Two levels of spiritual narrative poems were developed during the research—autoethnographic poetry and collaborative poetry where I wrote from the transcripts and the other research partner's fact checked them. In situating each poem as a road map while pairing spiritual narratives, I.C.E themes emerged—culminating in the Spiritual REEL life maps serving as the third analysis tool that decontextualized the collaborative DJs' spiritual narratives.

The autoethnography that I wrote during my first year of graduate school

juxtaposed with interview data from my collaborative dissertation study in Tampa,

Florida in June 2013 provided the artifact framework for my spiritualized narrative poem

and life map. The previously transcribed interview and Tampa discourse, thus, situated

my auto-ethnographic spiritual narrative. To convey self-esteem in the spiritual

narrative, I created a poem to illuminate my life's story.

Figure 3. DJ God's Def Poet's Spiritual Narrative

DJ God's Def Poet's Spiritual Narrative

> My first name means defender of mankind
>
> For the longest time I felt defenseless
>
> Financial hardships
>
> Drug Abuse
>
> Child Abuse
>
> Lights disconnected.
>
> There were six of us
>
> A lot of instability
>
> Foster care
>
> School I did not attend
>
> Fist fight with grown men

Kept my sanity with pad and pen

Then at 15 a new life began

Tragedy moved me with my next to Kin

Left my brothers and sisters to become who I was meant to be

It was here, with my family that I found my identity

I walked into a whole new world…at least I was stable

Looked in the mirror and thanked God for making me able

A three bedroom home on church roads end

In Centerville right outside East St. Louis

Grandparents didn't have much but love

And we knew it

And love drove me, carried me

To finish high school and get a college degree

The love of aunts, uncles, and cousins propelled me

In a depressed land

Combatting outside violence, drugs and murder

Houses burnt down, seeing dead bodies on the ground

Our strength was that everyone knew each other

Missing father and missing mother

Disconnected from my sisters and brothers

But I met new family …new sister, new brother

Love prompted me to continue

To continue….to forget those things behind and press toward a higher calling

God carried me

Through a 15 on my ACT

But now hold 2 college degrees on to the third

All because I believed the word….the purpose

And so I infuse others with love and purpose.

Dropouts, the forgotten, the misfits

Hip Hoppa's

I teach, I speak, I write. I rap. I Art. I minister.

And with my heart I educate adults and youth

To change lives, I mentor

And I ain't always been right

TOO many sins to remember

But purpose, and love gave me legs like pillars

To educate the masses

To see through the rose-colored glasses

To keep it moving toward self and community improvement

To be the change I want to see

And so I host conferences, I write grants for the misfits and misplants

To do it moving

Because it's more than ME

IT's about WE—our adults and children

Self-Esteem

I come from . . .

A long line of Rough Necks, Tough Necks

Who analyzed life rules like chess moves

    and then used those tools

To strategically collect from success

YEAH, I'm God's best!

You can kick me when I'm down

but a warrior's heart will abound

and come back and reassess

and I will do it with muscle so what's your hustle?

      I come from resilient people. In the poem, I focus on the resiliency that allowed me to use these individuals as pillars of encouragement to stand and become a warrior in harsh situations. When I lost the privilege of attending school, for example, I wanted to learn so badly that I read my mother's college books to stay abreast of what was going on outside of my situation. In my eyes, my family members carried a strength that may be seen in the experiences that they have endured, even further are the well-known feats that my people (Black people) have come through and how faith gave them a place to actualize this strength. The self-written poem above speaks to how arts have always been my way of expressing and empowering myself. Thus, my self-esteem, identity and pride are centered on a tri-factor of faith, education, and arts. I prayed and pushed forward instead of feeling downcast and regretful.

In my Spiritual REEL life mapSpiritual REEL life map, the picture of the artist Sunni Patterson spoke to my self-esteem. Patterson is a spoken word artist known for her critically acclaimed poem, *We Made It* (2006), detailing her experiences in the impoverished land of New Orleans before and after Hurricane Katrina. She graphically depicted lifeless bodies and a "boy stabbed 47 times in a church house" to illustrate the death toll. Her use of biblically infused words of making it through hard times painted a bleak picture undergirded by hope and redemption for the meek while forthrightly conveying a broader political message.

Resilience

"It don't matter what you tried to do, you couldn't destroy me! I'm still standing. I'm still strong! And I will always be." ~Antwone Fisher

My name means protector of mankind. Perhaps this made me a fighter. I grew up with a fighter mentality—fighting grown men and fighting to obtain an education. Through traumatic life experiences, I learned to cope and overcome adversity. In the Spiritualized REEL Life Map, the movie *Freedom Writers* represented my empowering journey as a writer/poet penning and speaking words of hope. *For Colored Girls Who Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Wasn't Enough* also decontextualized the intersectionality between Black women's struggle and pain.

In *For Colored Girls*, director Tyler Perry (2008) moved beyond Hollywood feel-good movies to portray eight women's poetic narratives of suicide, abuse, rape, religion, victimization, abortion, hopelessness and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) juxtaposed with Black femininity, empowerment, endurance, and survival. I used this movie to showcase the duality of my character and personality—a firm, tough-

spoken, strong educational leader with a softer side during trials. *For Colored Girls* strengthened my resolve to become myself regardless of who I currently am, where I came from or what I endured.

Within these stories are messages of hope and survival despite the trials that are before the protagonist. History confirms that Black women have always been women of purpose who understand that their being effects change beyond them and, thus, survival is imperative—be it familial, educational, or emotional (Witherspoon, 2008). These were women of purpose and I share that same narrative and similar to the women in this film I persisted due to my purpose. It has been this purpose that helps me to move forward and advance in my leadership practices. My faith in a higher power, ultimately, serving as a catalyst towards continuance of my goals to become an educational leader to help others fight for their dreams. In particular, I can recall being an eleven year old child reading the book of Psalms over and over to help me deal with the stress of what was going on at home.

Growth

Pictorial representations in the Spiritual REEL life mapSpiritual REEL life map illustrate my growth, but the movies *Antwone Fisher* and *Precious* breathed life into my story. In *Antwone Fisher*, the main character became a ward of state when his 17-year-old mother was imprisoned. Two months prior to Antwone's birth, his dad's girlfriend murdered him. Placed in an orphanage and foster care, Antwone was abused and mistreated. Suppressed anger later manifested through fights in the U.S. Navy. With the help of a Navy psychiatrist and friend, Antwone later searched for his biological family. Upon finding them, he began the transformative process of healing.

Precious was similar to *Antwone Fisher* with the exception that a female protagonist suffered abuse and poverty at her mother and father's hands. Joseph and Liney (2008) suggest that embracing traumatic childhood experiences and pain can help to accelerate learning, healing and ultimately growth. Both movies represented things that I endured during my lifetime that can be compared within the context of the films, music, and artists in the spiritualized life map. While I do not identify with every component of Precious' life, the film spoke to themes of abuse, hope, abandonment, healing, and growth. With the help of mentors, Precious obtained an education and a better living situation for her and her children—fathered by her father. Through counseling, Antwone confronted his past and anger issues to develop healthier, more successful, relationships with friends and family. Growth in my life materialized through the pain I endured in being disconnected from my parents, being in and out of foster care, and not being able to attend school while surrounded by violence. Similar to both protagonists, my story helped me to become aware of the purpose over my life and need to live out that purpose through educational attainment as part of my faith journey.

My relationship with my family and friends once I moved to Centreville, IL played a big role in my growth narrative as well. Their love–which was not always in word but in deed–propelled me to see beyond what was going on in my neighborhood. It reminded me of a scene in *Antwone Fisher* when he finally located his extended family and his grandmother, who seemed to be the matriarch of the family, held his face and said, "Welcome." Afterwards, the family gathered for a big dinner in his honor with all of his aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends. (A similar event took place in my life when I arrived in Centreville, IL. Despite the absence of the family that I grew up with, I knew

I was finally in a stable home filled with love. At times I would visit with my maternal grandmother who provided a different kind of love it was driven by her telling her story that included being one of 24 children that her mother bared. This woman pulled herself up from her bootstraps from having an 8th grade education with barely anything and retiring in 2011 as the executive director of buildings and grounds of a school district. She always explains that she was destined to make it and that her early experiences just made her strong enough to running a department with two hundred employees under her direct command.

Discussion

Education, purpose, and spiritual resistance were consistent themes in my overarching spiritual narrative—conveyed in each God-driven poetic line.   In the sentiments of Johnson-Bailey (2001) work on Black women in college and Travis (2012), our stories of struggle are pivotal in our growth and development and ultimately can empower us. Rather than allow drugs, violence, or abuse to lead me off the path of successful educational attainment, I used these circumstances for self-reflection. Seeking hope and healing, I taught, trained, and mentored in different communities, particularly those that reminded me of where I came from. I literally became the embodiment of Hip Hop in order bring about change in these environments. Lastly, the love that I received from my family and friends provided me with a deeper spiritualization of life in the Hip Hop community.

DJ West African Prince

DJ WAP's interviews took place by cell phone and in person when we met for the cipher interviews in Tampa, Florida on June 21-23, 2013. I interviewed him twice for a

sum of two hours then transcribed recordings afterwards. The data collection process included interviews, observations, and DJ WAP's teacher diary that he kept as an educational leader for the last four years. This teacher diary was submitted as a document artifact.

Figure 4. DJ WAP's Spiritual Narrative

DJ West African Prince's Spiritual Narrative

My earliest memory was my dad kicking down my front door

He beat my mama; she left him

And we moved every year—lived house to house

Different neighborhoods in Tampa River walk to Sugar Creek

Guns. Crime. Violence. Drug dealers on street corners

At the age of 8, I ran "Candy for them"

In elementary, I was doing grown things

Hanging with the gangs and befriending the Latin Kings

Switched from class to class

I started recording and writing lyrics to cope

Early teens, moved in with my father

He moved out with his girlfriend

Left my brother and I in a house with no food

Learned to fend for ourselves

I became a so called weed dealer

I was making raps. Pushing weight and CDs. Barely passing school.

I was troubled. Misled. Misfed.

But life changed after a book I read

—MALCOLM

My mother remarried

Carried us to the suburbs

Carried us to White people. I was culture shocked

A ghetto transplant treated different.

A white world. A new experience

I remember my brother and I

Playing ball at the park

White boys rolled up

Asked for directions and jumped out the truck

Called us niggers

My brother threw a rock

My brother ended up sliced up

Something clicked in me and that changed everything

Opened my eyes to what I could not see

I began to read, began to learn

That I am the original man

I was created, in the image of God

I am, a reflection of God.

Malcom X made the difference

My Black consciousness arose

I went back to school and allowed knowledge to be exposed

And switching the code to enlighten

My dreams became heightened

So I went to college from prepaid funds, failed college,

went to community college surpassed failure

Then on to the University of Florida

Graduated with a history degree ….Became a teacher

A year later I got a master's in Ed Lead

2 years later I became a principal

3 years later I'm beginning a doctorate

What made the difference?

I am confident it was God. Role models.

Education. Seeing Black men do good things

Little Black boys need this to be redeemed.

Self-Esteem

DJ WAP's critical examination as the original man, created in the image of God, illustrated the self-esteem tenet in the Individual and Community Empowerment framework.

I am the original man.

I was created, in the image of God.

I am, a reflection of God.......well, at least I used to be.

My mirror image was tainted by the forceful penetration of the

plantation owner who raped my great-grandmother.

Hold on.......let me give you her name to make it personal.

This ain't just "anotha" angry Black man; this is Mamie Bell,

surname Mann.......that's spelled with 2 n's on the end.

While she screamed for her reproductive rights,

America screamed for one nation under God.

Forget yo' flag and yo' pledge

It ain't no "justice for all".

It ain't no justice for me.......

That blind lady liberty.......is colorblind.

Where is the justice for Eric, my big Cuzo, doing 15,

or my great-great-Grandaddy released from slavery at 15?

We used to be Hamites and Shemites, but the white man

gave us a new name......."Nigger."

That wasn't good enough so he gave us his last name, Bell, Jackson,

Johnson, Williams, Green, Brown.......You "undastand" my point.

I "ovastand" what has happened and I pledge my allegiance to

breakthrough it. In the will of God ....Salaam.

    DJ West African Prince is a man who wanted justice for the injustice of the Black race   in what he perceived to be a stripping of identity.   He spoke to the experiences that he endured living in the South while growing up in a Hip Hop community. Due to the history of racism and classism, those from Hip Hop communities reared in the South

have a heightened sensitivity to racism more so than other locales in America (Hess, 2010). In the first stanza of his poem, DJ West African Prince–as the original man–believed that his ancestor was Adam from the Bible. Though DJ WAP associated himself with a Christian perspective, this belief system appeared to be connected to the 5-percenter theological tenets: 1.) Black people are the original people of planet earth, and 2.) Black people are the fathers and mothers of the civilization (KRS One, 2003).

DJ WAP's search for solidarity in his inquiry for justice aimed to enlighten brethren on their true identity. During qualitative data collection, he spoke of his connection to Malcolm X. Both searched for identity during inner-city upbringing and believed the American dream stood on the foundation of Black exploitation. This realization provoked DJ WAP to become a teacher of Black history before graduate studies as an educational leader. In the poem, DJ WAP spoke of America's cruel irony through his cousin having to do fifteen years in prison for a crime that, perhaps, someone of a different skin color or with more money may not have been arrested for.

He juxtaposed his great-great-grandfather's enslavement until age 15 to the brutal effect of 15 years imprisonment. For DJ WAP, resilience resulted as an unintended consequence of being abandoned by his father while surviving in low-income communities. On his self-identity quest, he felt harmonious vibes from KRS 1's Urban Metaphysics (2003), which focused on unlearning everything the dominant culture passed down in order to survive in the hood.

Boyz 'n the Hood, thus, represented a piece of his coming of age narrative. In the movie, the lead protagonist Tre' moved in with his dad as a pre-teen in inner-city Compton, California where drugs, violence, and sex appeared at much higher rates than

in his mother's home. In his spiritual narrative, DJ WAP addressed moving in with his father at age 12, like Tre', because his mother, as a single woman did not know how to raise him. There he found himself immersed in a gangster lifestyle. The common denominator—young Black males, regardless of era, resisted or fell prey to America's calamitous confines. Travis (2012), however, postulates that experiences like DJ WAP's – deemed as risky – actually could have the reverse effect and empower those from the Hip Hop community to grow and develop their self-esteem and resilience.

Resilience

The strongest resiliency depictions appeared in DJ WAP's self-written piece reflecting on memories of his father beating his mother; white men beating his brother; and drug dealers using him to "run candy for them." These stories showcases DJ WAP authentic struggle and highlight the being able to become a strong educational leader — an *overcomer* despite community adversity during his Tampa, Florida upbringing.

As a West African Prince lost in America, DJ WAP established himself as the original image and reflection of God. To claim his rightful place of power and empowerment, he then purposed himself to learn as much as he could through books and ancestral teachings to counter negative media stereotypes. He countered identity stripping through self-learning and communal discourse on *The Mis-education of the Negro* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X.*

During the interview, he also gave nods to Black theologian James Cone and political prisoner Mumia, who continues to epitomize being free yet imprisoned in America. DJ WAP's self-esteem progressively evolved from an understanding of himself as an individual to embracing his role as a strong Black male leader in the Hip Hop

community. His Spiritualized REEL Life Map culminated with salient strands of critical awareness in academia, spirituality, and Hip Hop. Hip Hop prides itself on "keeping it real and raw" as do unashamed spiritual testimonials (Carter, 2006; Witherspoon, 2009).

These Hip Hop and spiritual narratives in combination provided a platform for DJ WAP. He embraced uncovering every disheartened aspect of his participation in social ills. At this juncture in REEL, the movie title *Above the Rim* illustrates his rising above adversity. In the context of the movie, an athlete living in the inner-city played B-ball to get out of the hood. DJ WAP, however, honed skills in reading and writing to finish college. He is currently pursuing his doctoral degree and shares his story as a way to help other young Black males succeed.

Growth

I ovastand what has happened and I pledge my allegiance to
breakthrough it. In the will of God ....Salaam

As the youngest in the study DJ WAP was, in many ways, the most accomplished. Having obtained a master's degree at age 25, he became a charter school principal at 26, and sought success to affirm that his identity differed from negative young Black male stereotypes. Through his poetic narrative, he reflected on the need to be a change agent in his community. He first pledged his allegiance to God to ground himself to make wide scale change as depicted in his Spiritualized REEL Life Map.

Tupac Shakur (2 Pac), a lyrically adept Hip Hop artist–murdered in 1996 in his early twenties–represented part of DJ WAP's REEL. He explained that 2 Pac's music played a huge role in teaching and fathering him into being the man he once was as he identified with the lyrics and pain as his own. 2 Pac's posthumous influence is evidenced by over 12,610,000 views of his *Dear Mama* video from December 2008 to January

2014. *Dear Mama, Me Against the World,* and *Papa'z Song* painted a picture of a man struggling to find himself amidst being Black, fatherless, and poor in addition to having issues with his mother.

During an interview, DJ WAP discussed his growth in departing from Tupac's narrative to realizing the dichotomy of the late artist as valid but skewed in his musical genius and life. His reflections showcased continued leadership growth and development. Equally interesting was DJ WAP's deep connection to Malcolm X who began as swindler and deceiver Detroit Red. He transformed into Malcolm X—follower of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad who thought the white man was the devil. Settling into his true identity, he later became El Hajj Malik Shabazz, a man who embraced more advanced views of a unified people inclusive of every race and tongue (Lee, 2002).

DJ WAP's Spiritualized REEL Life Map also included movies reflective of his gangsta rap era. *Menace to Society* (Williams, 1993) and *Boyz 'n the Hood* (Singleton, 1993) conveyed a message of what he left behind but, at the same time, showed the dark secrets that happened in his community. These hood classic movies contextualized a complex narrative filled with poverty, violence, and murder. DJ West African Prince spoke about being free from every form of bondage in the beginning of his interview and later his own risky background that included gang related activity. In this 2009 communication with a young brother on a social media site, he recalled wanting to be a rapper at one time

 Ask yourself if God endorses what you do for a living and the lifestyle that you live? I dont [*sic*] even know you, so this may seem weird to you, but I just get tired of seeing our young "brothaz" come up the same way and find pleasure in

94

the same foolish things. What foolish things? The tattoos, the cars, the rims, the

hoes, the alcohol, the weed, the anti-education mentality, all of these components

are anti-progress and anti-christ [*sic*]. This is the reason why we continue to fill

up the white man's prisons, the same way we filled up his slave ships in Africa.

Devote yourself to something that will make a positive impact on our people,

don't further influence Black people to do all the wrong things that only lead to

prison, death, STD's etc… I used to rap and live that GOON lifestyle or at least

portray a GOON lifestyle. Rap don't pay. There is no stability in it. You not gone

[*sic*] be able to pay a mortgage payment with rap money. I hope you take this

[the] right way. West African Prince, lost in America. (Personal Communication,

2013

In his email, West African Prince spoke as an educational leader who once contributed to

the stereotypical Hip Hop culture as a goon—thug hired to intimidate opponents or a

tough guy (Urban Dictionary, 2013). This email illustrates the transitional growth that

DJ WAP underwent. Like the movie title *Above the Rim* (Pollack, 1994) he rose above

calamity.

Discussion

Historiography, deeply interwoven with spirituality, contextualized DJ WAP's

two 60 minute interviews. He emphasized the importance of studying biblical and

historical connections to develop as a leader in the interviews asking, "How can I be a

leader if I don't know who I am? How can I change this generation if I am lost as they

are"? His fatherless upbringing and mother's abuse at the hands of this man caused him

to struggle with his own identity as a young Black man in America. This realization led

to an adamant activist-scholar mindset that situated his braided narrative in the racialized tenets of history and faith. From this reality he used his own story as evidence of a need for more spiritual fathers in the Hip Hop community and therein strived in his lifestyle and work ethic to bring about this reality.

<center>**DJ Cross**</center>

DJ Cross' spiritual narrative included a self-written data transcription poem, Spiritualized REEL Life Map, artifacts (blogs, poems, and writings) and two interviews, one recorded during the group cipher meeting in Tampa, Florida June 21-23, 2014. The second was given over the phone in late November. Both interviews were recorded and transcribed then comprised into poetry.

Figure 5. DJ Cross' Spiritual Narrative

DJ Cross' Spiritual Narrative

Born in Belgium,

Raised in Chicago

Pops I didn't know

Product of a single parent household

Four boys/ I was the eldest

Made me more responsible for everything.

An Activist at birth/ with the same birth date as King

<center>96</center>

Watched my mother struggle to make us all kings

Watched violent Chicago's suburbs and the city

The reruns of death conundrums was gritty

I became a rapper, to put on for my city

But I was not hood.

I was asthmatic

    non-athletic,

    had cheap shoes,

    rap kept me from looking pathetic,

    and even the hardest thugs thought I was poetic.

The thing about Hip Hop, it's kinetic.

Whit allowed me to connect with Rhetoric

Even though in school I was a fool---I regret it

Kicked out of high school for not being reverent

Tried to stay focused instead of hopeless.

But ran with bad guys to cope with stress.

So with that mentality…I got kicked out of college soon as I entered

A college dropout to me was like a servant indentured

So I re-entered

Community college struggle of significance

Watching the have nots struggle to have

Blossomed a spirited transformation in my path

Community college was my catalyst to Jesus ….

But I joined a few churches and it was there the biggest racism was experienced

Politics that make you wonder, is church just for escapism?

Racial tension in the church, was this a white man's religion?

All at once: My identity was lost

Graduated …enrolled in a master's degree

Like bell hooks' said theory healed me.

Race relations freed me ….

Let me be me and find identity through the lens of performance.

There is no perfection until we are in heaven

Learned the difference between following church and following man

That it's bigger than the man or the organization

My ministry is the streets

That's my heartbeat

A professor who is professing the truth

Reppin Fela Kutu/ Malcom X/ Martin and 'em

Speaking against injustice where prejudice is "stifilin 'em"….

That's my gospel; I don't have to prove my Blackness

I'm a be "yo' self" advocate and that means be you at all times.

Before the foundation I was called as a prophet, a king and a leader, scholar, poet, creator

Pulling modern slaves off of modern day plantations. By stopping the violence

Using Hip Hop as a tool

Poetry as access

Using euphemisms to balance

To join with the lineage of the ancestors

And make my people better

Promote more art on a global perspective.

To help heal

Towards a better community

And a better generation

Self-Esteem

DJ Cross' critical analysis of his kingship illustrated the self-esteem tenet in the

Individual and Community Empowerment framework (Travis, 2012).

I was king

    before Martin ever walked

    before Pharaoh designed pyramids

    and Elvis learned how to do that.

I was prophet

    before God knew Jeremiah

    before the first prediction

    on ancient scrolls.

I was the whisper in the air

    that got conspiracy theorists

    talking.

I was leader

    before Jesus called Peter

    before Moses received his mantel

from a burning bush. . .

The absence of my presence

 was the beginning of chaos.

I was hip-hop

 before the hyphen.

 before Jamaica expedited

 a gem and planted it

 in the fertile ground of

 the Bronx. . .

 before Brooklyn wore

 the masks of our ancestors

 in the color of spray paint.

I was king,

 prophet,

 leader,

 hip-hop,

 before I ever was me.

  As a King, Prophet and Leader, DJ Cross wrapped his racialized spiritual identity in a performative Hip Hop lens. His spiritual narrative implied that having the same birth date as Martin predisposed him to be a King. Despite being a young Black man in inner-city Chicago, growing up in a single parent home, DJ Cross' self-esteem and self-worth countered the odds.

In deconstructing kingship, he contradicted poverty, crime, and fatherlessness –

cosigning to the biblical proverb: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy

nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you

out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1Peter, 2:9). But did gasping for air prove

more difficult than daily living? DJ Cross recalled, "I was asthmatic, non-athletic, had

cheap shoes; rap gave me a swagger to connect even with the hardest thug" (DJ. Cross,

personal communication, 2013).   The sad truth remains:

> [W]hether in an actual prison or not, practically every Black male in the United
>
> States has been forced at some point in his life to hold back the self he wants to
>
> express, to repress and contain for fear of being attacked, slaughtered, and
>
> destroyed. Black males often exist in a prison of the mind unable to find their
>
> way out. (hooks, 2007)

Negative Black male perspectives affiliated with Hip Hop communities shaped Cross'

identity:

> I constantly felt the sting of the static notions of my own identity, even as
>
> a child —the constant Black male mug shots on the news, all the Black
>
> villains in movies, and lack of Black heroes.   And the many repeating
>
> complaints I heard as a boy from Black women gave me the notion that
>
> Black men were stuck (DJ Cross, personal communication, December,
>
> 2013).

 Be yo' self-advocate became Cross' mantra as he emerged into an activist-educational

leader.

Resilience

I feel the pain in my city wherever I go

314 soldiers died in Iraq

509 died in Chicago ~Kanye West

"The reruns of death conundrums was gritty," noted DJ Cross in reflecting on his best friend's death and countless others. In his blog he discussed the loss of his best friend while he was in middle school.

> *The first time I lost someone close to me to murder I was 14 years old….He stayed a block down from me and we shared the same school and homeroom since we were eight years old. He died after our 8th grade graduation ceremony (for those who don't know, in the "hood" its [sic] common to have ceremonies for kids that are moving from the 8th to 9th grade. We're talking a stage, robes, tassels, a yearbook, and a keynote speaker because you've "made it" to 9th grade. Surely enough, not all of us made it to high school. I see now why the ceremonies were important). He didn't just "die." He was shot multiple times throughout his body by his own front porch. It was a murder. I remember those gunshots still and my mother yelling at me to stay in the house that night. It wasn't till the morning that we all learned that those gunshots were for him.* (DJ Cross, Personal Communication, December, 2013)

Death's reality molded DJ Cross' resilience. From execution of his 8th grade friend to stories of being harassed by police on the south side of Chicago, his story mirrored a common narrative in the Hip Hop community. Asante (2008) illustrated, for example, the numbing impact of daily deaths on the human soul. En route to teach at Morgan State

University, Asante witnessed a murder in Baltimore. At the start of class, he informed

his students of what he perceived to be a tragedy. They looked at him and went back to

business as usual. He suggested that tragedies of this sort became so prevalent in these

communities that there had been a numbing effect. The interplay between resiliency and

numbing served as a means to cope during tumultuous stressors (Travis, 2012). DJ Cross

created a rap identity to deal with violent community complexities:

> My community needed to represent itself as violent, unbeatable, and never scared
>
> to fight. Therefore I, as a metaphor for my community, needed to be violent,
>
> unbeatable, and never scared to fight. Soon enough I was a member, finally cool,
>
> a rapper that reflected the desires of my community and the culture of dominance
>
> that set the rules up in the first place. (DJ Cross, December, 2013.)

Rapper Kanye West personified DJ Cross' posture through *Jesus Walks*—on his album

that merged commercialism and racism to dominate billboards in 2004. Rhetorically he

asked if saying God "means my record won't get played." With over 5 million views on

YouTube for *Jesus Walks* (2009 to 2014), Kanye clearly remains an eclectic Hip Hop

mogul.DJ Cross gave credit to *Jesus*, Malcolm X's transformation, and bell hooks' theory

on the Black males' plight as pillars of support that redirected his narrative beyond self-

hate to resiliency.

Growth

From misogyny to maturity, DJ Cross' spiritual narrative traversed a myriad of

opposing views in his identity quest. The 90s bombarded him with Biggie's "money,

hoes, and clothes—all a nigga knows" to Jay-Z's sexually explicit lyrics to Tupac's fat

beats laced with b---ches, and hoes juxtaposed with *Dear Mama* and praise for ladies to

Keep Ya Head Up. Nearing thirty, DJ Cross no longer listened to or identified with the lyrics of men who were under 25 when they died. He noted that these men helped raise him through the speakers of his headphones, but upon growth he realized that their narratives were as lost as he was at that age. Now, he embraced his community obligation—a vision bigger than Hip Hop music, one that required being better for himself and others (Asante, 2008; Travis, 2012).

Discussion

DJ Cross' spiritual narrative revealed the need for role models to represent the conscious Black man. From early defeats of being kicked out of high school and college to growth as a man with increased faith, DJ Cross' experiences propelled him to be an effective change agent. Mezirow (1995) refers to this change as transformational learning where a life-altering crisis or dilemma causes a cognitive reevaluation of one's current situation to move in a new direction. We see DJ cross spiritual narrative being packed with epiphany moments that pivoted him to evolve into a better person, leader and spoken word artist. Being raised in a single parent household made him feel accountable for not only his growth and development but also other young men and women beneath him.

DJ Konquerer

A quiet educational leader DJ Konquerer grew up in Miami, Florida's Hip Hop community but was neither rapper nor poet and rarely listened to rap music. Her spiritual narrative enriched the study through reflections on coping with two drug-addicted parents with AIDS, personal demons (e.g., recreational drugs) and degree accolades. Both 45-

minute interviews were taped in her home then transcribed and made into poetry. I

interviewed DJ Konquerer twice, once in person and once over the phone.

Figure 6. DJ Konquerer's Spiritual Narrative

DJ Konquerer's Spiritual Narrative

I used to get high just to get by

Bogged down by the issues of life so I self-prescribed

A cold, angry, messed up person was I

And My---Parents were battling their own demons

Father was absent/ He was incarcerated...for drugs

Mother: from relationships to addiction was looking for love

Raised by Grandparents/Four kids were a challenge/ especially kids who are not your

own

But this is a reality in most Black homes

Was not bogged down by government assistance

It just would have helped if we had parental commitment

See we weren't well managed

This caused some good and some damage

Twins can be a full package …

Self-raising/ self-sufficient

105

The mistakes we made coming to age

Rough in elementary/ high school there was hard retention

And track and field helped me to become a focused stallion

Seasonal suspensions a rough transition trying to get attention

And to meet mentors who helped me to be valiant

And a principal helped me through graduation

Through which I could deal with the plagues of

Both parents infected with AIDS

Father died while in prison

Mother still living…and breathing …and fighting

Still gotta keep pushing or live trying

Mentorship brought exploration

That for failure there was no negotiation

 A four year degree/ bachelors/ seminary/ masters

The vision expanded when I met Christ/ was pointed in the right direction

The world I saw became bigger than me

The youth was an access point

My purpose and my ministry to bring enrichment into the lives of others

Programming/ life planning/ deeper assessment and examining

 Life on life/ Living the identity of Christ

Helping my brothers and sisters to step into purpose

Caring for my mother with the heart of forgiveness

To step away from the blurry and get their life in focus

To become healthy in body, spirit and mind is the plan

Cuz I too once was broken and so now I am spokesman

Self-Esteem

Waited for an honorable discharge

And received their marching orders

One sitting on the next hustle of the day

That some would call the optical illusion of fate,

061998, that you gonna be just like your mama.

They said you ain't going to be shit,

Was a few of the injured of my psyche.

Coming to the conclusion earlier that the negative

That was produced by those that gave the salute

Was going to be the catalyst to the higher heights of the deeper depths. 122602,

Optical illusion became the reality of what I am living ….Success

DJ Konquerer's self-esteem was based upon her achievements that she had made in sports, education, and ministry. As seen in her abstract autoethnographic poem above, she used words as a catalyst to push her forward in her life with the help of mentors. In high school and college, Konquerer was successful in her athletic abilities as a track star. She earned a scholarship to a well-known university to throw the shot put. At school and to relieve the stress that was going on at home, her participation in these extracurricular activities helped her to stabilize pieces of her identity. They caused her to have to be more responsible for her actions if she wanted to play and made her

accountable to her coaches. In this respect, sports served as a medium for an attitude adjustment for DJ Konquerer.

She included a picture of Miami Heat in her Spiritualized REEL Life Map. In hip-hop culture, sports are very prominent. They are of great significance to the athletes as well as audience. The congruency with sport culture and teams like Miami Heat is a message of confronting and overpowering one's opponent. One may recall Miami Heat emerging from the ashes like a phoenix while winning their championships with the help of Lebron James and Dewayne Wade.

Like sports, Hip Hop carries messages of strength, courage, success, perseverance and hope (Patton, 2009). This is the reason why one may often hear Hip Hop songs being played to excite and motivate the audience at sports games. Recently a song entitled *Ooooh Kill'em* has become notable in sports. Ranging from football to basketball, this encourages and uplifts those who are playing or listening to *Ooooh Kill 'em* with their sport savviness, swagger, or skill (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdongJpz_Ao).

DJ Konquerer's skills built up her self-confidence and helped her to kill a lot of the self-doubt she acquired growing up disconnected from her parents. For many kids in the Hip Hop culture, sports have become an outlet from the situations at home (Patton, 2009). Similarly, Konquerer conveyed a message of being empowered by being an athlete and individuals that she met during her tenure in track and field.

Secondly, DJ Konquerer's self-esteem was connected to her achievements made in school from a bachelor's, master's, and beginning a theological degree. In her self-written transcription poem, she articulates that people said that "she would never be shit." She used these words to propel her further into her destiny—as esteem to empower her

dreams (Kanye, 2001). Her self-esteem increased through her ability to navigate the

educational arena while being subjected to the stress connected to her family's battle with

drugs and disease. This showcased her resiliency and dedication.

Resilience

Recently VH1 released a documentary called Planet Rock which explored how in

the 80s and 90s the drug epidemic and Hip Hop was interconnected (VHI). The epidemic

changed neighborhoods across America socially and politically, specifically inner-cities.

Also connected to this drug epidemic was the contraction of HIV and AIDS from the

sharing of needles. DJ Konquerer experienced this reality firsthand when her mother and

father became addicted to drugs and afflicted with the AIDS virus. In her spiritual

narrative poem, DJ Konquerer details the story of finding out on the night before

Christmas that her father died in prison because of the virus and that her mother was

afflicted with the disease

Here she uses the movie *Tim Burtons: The Nightmare Before Christmas* (Burton,

1993) in her Spiritualized REEL Life Map to undergird this truth. She goes on to discuss

self-raising for her and her brothers and sisters. All of these situations caused her to be

angry and get in a lot of trouble in high school until mentors helped her see a bigger

picture. For DJ Konquerer, Hip Hop artist and actress Queen Latifah's life and music

showcased the reality of a woman of strength, love, and courage in spite of what trials

faced her. Use of the movie that starred Queen Latifah seen in the Spiritual REEL life

map entitled Life Support (George, 2007) brought to life Konquerer's challenges of

growing up with parents who had the HIV virus and how she remained resilient through

the trial. Even further, the data pointed to Konquerer embracing Latifiah's messages of ones of uplift and persistent growth.

Growth

DJ Konquerer's growth was moving beyond anger and self-defeat towards commitment to becoming a better person. Connection to mentors was a large piece of DJ Konquerer's growth component of her spiritual narrative. As one of her artifacts, she submitted the poem (source unknown) taught to her by a coach in high school.

> Excuses are the tools of the weak and incompetent.
> Used to build monuments of nothingness.
> Those who excel in it seldom excel in anything else but excuses.
> (author unknown, n.d.)

Before this time, DJ Konquerer recalled getting in trouble in school for different kinds of problems or different types of behavior such as fighting and smoking weed, but individuals like coaches and principals were instrumental in helping her to refocus and complete high school then move towards college. *Coach Carter* (Carter, 2005) on her life map reel is useful in supporting this experience. In this film there is a coach who works with an inner-city high school to help them win the play-offs. In this feat, he uses hard tactics to help them to become, not only, better athletes but better people. In high school, DJ Konquerer had a similar experience with both her coach and principal. In her spiritual narrative poem she discusses getting high just to get by or getting suspended from school and being really angry.

DJ Konquerer uses the movie *Lean on Me* (Avildsen,1989) to detail her high school journey with a principal who encouraged her to become better. In the film, the principal motivates inner-city children to finish high school. He was also present in their personal lives dealing with pregnancy, gang violence, murder, and injustice. DJ

Konquerer's principal taught her to succeed. Her graduating class that year was the largest in the school's history based upon his help. While *Lean on Me* (Alvidsen, 1989) details several elements, perhaps the main one in common with DJ Konquerer is the lead protagonist Mr. Clark, using stern motivational and accountability techniques towards the class.

In the Hip Hop community, mentorship relationships are the building blocks for opportunities of spiritual awareness (Asante, 2008; Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011;KRS One, 2003; West, 2003). Mentorship allows those who are the mentee to arrive at purpose, dedication and the realization that their success is intricately connected to others in the community (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011). Thus, it was in and through these mentorship relationships that DJ Konquerer's greater purpose awakened, which heightened her connection and relationship with God. DJ Konquerer's greater purpose was to become a leader within the greater Hip Hop community helping to engage young kids across America spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. She also furthered her educational pursuit to be able to reach a wider span of people in her professional world as an educational leader. In such, she used her capabilities in working for a large Midwestern nonprofit organization with inner city teenagers in the inner-city to help them become closer with God. In conjunction with her new job as an afterschool program administrator, she facilitated growth and development in herself and others.

Other areas of growth were in forgiving her mother and father for being absent for several years and for the lives that they lived:

I had to realize my mother is a woman just like I am, flesh and blood in its entirety and I do not always get it right. She messed up, but so have I a

million times and when I see her fallen nature it makes me see her in a new light. Forgiveness has been the answer" (DJ Konquerer, November, 2013)

Discussion

DJ Konquerer's story showcases the story of an educational leader who is driven because of the circumstances that occurred in her life. Her being affected by drug use, abandonment and the AIDS virus propelled her to embrace mentorship as a catalyst for her to grow and change. Travis (2012) conveys that the biggest struggles in the Hip Hoppa's life are the fuel that empowers them toward being better, feeling better, and doing better. It has been said that Suffering is a God given experience and also a providential blessing wherein we are able to move into His sovereign plan for our lives (Mcneal, 2012). DJ Konquerer's suffering of silence and shame behind her mother's secret of being afflicted with the AIDS virus propelled her into becoming an advocate for young people with similar upbringings.

Chapter Summary

Chapter four addressed the individual spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities. Each of our spiritual narratives included two levels of analysis. The first level was in the creation and developmental process of the poetry in which data was wilted away, summarized and formatted from the original transcriptions to arrive at the spiritual narrative (Lahman, 2011). Once this was done each leader's spiritual narrative was placed into the first three dimensions of the I.C.E. framework to locate self-esteem, resiliency, and growth. After which a data transcription

poem (spiritual narrative), spiritualized life map, and archival data inclusive of poems, blogs, emails and journals were used to crystallize and support the narratives.

Our spiritual narratives were inclusive of several factors that impacted us as individuals to change or lives. Weather it was violence, abandonment, parental drug use this adversity had an adverse effect in increasing the development of our self-esteem, resilience and growth and helping us to be well rounded. Our faith in a higher power increased our awareness of purpose and catapulted us into work that allowed us to be creative in our practices. We situated ourselves in the not only the community but culture becoming athletes, poets and rappers. Being a part of active in the culture gave of a Hip Hop credibility that allowed us to cross boundaries with others who may reject someone who did not carry this shared identity. A discussion was positioned after each one our spiritual narratives that allowed for deeper analysis to take place alongside the literature. These discussions revealed that the merger of levels of Hip Hop identity (while different for each DJ) and spirituality was the recipe that opened the door for us to be the successful individuals that we are.

V. COMMUNITY AND CHANGE SPIRITUAL NARRATIVE

When I and two of the other collaborative DJ's first arrived in Tampa, Florida on June 21, 2013, there was no plan for immediate data collection. I arrived first at the meeting location and soon after met with DJ Konquerer and DJ West African Prince (WAP). We then went to lunch to await the arrival of our last research partner, at an inner-city restaurant in a neighborhood that West African Price grew up in. I recognized this as a prime time to begin collecting data and pulled out my cell phone to record DJ WAP.

Violence resides here always

There is an identity crisis that comes into play

Mothers loosing sons, sons loosing mother

Daughters left without brothers and husbands

This generation does not know who they are

They are a direct blood line . . . cousins with Israel

It's biblical . . . a reciprocal of Jesus

– but they blotted them out

Transgressed the Black man's spot

As the haves and the have nots

Thieving, killing, lying, and pimping

All to bring them into the system

That's indifferent . . . and this fish spot

– well, it's just a part of the broken image

Of those who are taking over our village

DJ WAP's words set the tone for our study and allowed us to see his heart for his neighborhood. His spiritual narrative above also addressed his disappointments with the imbalanced and disproportionate racial, spiritual and economic conditions surrounding this restaurant. This chapter follows suit with DJ WAP's sentiments by looking deeper into the spiritual narratives that were located during the interviews, reels, and ciphers in a communal context. Just as Chapter IV addressed the four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop Communities' individual poetic spiritual narratives, Chapter V will delve into the conversation that took place during the cipher in Tampa. In order to represent the communal nature of this research, one poem was written which combined the collaborative DJs' main ideas and situated it within the community and change domains of I.C.E (Travis & Deepak, 2010: Travis, 2012).

Thus this chapter answers the third research question, "How do the spiritual narratives of four educational leaders from Hip Hop communities influence their community empowerment and change initiatives?" As mentioned in the literature, neighborhood pride and desires of improved communities are the driving factors of the community and change dimensions of I.C.E (Travis, 2012). These specific proponents were apparent in the activism that we each embarked on in our respective communities.

These ciphers (group meetings) took place over a span of two days. At times, the recorders were turned off due to the sensitivity and confidentiality of the topics discussed but when relevant topics came up we turned the recorders on. In total, we accumulated three hours of data and once complete it was transcribed. Following suit with chapter four the poetic narrative analysis helped to create the following poem, in which, our voices were combined to create a collaborative community and change spiritual narrative.

Community & Change Spiritual Narrative

What was false reality to some

Was commonality to us

As common as tying your shoes

Was hearing about murder in the morning news

The normalcy of murder . . . jail sentences,

  Autoimmune

Deficiency

  Virus

Where destruction is an epidemic-idis

And still met with silence

Where Trayvon's become less relevant

Even with over 500 murders in Chi-RACK

In a one year span

No shout-outs, no mentions

Symbolic of the apathy of the white man

Children being the culprit/ yet still no gun ban

So Spiritual Progression

Has been our life lesson

We intend to make freedom ring

With Spiritual Parenting

Where even the PROFANE IS SPIRITUAL

The block becomes the church

So the church has to be MISSIONAL

And through those eyes we see

We must be authentic and original with

New Waves of Digital

Facebook, Instagram, Blogs, and Twitter World

Educational leadership is visual and literal, too

To stop the violence and killing

To reach the lives of adults and our children

With a nod at historic vision

We turn up for the mission

And we take rejection – WE STILL DRIVING

With disappointment – WE STILL LIVE and

Multiple Degrees – WE KEEP STRIVIN'

We Prophetic voices We Ain't never finished

Hustle or Live Trying

–'cause the beautiful pain will lead us to Zion

Once this communal spiritual narrative was developed, I identified five mini-narratives that we had in common. Using the community and change context as a guide, I then found pieces of data that supported the five mini-narratives: spiritual parenting; spiritual progression; the profane is spiritual/church is missional; new waves of digital; and hustle or live trying. Below is the matrix that I developed to organize the data excerpts that will be discussed more in the paragraphs that follow. In those paragraphs, I

discuss the mini-narratives at length and expound upon them with additional data

selections that were in alignment with the communal spiritual narrative above.

Spiritual Narratives	Examples
Spiritual Parenting	DJ Cross: Wrote a Letter to Sharkeisha. DJ WAP: Met with cousin to help him understand himself in a historic context DJ Konquerer: Helped her mentee become more self-sufficient. DJ God's Def Poet (GDP): Mentored 5 to 7 young girls annually.
Spiritual Progression	DJ Cross: Progressed while teaching his students after an epiphany that he outlived Biggie and Tupac's lyrics. DJ WAP: Changed his attire, behavior, and job performance because of a Black principal's actions. DJ GDP: Interviewed for doctoral program and was honest about her research agenda. DJ Konquerer: Fed family healthy choices, changed her eating regimen, and discussed eating hummus and steamed spinach.
The Profane is **Spiritual/Church is** **Missional**	DJ Cross: Hosted seminars in schools and communities across America that spoke against violence in Hip Hop communities. DJ GDP: Wrote grants to host conferences that educated university, college, and nonprofit organizations about Hip Hop culture. DJ WAP: Brought historical-communal knowledge as principal of an inner-city charter school. Used this knowledge inside and outside of the campus DJ Konquerer: Worked with at-risk students in her community and went into their homes to do life-on-life.

Figure 7. Spiritual Narrative Excerpts

New Waves of Digital	DJ GDP: Created an educational Hip Hop documentary and marketed it on Vimeo.
	DJ WAP: Developed and shared educator journal using social media.
	DJ Konquerer: Used social media to market program(s) that she directed.
Hustle or Live Trying	DJ Konquerer: Became an administrator and purchased a home by age 33.
	DJ GDP: Worked towards obtaining a doctorate by age 32.
	DJ WAP: Became a principal by age 26.
	DJ Cross: Worked as a professor at three campuses, while being a traveling poet and speaker.

Figure 7. (cont'd.)

Spiritual Parenting

Film Director John Singleton provided America with one of the first prophetic depictions of fatherless homes in Hip Hop communities with *Boyz 'n the Hood* and *Baby Boy* (Cunningham, 2010). The collaborative DJs grew up at the same time the movies were released, enduring similar circumstances such as living in single parent homes, foster care, or grandparent-led households. Like many individuals in their communities, the collaborative researchers' parental relationships were nonexistent or not fostered well, so they took on this obligation to become parents to their brothers and sisters and others.

DJ Konquerer and I shared similar stories of being reared in homes that were impacted by the crack epidemic. Due to such extraneous circumstances, we were raised by our grandparents. DJs Cross and WAP were both raised by single mothers and discussed how inadvertently rappers like Tu Pac and Biggie were their surrogate fathers.

The longing for solid, supportive parenting was, thus, interwoven into the core of the Spiritual Parenting narratives. This word showed up in the data as mentorship but was in many ways more intense, involved, and specifically geared towards Black boys and girls, but carried a multicultural social justice message conveyed by DJ WAP's message:

> There is a lack of mentors in our guidance process as Black men. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. That's a lot of us; that's why we have identity problems. How can I preach Black consciousness when I'm selling weed? And although I never smoked weed, I sold it. I did this because I didn't have the true understanding of who I was nor who God was until my last year of college. I had no understanding of how God worked—that this was more than me studying for a test to become a teacher. This was me studying for purpose so that I could be like Malcolm. I felt that my purpose was to be an activist so that I could lead these zombies out of their dead state and show them that they did have a God-given identity.

DJ WAP demonstrated what Travis (2012) described as a commitment to make things better in his community through recognizing his need to be different based upon what he referred to as walking zombies in the communities he served as a teacher and principal. He called his people walking zombies because they seemed to be oblivious of the conditions in which they were living and therefore looked to rappers and drug dealers for mentorship which helped to lead them further astray.

At the end of 2013 DJ Cross penned an open letter to Sharkeisha, a young woman whose fight went viral with over 12 million views, perpetuating the already negative look upon the young Hip Hop generation. His letter sought to help people who

promoted the fight as well as Sharkeisha to look at the bigger picture. While this fight

was seemingly right in her eyes, later in life something of this nature would affect her.

His letter addressed the reasons why she fought and why she should think differently

about her mode of protection. Stepping into the role of being a mentor and role model, DJ

Cross' letter was more than a rebuke. It was a meeting of the minds where he stated that

he had stood in similar shoes before but wanted better for her. He demonstrated growth,

community, and change as a leader moving away from his past gang member image that,

perhaps, condoned fighting to emerge as a community advocate who fought to stop

violence in Chicago.

     DJ Konquerer and I had similar perspectives on Spiritual Parenting. We both

took it upon ourselves to seek out young people to mentor. In the data, she discussed a

young girl who came over to her house for what she called life-on-life:

> I had to constantly encourage this girl to be self-sustaining. She called me and
>
> asked me to bring her lunch; that was not going to happen. She needed to be more
>
> responsible. I had to give her tough love and not be so available to her. I let her
>
> come over and sleep on the couch, anything she needed but there had to be a line
>
> drawn in raising this generation.

As educational leader from a Hip Hop community such as Miami, DJ Konquerer

showcased her strength in being straight-up—authentically real. Authenticity is a must in

Hip Hop communities. People from there know if someone is being false or phony. They

seek truthful people who can look them in the eye. In living out my spiritual parenting, I

mentored five to seven teenage or college girls every year since I started attending

college. Through mentoring, I found out that students often gravitated towards me based

upon my Hip Hop nature. Mentoring relationships connected us and helped to mold their lives into better people.

Spiritual Progression (Growth)

The four collaborative DJs shared progression and growth in their combined spiritual narratives; it was through this that they were able to promote change in their respective communities.   During the cipher I asked for the collaborative DJ's to chime in describing the main narrative that we shared. They postulated, almost immediately- that it was spiritual progression. As such, Apostle Paul's message of leaving childish things behind became a reality. While all of the DJs often referenced and respected their Hip Hop communities, they also spoke about growing beyond the community norms. Whether it was eating new foods like hummus or dressing more appropriately for work, these leaders understood that progression was the key to being better. DJ Konquerer spoke about bringing new food choices to her family:

> It's like I am living in this big house – living a different life here than in Austin – and not sharing that life would be dead wrong. So I began to bring things to Miami that my family never had experienced. One day I had them taste hummus; the next day I had them taste creamed spinach. And they were like this is eating fancy but, really, it's just regular to the world outside of home. There was a time when I made bad health choices, too. But with everything going on with my mom, it's important that she eats well and the rest of my family does too.

DJ Konquerer took on the responsibility to change her eating habits and then educate her family on eating healthier choices. It was from this place that her spiritual progression was largely seen.

DJs Cross and WAP shared a similar narrative of realizing that they both had out grown Tupac and Biggie's parental guidance. During the cipher, DJ Cross spit some lines saying: "I realize that I have outgrown Biggie, the only father I ever knew." The poem continued with his reflections of teaching students who were in their early twenties (the same age of Biggie and Tupac when they died) and how their mindset was immature and perhaps similar to the development of their predecessors. While Pac and Biggie were rapping about things far beyond their years, there was still a hood mentality that came along with disrespecting women, killing, and using drugs. Some rappers never stepped over the threshold of understanding the implications of their words or actions. The more education that we experience from the school of life academically, professionally and spiritually, the more awakened our eyes became to social injustices within our communities. We, in turn, graduated to more socially-conscious behaviors due to the things that we experienced. DJ WAP even reminisced on how he used to dress like a gangsta but changed due to another educational leader at his school:

> Mr. Smith caught my attention: he dressed well, drove a nice car, and had a nice
> wife and kids. One thing in particular I can remember is him always carrying a
> notepad with him everywhere he went so I started doing that, too. I saw what he
> wore and so I started dressing in slacks and a tie, too. I changed up the normal
> routine of dressing in baggy jeans and Jordan's and did something new. This was
> a Black man after all and as a little Black boy, I needed somebody Black to look
> up to and imitate.

Apostle Paul says imitate me as I imitate Christ. This notion recognizes the leadership capacity in others in order to become a better person to serve more effectively. DJ

123

Konquerer's spiritual narrative, for example, discussed progression as being healthy in mind, spirit, and body. Becoming a whole person was the overarching theme in her narrative illustration of educating her family, especially her mother with AIDS, on adopting a more health-conscious nature.

My spiritual progression was different. It came through my educational journey. I recall when I first interviewed for the doctoral program I told the professors what I thought that they wanted to hear about what I wanted to do. When I did not get into the program, I went through a year of soul-searching figuring out the reasons I was not truthful. As I began to investigate further, I realized that I wanted to talk about adults who grew up in the Hip Hop generation. I wanted to speak about all that we go through as leaders and adult learners. The next time that I interviewed with the school, I was more confident in who I was in the person that God called me to be. I told them exactly what I wanted to study and how I wanted to study it. The result was my writing this dissertation about the exact topic I professed interest in.

The Profane is Spiritual/The Church is Missional

Black preacher G.S Lewis labeled the Hip Hop generation and music as profane and demonic. Yet we, as Hip Hop educational leaders, we are seemingly doing more for our communities than many others in the same position. We, in turn, looked at the demonic as an opportunity to get our hands dirty and do real work. DJ Cross hosted seminars in schools across America that spoke against violence in Hip Hop communities. DJ GDP wrote grants to host conferences that educated university, college, and nonprofit organizations about Hip Hop culture to increase awareness and diversify campuses. DJ WAP, as a charter school principal, educated students about Hip Hop daily. He brought

124

historical knowledge to the table and brightened the path with an "each one teach one" perspective.

DJ Konquerer dedicated years working at summer camps that served inner-city at-risk high school kids with whom she shared her life as a testament of overcoming. She used her story in raw form to show them an imperfect being who was able to rise above her circumstances. In the data, she detailed her life-on-life approach with these students—being real with no filter, as brutally honest as possible. It was important for her students to trust her. In a letter, DJ Cross discussed his narrative similar to DJ Konquerer's, in depth:

> One night a gang was having a party across the street from my home. At the time, I was living in a place that was not the safest. The music was vibrating my windows and I was desperate to get some sleep. So I got up, put on a robe, and went across the street. I walked through the entire crowd, found the DJ, and asked for the music to be turned down. The DJ looked at me and said, 'Oh, you're—.' I didn't know the man so I was confused. 'All the kids around here love ya' man. Thanks for looking out for them. Whatever you need I gotcha.' He respected me because for the year I lived in St. Pete, I mentored and tutored the kids in the area. Some of those kids were their little brothers and sisters. Respect bought me a night's rest. Months later when my home was broken into, respect had the community find the culprit on my behalf. By community, I mean brothers with jail records longer than my arm.

DJ Cross made an impact in his community by seeing the profane as a spiritual place to work and not leave. His payback was respect from people deemed as some of society's

worst citizens. True respect came from fighting people's battles, serving them, and meeting their needs. True respect came from staying in his darkest places and making a true impact on the church—the people. In other words, if God is love then Hip Hop is love, the Bible backs this up when it states "For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him" (Col. 1:16).

As a unit, we believed the profane was spiritual and that spirituality was guided from above but extended to others in the form of love. Through this revelation, we were able to connect and serve Hip Hoppas deemed profane at a deeper level because they were one in the same. This understanding of the profane having spiritual implications helped the leaders to reach beyond the four walls and into the greater community with a missional vantage point. As of late, the missional church has become a big thing in many communities. Instead of meeting in a physical building, many churches meet weekly at several local community centers around big cities where true outreach takes place. These churches pride themselves on giving back to the community and not wasting money on buildings but on the people. Missional churches ultimately have become the epicenter of the mega-church, widening it's work beyond the four walls and encompassing what I call a hustle or live trying spiritual mindset.

Hustle or Live Trying

"Put me anywhere on God's green earth; I'll triple my worth." ~Jay- Z

While we were in Tampa, I asked the rest of the collaborative DJs, "Do you think that we have made it yet?" What I noticed in our conversations was that we often said the things that we were doing in the community, work, and amongst ourselves but then said

we were searching for the next goal or mountain to climb. One of the DJ's retorted, *we ain't neva satisfied*. Thus, the quote, "*Started from the bottom now we here*" (Drake, 2012) only described part of our spiritual narratives. We realized that we still have a long way to go even though collectively all of us have master's degrees; have been recognized nationally for various endeavors; and are emerging leaders in our professions. Still we felt as if we had not made it. The hustle mentality – hustle or live trying – was not predicated on what the word hustle traditionally means in the streets: illegally getting money by any means necessary. Rather, it referred to obtaining the highest goal, reaching the most people, and projecting change in Hip Hop communities. DJ Konquerer discussed, for example, purchasing her first home at the age of 33 and being proud to have crossed that threshold. She used buying a home as a motivational factor for her mentees and family:

> I once lived in a house with so many people none of us had our own room. I am used to that, but now I bought a house that is four bedrooms, two baths . . . I live there alone and, perhaps, it's too much home but growing up like that you become so paranoid and want to have enough room for people to stay and be comfortable. I also wanted enough room just in case my mentees need somewhere to stay one day.

DJ Konquerer was happy about where she came from but also wanted to enlarge her territory and use her story as motivation to hustle and obtain more. Similarly, DJ WAP became a principal at the age of 26 recalling:

> I always love the look that older people give me when I step onto their campus. Like yeah what can you teach me? I think hey I know a whole lot more than you

think. I have always been the youngest: the youngest in class, the youngest at

work, and that makes me feel good to have come this far. And during a job

interview to actually know what I am talking about when they ask questions. I

think hey I am a 26-year-old man from Tampa. A lot of other 26-year-old Black

men from my city are in the penitentiary right now.

From stories like these to DJ Cross being featured on CNN due to his worldwide social

media campaign to working at three colleges to me planning to get a doctorate at the age

of 32, all indicate that for us there is no ceiling in becoming successful. "It seems like for

white people the sky is the limit but for Black people the limit is the sky," Hip Hop

Comedian Chris Tucker declared in the 2001in his stand-up comedy routine. Quotes like

this humorous one reflect the hustle or live trying mentality. This notion to *live trying*

includes working overtime, two and three jobs, starting grass roots projects or posting on

social media sites to get one's message to the greater public. Essentially it becomes a

matter of taking matters into your own hands to get heard. Ultimately, as educational

leaders from Hip Hop communities, we embody this fact *by any means necessary*.

This notion perhaps offers a return to the age old story of Hip Hop where young

people re-used their parents old linoleum floors which were considered trash as floors for

breakdancing (Seidel, 2011), a few other successful Hip Hop narratives include: Soulja

Boy, Dee 1, and Kendrick Lamar hustling to get their music to the mass public without

having a record deal, finances, or material that was professionally done in a full state of

the art studio. Like no other time in history, we see the creativity and bold drive of the

Hip Hop generation—developing their own studios or becoming self-taught

photographers, makeup artists, journalists, and self-publishers. We are seeing these

artists emerge on YouTube teaching others the tricks of the trade for free creating a

culture of social media taught experts. With or without funding, they literally walk as

revolutionaries focused on making a difference in their respective communities (Dee 1,

2013). Driven by a purposeful mission, their vision affects change through social media

which focuses the last chapter in the context of New Waves of Digital.

New Waves of Digital

Noticeable in our study was the need to become the embodiment of Hip Hop in

our practices by utilizing digital mediums to build bridges with Hip Hop communities

through social media conduits to: voice our prophetic declarations, start a social media

campaign, promote conferences, and connect with mentors and mentees. Also speaking

to embodying the term New Waves of Digital, the well-known online newspaper

Huffington Post TECH released Russell Simmons' article entitled *Social Media is the*

New Hip Hop which drew a parallel between Hip Hop and social media:

It was the beginning of a movement that for the following thirty years would

connect hundreds of millions of young people around the world to the heart of

mainstream culture. With just a pad and pen, hip-hop became the strongest

cultural force this world had seen since the invention of rock & roll that displaced

two presidents and effected [*sic*] social and racial and gender change previously

unimaginable, in the sixties and seventies.   And thirty years later, what has come

out of hip hop has become the New American Mainstream and taken over the

globe. (Simmons, 2010)

Simmons forecasted that social media was birthed from Hip Hop culture and would

become this generation's new method of getting their voices heard while pushing for

social justice. Four years later, these prophetic words have become a reality. With social media sites like Instagram®, YouTube®, Twitter®, Facebook®, and Tumbler® (just to name a few), our generation and communities made strides with just a few strokes of a laptop. Another example of Hip Hop and the merger of social media is #HipHopEd. In 2011 four men who were scholars, Hip Hop artist and educators began to discuss social justice issues surrounding education and Hip Hop on twitter. Since that time the conversation grew to literally hundreds of people who meet every Tuesday at 8pm to tweet for an hour using HipHopEd® as a hashtag. This has opened the door for people who would never have connected in real life to connect on Twitter—including several conference talks, television time and a group that meets as part of South By Southwest in Austin, Texas for #HipHopEdSXSW (http://husslingtonpost.com/). Another educational leader from the Hip Hop community who incorporates new waves of digital into his teaching framework is Dr. Jason J Campbell. This scholar bears sleeves of tattoos on his arms and theorizing on Hip Hop while spitting raps. . Even still, this Assistant Professor has made over 1,000 YouTube videos of free global education https://www.youtube.com/user/drjasonjcampbell. These interdisciplinary videos include topics like qualitative research, Neitche, War and Terrorism, Hip Hop (http://www.youtube.com/user/drjasonjcampbell). By creating these videos he literally embodies a hustle, or live trying, and new waves of a digital mindset. He made a name for himself by the depth, length and dedication to the research in the videos.   This example depicts how this generation's revolution is going to happen on the back of social media. Perhaps, more notable is a documentary entitled *The Harvard Fellow* that details

the work of producer turned professor 9th wonders journey from DUKE University to Harvard University teaching Hip Hop scholarship.

Similarly to #HipHopEd we were each innovative in our community and change digital efforts, too. I developed my own documentary on Hip Hop and spirituality to speak to educational leaders in the Hip Hop generation then marketed it on a website similar to YouTube® called Vimeo®. That documentary was the impetus and building block for this dissertation and served as a piece of my scholarship. DJ Cross developed his own grassroots social media-based project to impact change in Chicago, gaining national attention on BET and CNN. DJ WAP created an online social media-driven journal/blog that he shared amongst friends and colleagues. DJ Konquerer utilized social media within her youth group to promote and increase attendance by leaps and bounds. All of these techniques effectively and authentically reached our respective Hip Hop communities.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the researchers' collaborative spiritual narratives in the context of community and change dimensions situated in the Individual, Community, and Empowerment Framework (Travis, 2011). These dimensions were contingent on how each researcher empowered the community through feelings of connection and belonging while embarking on social justice feats. As the spiritual narrative poem and data matrix suggest, we demonstrated a better sense of belonging and social justice through Spiritual Parenting where we went above and beyond to educate, mentor, and develop others from the Hip Hop generation. Following an epiphany state, Spiritual Progression was a pivotal

moment that changed our personalities for the betterment of our communities and allowed us to give back.

We elevated our voices, reached out to new people, and embarked on new terrain. In our attempt to become representatives for our communities, we became God-driven purposeful leaders with advanced degrees and workplace success to mentor the Hip Hop generation. The Profane is Spiritual/Church is Missional mentality allowed us to see ourselves and embody people as the church to move beyond four walls to do greater work. Using social media, our activist efforts increased as we vowed to Hustle or live Trying!

VI.   SPIRITUALIZING HIP HOP WITH I.C.E.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities and how the narratives influenced our Individual and Community Empowerment (I.C.E.) developmental practices. In this process, we hoped to better understand ourselves as educational leaders as well as to unearth our spiritual narratives. What was discovered is that our spiritual narratives have the ability to: provide insight and encouragement to other educational leaders from Hip Hop communities who also spiritualize their leadership practices; influence school administrators, scholars, and academics to better understand different viewpoints; and inform policies and practices of the academy.

This study incorporated narrative inquiry as a research strategy using freestyle and cipher interviews as a primary mode of data collection. I worked wth the three other collaborative DJs/partners to analyze data at two levels. The poetic narrative analysis was situated into five dimensions of the I.C.E. Framework: self-esteem, resilience, growth, community, and change (Travis, 2011, 2012). This study was based upon the following three research questions:

1) What are the spiritual narratives of four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities?

2) How have the spiritual narratives of these leaders influenced their personal growth and development?

3) How do the spiritual narratives of these leaders influence community empowerment?

The three research questions helped to understand the individual and community spiritual narratives presented in Chapters IV and V.

Chapter I introduced this study as an arts-based collaborative with my narrative written in poetry and journaling formats. I briefly discussed I.C.E. as the theoretical framework that guided the creation of research poetry and poetic narrative analysis for this study. This chapter also provided the research questions, purpose of study, and significance of study, and introduced collaborative DJs.

Chapter II interwove traditional and non-traditional or grey literature about Hip Hop and adult education, Hip Hop and educational leadership, educational leadership and spirituality, Hip Hop stereotypes, and the Individual and Community Empowerment framework, while offering a conceptual framework intended to help the reader see interconnections among the different components of the study more clearly.

Chapter III discussed the power of narrative inquiry--couched in an arts-based collaborative multi-spaced ethnographic study. It discussed the specific data collection methods used for this study: Poetic narrative analysis, methods of freestyle, cipher-based interviews, Spiritual REEL life maps, document artifacts, and a collaborative DJ's blog. Chapter III also discussed the multiple viewpoints present with this type of inquiry and detailed the study's IRB safeguards.

Chapter IV released our spiritual narratives in poetic form from an individualized perspective. We used the first three tenets – self-esteem, resilience, and growth – by Travis and Deepak (2011) to address these developmental stories. Once the transcripts were shared amongst the other collaborative DJ's we used the data to create the two

levels of research poetry--auto-ethnographic and collaborative. This data analysis

included the Spiritual REEL life maps and document artifacts.

Chapter V addressed our collective community and change spiritual narratives

using Travis and Deepak's (2011) last two tenets. I situated the spiritual narrative in the

context of community and change, social justice proclamations, and connection to one's

community. I then used that information to pinpoint and identify five common mini-

narratives that were uncovered in the community and change context. These five mini-

narratives were: Spiritual parenting; spiritual progression; the profane is spiritual/church

is missional; new waves of digital; and hustle or live trying. Literature, data, and

document artifacts were also woven throughout the text to support the overarching

narratives.

Chapter VI, the culminating chapter, will elaborate more upon the spiritual

narrative from Chapters IV and V. In this chapter, I merge the Individual and

Community Empowerment Framework, extending interpretation in the context of

literature presented in Chapter II.   In the end, I incorporate a reflection poem in addition

to recommendations and implications that may aid in the creation of future studies.

Spiritualizing I.C.E

The Individual and Community Empowerment Framework (Travis & Deepak,

2010; Travis, 2012) undergirded this study. Most recently, Travis (2012) called for more

nuanced analyses of Hip Hop research concerning education and social change in the

community and individual domains. I.C.E. must, thus, become a relevant learning tool for

practitioners to evolve in social justice—a tool that can be successfully integrated into

practice (Travis, 2012). The I.C.E. theory was built upon how all people conceptualize

rap narratives, but the two empirical studies that emerged from the original research (Travis & Deepak, 2010; Travis & Bowman, 2012) were both directed at high school and college students some of whom were nontraditional in age, thus, for the purposes of this study it was useful in the analysis of adults involved as educational leaders who are from Hip Hop communities.

Our study was in line with Travis' (2012) articulation that high-risk adversity levels can help individuals to demonstrate strong coping mechanisms, thinking, and self-esteem. The social support that we received in our respective communities from peers or persons who mentored us helped to promote a healthier self-image (Travis, 2012). Looking back at the poetic spiritual narratives, it became clear that our practices of spiritual parenting through new waves of digital media helped create a positive self-image for us and others who we worked with.

Extraneous ecological factors within our communities worked in tandem to build individual strengths while helping us navigate potential outcomes associated with adverse risky/dangerous situations (Travis, 2012). The study showcased that being raised in Hip Hop communities surrounded by external influences that were sometimes fraught with risk gave us coping skills and helped us to be strong in our environments. Thus, experiencing adversity promoted resilience as a God-given gift. Some of the strength was, perhaps, passed on by the generation before us but much was developed in living in a Hip Hop era in the drawing of the crack epidemic (VHI, 2012). Through this process, we developed thick skin; we questioned more people; and we were bolder—fear lessened and morphed into a Hip Hop mindset or worldview (Petchauer, 2012)

Spiritual Growth

As we found innovative ways to create change in our communities, growth became an essential component of our spirituality. Thus, Spiritual growth was the most important component to our individual and community leadership development. At first, our resilience was built upon being risky – experimenting with weed, fighting, selling drugs – essentially fitting into a stereotypical Hip Hop culture mode, we were in many ways trying to fit in. Spiritual Growth however, helped us to transcend these stereotypic behaviors. Spirituality and growth gave us a different lens to see the world and made us accountable for our actions, which led to the five mini-narratives in Chapters V.

Travis (2012) postulated that when growth aligns well, confidence connects, carries, and contributes to character and becomes married to self-connectedness, self-control, decision-making, and moral systems. Spiritual relationships, a type of connection can guide and be effective with elements of this growth process. Within our poetic spiritual narratives, it is noticeable the impact that those who helped us get through our lives had on us. This was demonstrated through the love of family, the love of friends, and the love of mentors who encouraged us which, in turn, led to us to want to give back and become spiritual parents to the next generation.

Our membership in faith and Hip Hop communities allowed us to feel connected to one another because of the intersectional ties we shared. As seen in the community and change poetic spiritual narrative, it was through this understanding of interconnectedness that collective growth bloomed. This did not stop at the end of the creation of community and change poetic spiritual narratives but, rather, was actualized in the interview process. Spiritual growth also happened during the ciphers-group

interviews which helped to bridge gaps between a collaborative DJ from Chicago and a collaborative DJ from Tampa, Florida. There was a collective identity at stake, but we were empowered by belonging to a shared history through pride, cultural accomplishments, and cultural resilience (Travis, 2012). An example of this was seen when DJ Cross and DJ WAP shared experiences of adopting Tupac and Biggie as fathers because of their absent fathers. There was a level of identification almost like an Ah-ha moment with this shared information. The air seemed to become lighter and gone was that chip on the shoulder or ICE grill that Emdin (2010) addresses in his research on being a part of the face of the Hip Hop community. It was at this point that their (DJ WAP and DJ Cross) shared experience was seen as a hood validation (when individuals feel one another based upon similar struggle). Sharing the experience of being raised by single mothers seemed to bond them in that moment and space. Multi-spaced research supports the notion that geographic space can be of great value among certain groups because the shared experiences promote resilience and create conditions for empowerment (Marcus, 1995).

The commercialization of Hip Hop often disregards or creates a stereotype that social change is not happening in hip hop communities (Travis, 2012). Yet, this study debunked these stereotypes and provided a nuanced view that shows demonstrates several examples of social justice. The collective identities of race, gender, and class helped to spiritualize our experiences at a greater level. Our passion to fight against injustice and disparities aligned with the Hip Hop theories by Asante (2008) and KRS One (2001) in that Post-Hip-Hop and urban inspired metaphysical actions can help us unlearn the stereotypical nature of Hip Hop and restore our authentic spiritual and

cultural identities. We too, unknowingly took on this unlearning to become better leaders in our respective communities who really did the work.   Therefore, like common Hip Hop terminology states we did not just *talk about* it, but *was about it.* The bottom line is that our spiritual growth put us in places emotionally and physically where we could be of service to others at a deeper capacity that we would have had we not progressive spiritually.

Spiritual Narratives

In this qualitative study, spirituality grounded findings of love for our communities and race. Our spiritual narratives often conveyed messages underlined by race—especially by male DJ collaborators. When speaking about their spiritual narratives inside and outside of leadership practices the Black males seemed to have been subjected to overt racism; whereas, the females seemed to deal with covert racism that was more subtle. Although our commitment to social justice was driven by what we endured in our communities and workplaces, the Black men in the study were more vocal about experiences with racism and oppression as shown by their positionalities in our collaborative poem. As Noguera suggests (2008) the plight and well-being of Black males should be focused upon in areas of education, employment and income. Black males are considered as a threat to society and they are faced with a coin of adulation and scorn where they are either highly recognized or greatly dehumanized. Hence, their fall from grace can be as quick as their emergence into leadership. The spiritual narratives of the Black men in this study conveyed messages of internalized rage that they worked towards healing through their community practice.

Also notable in our spiritual narratives was the pride from what could be deemed as bad or risky choices. These choices provided an even deeper understanding and spiritual tie that overflowed into our communities and workplaces. Therefore our testimonies humanized us to those who we worked alongside and made us more approachable. Instead of a cloak of shame, the risky discourse that we had previously engaged in became a badge of honor of survival for us because we endured the terrain of communities where a majority of Black boys died prematurely, were imprisoned, or dropped out of school (Noguera, 2008) and a large number of Black girls from Hip Hop communities became mothers early, disconnected from schools and family and could have been considered as "*Black girl Lost*" (Goines, 1973; Love, 2013).

As Witherspoon (2008) posited in her dissertations on spiritual narratives of women who were educational leaders, our faith in God actualized an applicable knowledge base that gave us a strong spiritual foundation and purpose to be educational leaders. Here in and through our work we became in essence Hip Hop prophets and ministers to the Hip Hop generation (Watkins, 2009). This prophetic call and mission included a *great commission* to go ye there forth and preach, teach and heal the lives of the spiritually dead "walking zombies" through knowledge of truth (West, 2003) that we are indeed important pieces to God's puzzle. In this process we stepped beyond traditional religion with a heartfelt embodiment of who God was to us. DJ Cross said, "I am no longer a Christian but a follower of Christ's teachings" similarly to his proclamation we followed suit; meaning that we did not want to get boxed by religious traditions of men. Ultimately, this manifested itself in speaking to those who society did not accept, thus in our work we tried to imitate the actions of Jesus—creating a spiritual

paradox that touched and inspired marginalized people and communities (Kirk-Duggan &

Hall, 2012). As it were, living out the works of Jesus through our own spiritual

narratives consisted of individual and community empowerment driving home what can

now be framed as hip hop spirituality—practices revealed through this study that

embodied the meaning of being Hip Hop educational leaders.

Hip Hop Educational Leaders

As mentioned in Chapter II, a growing body of literature supports the need for

young Black educational leadership (Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon, 2008). Past leadership

models supported the dominant culture and were not transferable to educational leaders

from urban communities (Gooden, 2002). To contend with these issues, Black scholars

(Dantley, 2007, 2010; Gooden, 2002) attempted to design leadership models that were

informed by the Black experience in which they cited spirituality as being intricately

intertwined within Black leaders' identity, understanding, and practice (Milner, 2006).

Though these models were useful in laying the framework for current Black educational

leaders, due to the generational gap between those from the civil rights era and Hip Hop

culture, they did not speak to the experiences of emerging Black leaders like those

addressed in this study. This dissertation study spoke to these emerging educational

leaders experiences and provided a more advanced look at what previous scholars'

research may have neglected while offering a framework to place leaders with this

epistemological viewpoint.

This dissertation study gave me a foundation to define the collaborative DJ's and

myself as Hip Hop educational leaders. The definition of this is a person who grew up as

a part of Hip Hop culture/communities/generation and became an administrative leader in

141

various learning settings, including K-12, adult or higher education. Research on Black educational leaders suggests that they sometimes felt as if they were handpicked by God to work in their learning communities (Dantley, 2003; Dillard, 2006; Milner, 2006; Witherspoon, 2008). In this study, all of us held the perspective of being called and chosen by God to do this work, creating a bridge for individuals who have similar cultural experiences and find themselves as educational/community leaders. We, in turn, became bridge connectors by telling multi-dimensional stories that existed within our Hip Hop communities. Spirituality gave us a lens to move beyond the stereotypical trajectory of Hip Hop and gave us a deeper assessment of those experiences. We saw educational leaders as well as brothers and sisters "on a mission trying to shift the culture" (Drake, 2013).

Other dissertations: Bridges, 2009; Munn-Joseph, 2007; Runnell-Hall, 2011, while not explicitly stating it, have alluded to spirituality as not being a doctrine but the driving force for many Hip Hop and educational leaders' social justice. This study honed more into this notion of spirituality, Hip Hop and educational leadership and showcased a strong tie among the three separate entities. Our spiritual narratives showed that we were adamant about our faith and confident that it carried us through our leadership practices. The study articulated the fact that without faith we would have been in different stations in our lives, perhaps, less successful. Therefore, there was power between our belief in who God called us to be and our purpose as Hip Hop educational leaders. Dantley's (2010) critical spirituality model proclaimed that for Black educational leaders, spirituality cannot be estranged from social justice action. Rather the core of Hip Hop

142

communities' social justice and leadership practices is grounded in the notion of spirituality (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011).

Hip Hop as Social Justice?

Nearly ten years ago, Guy (2004) and Price (2005) and later others including Hanley (2007) and Redmond-Wright & Sandlin (2010) postulated about Hip Hop in the context of adult education, urging adult educators to pay attention to young people who were emerging out of this culture. Yet, in this time period some of these youth who were being discussed have aged, attained higher education, professionalized themselves, and now work in their communities to make powerful changes as seen throughout this study. The individual and community spiritual narratives that we discussed in this study were both intense and succinct but allowed for the poetic to convey a rythmatic message that may have been lost otherwise. Sharing stories, as adult learners and educational leaders, gave us an opportunity to peer into other Hip Hop communities that we did not grow up in, as Jay Z (2003) conveyed in his song *All around the world*

> Sh** it ain't about your city or borough
>
> It's bout if you really as thorough
>
> And if you are, holla at your boy
>
> I put my hand on my heart, that means I feel you
>
> Real recognize real and you lookin familiar

This experience allowed us to "feel" one another by sharing our perspectives and ideas. From this notion of feeling one another's experiences, the social justice piece became more recognizable.

The poetic spiritual narratives also demonstrated that while adult education scholars contended that Hip Hop was not common in adult culture (Price, 2005, p. 1) or was only relevant in urban communities, the reality may be just the opposite and very well important and informative to adults from these places. In fact, Price (2005) noted that there has been a generational shift due to Hip Hop that impacts adults in classrooms and workplaces:

> The generational shift at work in hip hop culture as the new ideological nexus for Black culture has implications for adult educators and administrators who need to take these cultural shifts seriously. When paradigms shift, those centered in former schools of thought are debunked and must go back to ground zero and begin learning the assumptions and worldview of the nu skool of thought. The knowledge and status accumulated in the old system is meaningless and irrelevant. It may seem humiliating, but adult educators and administrators must come down from their ivory towers and practice what they preach about lifelong learning in the context of hip hop culture. (p. 56)

In *Social Justice in Adult and Continuing Education: Laboring in the Fields of Reality and Hope,* Johnson-Bailey, Baumgartner, & Bowles (2010) critique the field of Adult Education for lacking a strong social justice position to inform future leaders. This claim provided the space for adult educators from different sectors of the field to create a social justice framework that encompassed six tenets for all adult educators to ascribe to: 1) Employing interdisciplinary perspectives, 2) Recognizing importance of reflective practices, 3) Encouraging collaboration/ collective inquiry, 4) Valuing experiential ways of knowing/doing, 5) Stipulating the importance of social context, and 6) Engaging in

144

social justice projects and movements (p. 346). In many ways, this framework is central to the core foundation of Hip Hop culture, which aims to foster social justice. Binfield (2009) posits that "the very act of [Hip-Hop] telling the stories and airing the concerns of the [marginalized and mostly] Black underclass . . . has raised the consciousness of socio-political issues amongst [the culture]" (p. 85). As such, the stories that have been discussed in this dissertation have the ability to add to the conjecture of adult education literature by helping to speak to this generational shift and helping to initiate the social justice framework Johnson-Bailey, Baumgartner, & Bowles (2010) addressed in the literature.

Spaces for Artistic and Spiritual Inquiry

Space and time have no barriers to experiences (Marcus, 1995), but this study cannot be generalized because every leader's story was unique. Shared testimonies were quilted within the pages that helped contextualize the conclusion. We were able to draw upon multi-spaced ethnography literature and postulated that poverty, oppression, and racism were macro-power structures that existed as social phenomena in the multiple sites of inquiry that were interrelated (Falzon, 2009; Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2010; Marcus, 1995).

This innovative methodology allowed us to see connected stories and how spiritual narratives of brokenness (trauma) helped to guide our self-discovery of meaning-making (Chase, 2005). The use of poetry gave a heartbeat to these spiritual narratives that promoted a marriage between the secular and holy (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011). As Kent and Cahnman-Taylor (2010) suggest, research poetry locates the themes and patterns of human experience that could often be negated in other methodological

story formats. Some difficult narratives were more efficiently told through artistic mediums. Art spoke to what words alone limited. The Spiritual REEL Life Maps and poetic spiritual narratives of the four Black collaborative DJs offered deep analysis. Thus, spaces for artistic and spiritual creativity were useful for this cultural *milieu*.

Hip Hop Methodology

In this study we utilized what I now frame as Hip Hop methodology—interdisciplinary, artistic methods, theories, and frameworks to study persons from the Hip Hop community. My definition of a Hip Hop methodology is built upon the word remix the art of taking samples from pre-existing materials to combine them into new forms (Chang, 2005). It is a nontraditional imaginative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) that is also grounded in the culture, spirit and race methodological approaches of scholars like Henry (2013) and Valadez(2012) which incorporated use of collaboration, art, performance, and to ground their research. Lastly, it seeks to serve the community it researches rather than further oppress them with language that cannot be understood by the masses (Quimette, 2013). Through this methodological approach, I sought to empower other doctoral students and scholars to go along with their heart to do spirit-led work. As qualitative research emerges, some studies may need more than one methodology grounded in the epistemological and ontological ways of knowing of Black people (Dillard, 2003; Milner, 2006). Acceptance of interdisciplinary qualitative methodologies allowed the idea of Hip Hop methodology to emerge. This methodology, similar to its Hip Hop communities and art forms, calls for collaboration of researchers in order to be authentic to a Hip Hop worldview (Petchauer, 2012). Member checking,

social media, and use of high technology were also important factors to this unique methodological approach.

The theoretical foundations of this framework are built upon the foundational (Chang, 2005; Kitwana, 2003; Rose, 2008) and current Hip Hop research (Asante, 2008; Emdin, 2010; Petchauer, 2012) it is also grounded in the four artifacts of Hip Hop Mc'ing, Dj'ng, B'boying and Graffiti (Chang, 2005).   This emerging methodology allowed for the artistic collection and display of data inclusive of – but not limited to – poetry, graffiti art, music, performance, and multi-media. Through the trial and error of this study, I now highly recommend social media and multi-media analyses for the embodiment of Hip Hop data collection. This methodology can be used in individual or communal contexts, building upon Hip Hop culture's collective nature. It may also provide a lens to help scholars remix some of the approaches that created this unique dissertation: What is unique here, is that I put together a particular blend that has not previously been put together in the same fashion. The ways that I have chosen to blend this was driven by a Hip Hop and spiritual epistemological standpoint. They are as follows:

1. Arts-based collaboration-use of artistic data collection (singing, dancing, poetry, art, etc) methods and multiple research partners.

2. Integration (Remixing) of non-traditional and traditional literature bases-incorporates lyrics, blogs, magazines, and documentaries as scholary alongside traditional scholarship.

3. Interdisciplinary cross-curricular methods and theories-(similar to song sampiling) use theories and methods from several fields to help you solidify your theory.

4. Member checking (Through cipher and freestyling) -once data collection is complete make sure that you constantly share with the other research partners the emerging product.

5. Social media/multi-media inclusion (Similar to graffiti in merging of artistic drawing and tagging) Blogs, YouTube®, Facebook®, Google Plus®, Instagram® and Twitter® etc.

6. Narrative writing- (Storytelling aspect of Hip Hop) driven by the foundation of Hip Hop this research is built upon telling the story in any form poetry, dance, art etc

7. Populizing the research- (Mc'ing and Dj'ing) this is a commitment to push the work beyond the academy into the communities in which they belong. This may take form in ethnodrama, performance, dialogues, films or reports or other modes that are in Vannini's (2012) book. One may have a public forum to get these stories out.

8. Using language that is consistent with Hip Hop culture and literature to further ground the study.   For instance, in this dissertation I used words like DJ, Cipher and REEl, to articulate the "Hip Hopness" and authenticity of the work.

Other parts of this interdisciplinary methodology can be developed/created during a researcher's data collection process; it is not just confined to what I did. Hip Hop shares, it merges, it morphs it collaborates in order to create a *dope* product. This

methodological approach is grounded in social justice and accepts different research

formats like documentaries, and mixtapes as valid scholarship—widening the 9th

moment of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In a 2012 documentary, for

example, Dr. Raphael Travis (developer of the Individual and Community and

Empowerment theory), noted his work/mixtapes outside of academia (Maston & Harris,

2012) which should be considered as scholarship. Using a DJ moniker calling his self DJ

Hoodwink he artistically merges Hip Hop, songs, speeches, news commentary and

situates them under the themes of I.C.E to demonstrate social change. His countless

mixtapes of thought-provoking songs could be dubbed as literature intended to incite

conversations as therapeutic domains. Taking on Hip Hop in educational leadership,

Travis' mixtapes honor the culture and ultimately can heal others. It is scholarship like

these mixtapes, that this proposed Hip Hop methodology seeks to include and build upon

for future research. The question is how do academics create a space for this type of

inquiry and in what ways will it help to help their programs become more relevant to

students who hail from this generation? More of these questions will be maneuvered in

the future studies portion of this chapter. This methodology not only helped us reach the

heart of the spiritual narratives but also allowed implications for practice to emerge.

Implications for Practice

Spiritual narratives of Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities have

implications for fields of Adult and Continuing Education, educational leadership, and

higher education.   Understanding holistic adult learners has emerged as a priority in

Adult Education, yet little is known about Hip Hop leaders' holistic well-being and adult

experiences. As adult educators and adult learners, our call must be more vigorously

directed toward social justice in scholarship, recruitment, and research experiences of Hip

Hop adults and students as part of this research agenda. More emphasis should be placed

supporting on leaders committed to impacting Hip Hop communities. Furthermore,

Adult Education scholars should focus on spirituality to aid in addressing the disparities

in Hip Hop communities since these places carry unique identifiers which were discussed

at length in this study.

Based upon my own experiences as an adult who is from a Hip Hop community

and also an educational leader, I predict that practitioners and scholars who identify with

Hip Hop worldviews in Adult Education and Educational Leadership fields are quickly

emerging. Having negotiated the streets of our Hip Hop origins, we all felt that we

embodied a OG (Original Gangsta) status that helped us to traverse the workplace

terrains, since we had *been there done that*. This mentality served as a reminder that the

rawest experiences equip this generation for the most provocative work. I venture to say

this ground of authenticity is where leaders are birthed and can flourish using their skills

and interests at a level of engagement deeper than the educational leader who has never

been immersed in the Hip Hop community.

In the song quoted below Ghostface Killah discusses understanding that you were

raised in a Hip Hop community, filled with adversity, and using this reality to be

successful. His position is "[I]f you forget where you come from, you're never gonna

make it to where you're goin'" (Ghostface, 2000). Before he became famous Drake

(2010) made it very clear that "the game needs change and he was the cashier." In other

words, he was the change that Hip Hop needed to see in order to become more advanced

in their thinking and ways of doing things. This idea of advancing change can be related

to adults from Hip Hop communities who work in educational leadership positions. We have learned not to forget where we come from and are willing to become the change that we want to see towards greater advancement, and for us that was greater spiritual advancement.

We must then purposely work to value the stories and experiences of adults who ascribe to a Hip Hop worldview. This value may lead to the acceptance of students, faculty, and leaders from Hip Hop communities to promote personal and social change through high self-esteem, resilience, and growth. This acceptance will also help to facilitate organizational climate and diversity training to help others embrace persons who carry this Hip Hop worldview. As more empirical research is completed more organizations may be willing to provide grant funding based upon their understanding of the importance of the culture, community and generation.

In the second year of my doctoral studies, Dr. John Oliver, who is serving as co-chair on this dissertation and I wrote and received grant funding to host a Remixing Higher Education with Hip Hop conference at Texas State University. With this money we hosted Hip Hop scholars, artist, nonprofit organizations, and students to discuss the need for the current climate of higher education to be remixed by inclusion of Hip Hop-based education included in the curriculum (Petchauer, 2012). This acceptance will also help to develop unique research, ways of publishing, and artistic methodological approaches as seen in this study.

The last implication is to redirect our attention to Hip Hop away from what was formerly considered gangsta (Guy, 2004), to consider it greatness instead. Showcased within our spiritual narratives in this study was a Hip Hop worldview and consciousness

that embraces change, creativity, inclusion, and social justice (KRS One, 2003). Let social justice be more than words with no direction, demonstration, or purpose (Johnson-Bailey, 2012), but let our commitments to social justice be proactive in the increased recruitment of students and faculty with a Hip Hop worldview. The inclusion of these individuals on academic boards; the hands on engagement in inner cities like Chicago; East St. Louis; Miami and Tampa, Fl ; and accepting more scholarship written by individuals from these environments. Overall, the summary of these recommendations are as follows:

1. Recognize the talents of Hip Hop educational leaders and seek their involvement in adult education programs, higher education, and PK-12 leadership, both in practice and the academic arena.

2. Incorporate Hip Hop educational leaders, communities and leaders in discussions and practices of social justice within the field of adult education

3. Recognize and draw upon spiritual narratives of Hip Hop leaders to support community engagement and social action

Recommendations for Further Research

More research is needed to understand adults who are leaders in educational settings who operate out of this Hip Hop vein and who ascribe to this way of knowing. Given the increasing linkages between social justice and Hip Hop in the last twenty years in other fields, it is important that other fields, more specifically Adult Education pay attention to emerging research that addresses Hip Hop culture/communities.

Dillard (2006) calls for scholarship to be both intellectual and spiritual. She states that when this is done the purpose of our research will be to fully love while serving

human beings and life. She goes on to convey that living with spirituality as an ethos is creative and seeks to heal the mind, body, and spirit through research. Culturally based spirituality must be considered, contextualized, studied, and articulated at another level in order to reach those from Hip Hop communities. The methodology used in this study tried to address what Witherspoon (2008), Dillard (2006), Milner (2006), and other scholars refer to as a systematic assault on educational leaders with a cultural and spiritual intermixed worldview. The incorporation of spiritual narratives is one way to embrace this spiritualization of culture by taking into consideration Black educational leaders' ontologies, epistemologies, and worldviews (Milner, 2006). With this in mind, future research and recommendations are fleshed out below.

1. Develop grant funding opportunities to support artistic and spiritual inquiry using Hip Hop methodologies

2. Design studies that examine the influence of gender on the worldview of Hip Hop adult learners and leaders

3. Culturally based spirituality must be further considered, contextualized and studied. Hip Hop educational leaders should Inform the current literature on leadership

4. Future studies should seek a better understanding of Hip Hop educational leaders based upon gender through studies focused specifically on males or females.

Concluding Thoughts

For the four Black educational leaders from Hip Hop communities who collaborated in this study, there was a bridge between spirituality and Individual and

153

Community Empowerment practices. This study points to an undeniable linkage between spirituality and Hip Hop that suggested that those who hail from these communities and who also do leadership work are driven by spiritual purpose. While, Travis (2012) touched upon the foundational and functional values of linkages between spirituality and the Individual and Community Empowerment Framework, his study uncovered at a deeper level a cultural based spirituality that is perpetuated in practice in Hip Hop communities arising in self-esteem, resilience, growth, community, and change. There was also a distinct essence that drove our spirituality, predicated on authenticity and creativity.

Chase (2005) narrative research suggests that people are able to learn from their narratives. Thus, our spiritual narratives gave us insight into the harsh realities that we faced growing up in Hip Hop communities and how this awareness increased our self-esteem in areas of identity, race, and faith. They made us stronger and helped us to cope in the midst of traumatic experiences and distress. In addition, they served as tools of self-analysis and gave us the ability to grow in our spirituality and leadership practices. Finally, these narratives helped us to truly recognize our individual conceptualizations of God as our provider, the one who ultimately held our world. We could not in any way have separated ourselves from our spiritual narratives, or from our Hip Hop narratives that were deeply intertwined. While living these experiences that took place in our Hip Hop neighborhoods did not always seem to embody spirituality, due to the some of the faith based choices that we made, we came to the realization that the profane strongly drives the spiritual (Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011) and is also deeply intertwined. Thus,

these tensions actually worked together congruently to impact what we did on an everyday basis.

Our commitments were always profoundly aligned with our purposes. DJ WAP once stated, "I'm not taking a job that has nothing to do with my purpose." Thus, the hustle was always strategic. Individually, our poetic spiritual narratives offered snippets of our reality—a reality that could often be considered, as Tupac once said, "trading war stories" wherein we gained hood credibility for the stories of struggle we endured in our childhood and onward into our adult lives. We, indeed, all experienced and confronted stereotypical belief systems that were present in Hip Hop. Sometimes our tears were the endurance factor, but my grandmother always said cry and keep moving. So we kept moving in our work to fulfill our purpose. We used our narratives as tools of learning that awakened us to embrace a "we all we got" (Nelly, 1999) mentality instead of I am all I got. From this stance there was interconnectedness within our community that was deeply spiritual, which allowed us to spiritualize even the harshest realities (KRS One, 2003).

The I.C.E. Framework proved useful for a study related to Adult Education, a field outside of the context of Social Work for which it was initially developed. Scholars and practitioners in other fields may ascribe to this theoretical framework to conduct interdisciplinary quantitative or qualitative Hip Hop studies and narrative analysis that humanizes breathable and adaptable new forms of research. For this study, use of poetic narrative analysis became a tool for creating prophetic spiritual narratives. We moved into the auto-ethnographic realm at a deeper level to understand experiences and circumstances with meaning and feeling (Glesne, 2010), which helped scratch beyond

155

multilayered historical and personal events (Chase, 2005) to reach the core of the four

Hip Hop educational leaders' spirit.

Going Forward "A Promise to Hip Hop Communities"

Journal Entry-February, 17, 2014

When I introduced the Hip Hop methodological terminology in my dissertation, I asked the question in what ways can Hip Hop scholarship that is not accepted as scholarly enough be accepted as relevant to the field? How can we value the work, identity and creativity of individuals with a Hip Hop mindset in academic settings? Today, I revisit this question on the heels of receiving a rejection letter from a journal. One of the comments the reviewers wrote was that they did not understand how my topic was scholarly or relevant enough going forward in the field of Adult Education. My question as I process this rejection letter is after four years of presenting my work at conferences, building an argument, polishing my skill and completing this dissertation work, I still have to defend scholarly and non-scholarly literature? Which saddens me because not too many academics have done the work that I am doing in the field and yet it still is not seen as relevant. My spin on Hip Hop was to spiritualize it in order to make it more acceptable, but going forward where does that really leave this kind of work. It is my hope that this dissertation has helped to ground some of what I believe is the future of scholarship. I am not going to lie, the rejection letter discouraged me, but I decided to take what they said and try to make the work better, use it as fuel to help me to become an even doper writer. Hopefully one day soon the masses will be able to see what I am doing on an even larger scale. Until then I'm like Jay Z when he said in his Blueprint album that he used to sit at the kitchen table honing the skill of rapping until someone

156

took notice and now he is one of the greatest in the game. That is going to be me one day, in the words of Trinidad James "Don't believe me just watch".

Going forward, this dissertation will not just be an exercise that I had to do in order to obtain a doctorate degree. In accordance with the work of Hip Hop artist Lupe Fiasco, Dee-1, Common and others, my voice is for the people, not the just academia. Therefore, going forward with this research includes moving beyond the four walls of the academic church (the academy) and popularizing the research, which Vannini (2012) calls for the new age scholar to do. This vow is driven by the sobering academic *diss* that Nicole Quimette (2014) wrote about academics and research agendas.

> The revolution will not be cited. It will not have a bibliography, or a title page. The revolution will never happen in the seclusion of the ivory tower built by racist, sexist, and classist institutions. Professional academic researchers in the social sciences of many colleges and universities exploit the struggles of oppressed peoples. Oppressed peoples are left stranded with little to no resources after researchers leave their communities high and dry. Researchers steal value from oppressed peoples by making them the subjects of theoretical research without lending them access to information that could better help their communities. Articles, books, and dissertations written about marginalized populations are written for academics, not working people, and as such have little impact on the people whose lives are the subject of this research. Liberal academics and social scientists are more concerned about developing the wealth of academic literature than addressing the immediate material concerns of the communities they research (p.1).

Thus, as a member of the Hip Hop community and a member of the academic I do not want to further oppress my people by giving these stories just to the academics who will read this dissertation. Upon graduation, I will host a party of celebration that will take these spiritual narratives back to the community where they belong. At this event each of my research partners will spit (tell) their stories in poetic form and present what we found in our study. Later this research will be published in a less academically dense book that will be accessible to the Hip Hop community as a whole as well as teachers, administrators or other scholars who will appreciate the research. As I emerge in scholarship with this research, I will reach out to other scholars who are also emerging and who share similar worldviews in hopes to advocate for their artistic research initiatives. I will also co-author with these like-minded individuals and help to build towards the advancement of Hip Hop culture in traditional and non-traditional scholarship. Furthermore, I will continue to host conferences, write grants, and create programs that help to spiritualize and reframe Hip Hop communities as we know them. I will also go back and commit to get my hands dirty in doing real work and making real changes in my home city and similar places around the globe. And so I end this dissertation just like a DJ would on a mixtape, *riding* (talking over) a nice beat and giving shout outs and honorable mentions. My commitment to this research is not only for myself but for my faith, for the Hip Hop communities all over, for upcoming scholars and lastly for the other Hip Hop educational leaders and Adult Education Scholars whose research, support and one on one guidance helped me to formulate my dissertation topic and to make it a reality. My committee: Dr. Ross-Gordon, Dr. J Oliver, Dr. R Travis, Dr. A Brooks. My colleagues: Dr. G.Henry, Dr.R Oliphant, Dr. M. Valadez. Hip Hop Ed

158

leaders: Dr. F. Beachum, Dr. D. Prier, Dr. B. love, Dr. E. Petchauer, Dr. C. Emdin, Dr. M. Cunningham, and Dr. D. Stovall. As the southern rappers say to inform others of their existence and entrance in a place *We Out Chea* and as those from the East Coast proclaim in the same fashion, *We are defiantly in the building*.

Reflection Poem

Hip Hop Educational Leaders

Using Spirituality

Through Individual and Community Empowerment

We are relevant

We are purposeful

A skill set that is resourceful

The New generation of scholars

Who ain't afraid of getting our hands dirty

Narratives – be real gritty . . .

Nowhere close to pretty

But real testimonies

Impact real people

In real cities

Hip Hop methodologies

That's how we going to change the block and policies

Spiritualizing Hip Hop

By what we do and what we say

The streets is watching—no more time to play

Lives are being lost, the cost

Our lives we lay

For our fellow brethren

The call is our medicine

Purpose is heaven sent

So prophetic acts

Heal the deficit . . .

Now that's Hip Hop; that's relevant.

We publishing, we encouraging, we keep surfacing

The work ain't never finished

So we out here hustling academics, teachers,

Hip Hop Educational Leaders

Spiritualizing for the people

REFERENCES

Ahearn, C. (Director). (1982). *Wild Style* [Motion picture]. New York: First Run Features.

American FactFinder - community facts. (2013, May). Retrieved from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

Ammerman, N., & Williams, R. (2012). "Speaking of methods: Eliciting religious narratives through Interviews, photos, and oral diaries. *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion, 3*, 129-146.

Ammerman, N. T. (2007). *Everyday religion: Observing modern religious lives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Asante, M. K. (2008). *It's bigger than hip-hop: The rise of the post-hip-hop generation*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Avildsen, J. (Director). (1989). *Lean on me* [Motion picture on DVD]. United States: Warner Bros.

Baker, H. A. (1993). *Black studies, rap, and the academy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Baumgartner, L., & Merriam, S. B. (2000). *Adult learning and development: Multicultural stories*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Pub.

Beachum, F. D., & McCray, C. R. (2011). *Cultural collision and collusion: Reflections on hip-hop culture, values, and schools*. New York, NY: P. Lang.

Big Krit. (2011). *The Vent* [MP3].

Binfield, M. R. (2009). *Bigger than hip-hop music and politics in the hip-hop generation*

    (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved May

    3, 2010, from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

Black, H. K. (1999). Poverty and prayer: spiritual narratives of elderly African American

    women. *Review of Religious Research, 40(4), 359-374*

Braszile, D. (2000). Reading between the lines: Perspectives on contemporary cultural

    text/Like an echo in the wind. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 16*(3), 111-114.

Braszile, D. T. (2009). Deal with It we must: Education, social justice, and the curriculum

    of Hip Hop culture. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 42*(1), 6-19. doi:

    10.1080/10665680802594576

Bridges, T. (2009). *Peace, love, unity and having fun: Storying the life histories and*

    pedagogical beliefs of African American male teachers from Hip Hop generation

    (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Maryland.

Bruner. (1987). Life as narrative. *Social Research, 54*(1), 11-32.

Butler-Kisber, L. (2010). *Qualitative inquiry: Thematic, narrative, and arts-informed*

    perspectives. London: Sage Publications.

Bynoe, Y. (2004). *Stand and deliver: Political activism, leadership, and hip hop culture*.

    Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull Press.

Cahnmann, M. (2003). The craft, Practice, and possibility of poetry in educational

    research. *Educational Researcher, 32*(3), 29-36. doi:

    10.3102/0013189X032003029

Capper, C., & Dantley, M. (2010). *Spirituality and social justice in schools: How school*

    leaders make a difference. New York, NY: Corwin Press.

Carter, T. (Director). (2005). *Coach Carter* [Motion picture on DVD]. America: MTV films.

Chang, J. (2005). *Can't stop, won't stop: A history of the hip-hop generation*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Chang, J. (2006). *Total chaos: The art and aesthetics of hip-hop*. New York, NY: BasicCivitas Books.

Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative methods* (3rd ed., pp. 651-679). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Common. (2011). *One day it'll all make sense: A memoir* (A. Bradley, Ed.). New York, NY: Atria Books.

Cunningham, M. (2010). *Once upon a time in south central Los Angeles: Race, gender and narrative in John Singleton's hood trilogy* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Texas. Retrieved from http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/ETD-UT-2010-05-1139/CUNNINGHAM-DISSERTATION.pdf?sequence=1

Dantley, M. E. (2003). Critical spirituality: Enhancing transformative leadership through critical theory and African American prophetic spirituality. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 6*(1), 3-17. doi: 10.1080/1360312022000069987

Davis, A. (2012). G.E.D in 3 voices. *Qualitative Inquiry, 18*, 227-234.

Decoteau, I. J., & Hall, B. (2011). Fresh faces, new places: Moving beyond teacher

    researcher perspectives in Hip Hop based educational research. *Urban Education,*

    46(216), 216-240. doi: 10.1177/0042085910377513

Denizin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2011). *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (Vol. 4).

    Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dillard, C. (2006). When the music changes, so should the dance: Cultural and spiritual

    considerations in paradigm 'proliferation'. *International Journal of Qualitative*

    Studies in Education, 19(1), 59-76. doi: 10.1080/09518390500450185

Dimitriadis, G. (2009). *Performing identity/performing culture: Hip hop as text,*

    pedagogy, and lived practice. New York, NY: P. Lang.

Drake. (2012). *Started from the bottom now we here* [MP3]. Canada: Mike Zombie.

Dyson, M. E. (2007). *Know what I mean?: Reflections on hip-hop*. New York, NY: Basic

    Civitas Books.

Emdin, C. (2010). *Urban science education for the hip-hop generation*. Rotterdam, NY:

    Sense.

Falzon, M. (2009). *Multi-sited ethnography: Theory, praxis and locality in contemporary*

    social research. Farnham: Ashgate.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Lanham:

    Rowman & Littlefield.

George, N. (Director). (n.d.). *Life Support* [Motion picture on DVD]. United States:

    HBO.

Glesne, C. (2010). *Becoming a qualitative researcher: An introduction*. Boston, MA:

    Allyn and Bacon.

Glesne, C. (2010). Disappearing Into another's words through poetry in research and
education. *Learning Landscapes, 4*(1), 29-39. Retrieved January/February, 2013.

Goines, D. (1973). *Black girl lost*. Los Angeles, CA: Holloway House.

Gooden, M. A. (2002). Stewardship and critical leadership: Sufficient for leadership in
urban schools? *Education and Urban Society, 35*(1), 133-143. doi:
10.1177/001312402237218

Greene, M. (2011). The maxine greene center for aesthetic education. Retrieved from
http://www.maxinegreene.org/

Guajardo, F., & Guajardo, M. (2010). Cultivating stories of change. In K. Ruder
(Ed.),The collective leadership storybook: Weaving strong communities (pp. 85-
103). Seattle, WA: The Center for Ethical Leadership.

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (2008). Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions and
Emerging Confluences (N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, Eds.). In *The landscape of
qualitative research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Guiney-Yallop, J., & Wiebe, S. (2012). Moving poetic inquiry beyond the academy. In P.
Vannini (Ed.), *Popularizing research: Engaging new genres, media, and
audiences*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Guy, T. C. (2004). Gangsta rap and adult education. *New Directions for Adult and
Continuing Education, 2004*(101), 43-57. doi: 10.1002/ace.127

Hall, B. L. (2001). I Wish This Were a Poem of Practices of Participatory Research. In P.
Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), Handbook of Action Research: Participative
Inquiry and Practice (pp. 171-178). London: Sage Publications.

Hall, M. R. (2011). *Education in a hip-hop nation our identity, politics & pedagogy* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Massachusetts Amherst. doi: Open Access Dissertations 391

Hand, B. (2009). *A pedagogy of process: Using arts based research with community development co-researchers to explore campus community dialogue* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Dublin Institute of technology.

Hanley, M. S. (2007). Old school crossings: Hip hop in teacher education and beyond. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2007*(115), 35-44. doi: 10.1002/ace.265

Hartman, G. (2002). Representing trauma. In L. Vickroy (Ed.), *Trauma and survival in contemporary fiction* (pp. 1-35). Charlottesville, SC: University of Virginia Press.

Henry, G. (2013). *Resurgence of the spirit: A qualitative study of African American women's experiences in doctoral study* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Texas State University.

Henry, G. (2013). *Resurgence of the spirit: A qualitative study of African American women's experiences in doctoral study* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Texas State University. doi: https://digital.library.txstate.edu/handle/10877/4595

Heron, J., & Reason, P. (1997). A Participatory Inquiry paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry, 3(3), 274-294*.

Hooks, B. (1984). *Feminist theory from margin to center*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hooks, B. (2003). *Rock my soul: Black people and self-esteem*. New York, NY: Atria
    Books.

Houston, D. A. (2008). *A DJ Speaks with Hands gender education and Hiphop culture*
    (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Ohio University, November. Retrieved April
    01, 2011, from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

HSAN.org | Our Mission. (n.d.). Retrieved from
    http://www.hsan.org/content/main.aspx?pageid=7

Hunn, L. M. (2004). Africentric philosophy: A remedy for eurocentric dominance. *New
    Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2004*(102), 65-74. doi:
    10.1002/ace.139

Jay Z, & Kanye West. (2011). *Murder to excellence* [Song]. New York: Good Music.

Jay Z. (2009). *On to the next one* [MP3]. New York: Swiss beats. (2009)

Jeffries, M. P. (2011). *Thug life: Race, gender, and the meaning of hip-hop*. Chicago, IL:
    University of Chicago Press.

Jeremiah. (n.d.). In *NIV Blble*.

Johnson-Bailey, J. (2001). *Sistahs in college: Making a way out of no way*. Malabar, FL:
    Krieger Pub.

Johnson-Bailey, J., Baumgartner, L. M., Bowles, T. A. (2010). Social justice in adult and
    continuing education: Laboring in the fields of reality and hope. In C. E.
    Kasworm, A. D. Rose, & J. M. Ross-Gordon (Eds.), *Handbook of adult and
    continuing education* (2010 ed., pp. 339-349). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Joseph, S., & Linley, P. A. (2008). *Trauma, recovery, and growth: Positive psychological
    perspectives on posttraumatic stress*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.

Kirk-Duggan, C. A., & Hall, M. (2011). *Wake up!: Hip-hop christianity and the Black church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Kitwana, B. (2003). *The hip hop generation: Young blacks and the crisis in African American culture*. New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books.

KRS-One, & Smiley, T. (2003). *Ruminations*. New York, NY: Welcome Rain.

Kurtz, C. (2012). *Working with stories* (3rd ed.). Retrieved from http://www.workingwithstories.org/

Kyllonen, T. (2007). *Un.orthodox: Church, hip-hop, culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Kyllonen, T. (2007). *Un.orthodox: Church, hip-hop, culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Donnor, J. (2008). The moral activist role of critical race theory scholarship. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 371-403). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lahman, M. E., Geist, M. R., Rodriguez, K. L., Graglia, P. E., Richard, V. M., & Schendel, R. K. (2009). Poking Around poetically: Research, poetry, and trustworthiness. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(1), 39-48. doi: 10.1177/1077800409350061

Lamar, K. (2011). *Faith* [Song]. Kendrick Lamar.

Land, R., & Stovall, D. (2009). Hip Hop and social justice education: A brief Introduction. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 42*(1), 1-5. doi: 10.1080/10665680802631238

Lee, B. (2012, June 19). *Legacy*. Reading presented at First EV free church service, Austin.

Lee, S. (Director), Lee, S. (Producer), & Lee, S., & Perl, A. (Writers). (1992). *Malcolm X* [Motion picture on DVD]. United States: Warner Bros.

Liamputtong, P., & Rumbold, J. (2008). *Knowing differently: Arts-based and collaborative research methods*. New York, NY: Nova Science.

Love, B. L. (2012). *Hip hop's li'l sistas speak: Negotiating hip hop identities and politics in the new South*. New York: Peter Lang.

Maston, A., & Harris, T. (2012, November 18). Spiritualizing Hip Hop - Alexis Maston. Retrieved from http://vimeo.com/53650266

Maynard, K., & Cahnmann-Taylor, M. (2010). Anthropology at the edge of words: Where poetry and ethnography meet. *Anthropology and Humanism, 35*(1), 2-19. doi: 10.1111/j.1548-1409.2010.01049.x

McKnight, J., & Block, P. (2010). *The abundant community: Awakening the power of families and neighborhoods*. [Chicago], IL: American Planning Association.

McNeal, E. (2012). *Good grief!: How to create an oasis when life is a desert*. Bloomington, IN: West Bow Press.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Milner, H. R. (2006). Culture, race and spirit: A reflective model for the study of African-Americans. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 19*(3), 367-385. doi: 10.1080/09518390600696893

Mitchem, S. Y. (2002). *Introducing womanist theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Molnar, T. (2010). Hospitality and the Hôte: Revealing responsibility through found poetry. *Learning Landscapes, 4*(1), 157-175.

Moss, V. (2011). *"A knock at midnight" A pedaogy of Womanisst Spirituality* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Georgia Southern Universtiy. Retrieved December.

Munn-Joseph, M. S. (2007). *Don't talk about it. Be about it. examining the significance of hip hop culture in Black parents' engagement perspectives of their children's education* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Indiana University, School of Education.

Noguera, P. (2008). *The trouble with black boys: And other reflections on race, equity, and the future of public education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Okpalaoka, C. L., & Dillard, C. B. (2011). Our healing is next to the wound: Endarkened feminisms, spirituality, and wisdom for teaching, learning, and research. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2011*(131), 65-74. doi: 10.1002/ace.422

Patton, M. Q. (2010). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks [u.a., CA: Sage.

Paulston, R. G., & Liebman, M. (1994). An Invitation to Postmodern Social Cartography. *Comparative Education Review, 38*(2), 215. doi: 10.1086/447242

Perry, T. (Director). (2010). *For colored girls who considered suicide when the rainbow is enough* [Motion picture on DVD]. United States of America: Liongate.

Petchauer, E. (2007). *"Welcome to the underground" Portraits of worldview and education among hip-hop collegians* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). doi: UMI3271452

Petchauer, E. (2012). *Hip-hop culture in college students' lives: Elements, embodiment, and higher edutainment*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pharoahe Monch. (2011). *Still Standing* [MP3].

Polkinghorne, D. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2007). Validity Issues in narrative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13*(4), 471-486. doi: 10.1177/1077800406297670

Pollack, J. (Director). (1994). *Above the rim-* [Motion picture]. United States: New line cinema.

Prendergast, M. (2006). Found poetry as literature review: Research poems on audience and performance. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*(2), 369-388. doi: 10.1177/1077800405284601

Prendergast, M. (2009). *Poetic inquiry: Vibrant voices in the social sciences* (M. Prendergast, C. D. Leggo, & P. Sameshima, Eds.). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense.

Prendergast, M., Leggo, C. D., & Sameshima, P. (2009). *Poetic inquiry: Vibrant voices in the social sciences*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense.

Price, R. (2005). Hegemony, hope, and the harlem renaissance: Taking Hip Hop seriously. *Convergence, 45*(2), 55-66.

Prier, D. C. (2012). *Culturally relevant teaching: Hip-hop pedagogy in urban schools*. New York, NY: PETER LANG.

Psalms. (n.d.). In *NIV BIBLE*.

Quimette, N. (2014, February 10). Why liberal academics and ivory tower radicals make poor revolutionaries. Retrieved from http://youngist.org/why-liberal-academics-and-ivory-tower-radicals-make/#.Uz-eQ_ldX0c

Raboteau, A. J. (1978). *Slave religion: The "invisible institution" in the Antebellum South*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Randall, W. L., & Mckim, A. E. (2004). Toward a poetics of aging: The links between literature and life. *Narrative Inquiry, 14*(2), 235-260.

Reed, L., & Johnson, L. (2010). Serving LGBT students: Examining the spiritual, religious, and social justice implications for an African American school administrator. *Journal of Negro Education, 79*(3), 390-404.

Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of inquiry (N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln, Eds.). In *Handbook of qualitative research* (Vol. 2, pp. 923-948). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Rose, T. (1994). *Black noise: Rap music and black culture in contemporary America*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Rose, T. (2008). *The hip hop wars: What we talk about when we talk about hip hop--and why it matters*. New York, NY: BasicCivitas.

Rossiter, M., & Clark, C. (2010). Digital storytelling: A new player on the narrative field. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 126*.

Sawyer, M. R. (2000). The Black church and Black politics (G. Murphy, Ed.). In *Down by the riverside: Readings in African American religion* (pp. 293-302). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Seidel, S. (2011). *Hip hop genius: Remixing high school education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Selick, H. (Director), & Thompson, C., Leighton, E., Sarandon, C., & O'Hara, C. (Writers). (1993). *Tim Burton's the nightmare before Christmas* [Motion picture]. United States: Buena Vista Pictures Distribution, Inc.

Simmons, R., & Morrow, C. (2011). *Super rich: A guide to having it all*. New York, NY: Gotham Books.

Simmons, R. (2010, April 21). Social Media Is the new hip-hop. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/russell-simmons/social-media-is-the-new-h_b_545849.html

Singleton, J., & Clarke, S. (Writers). (1993). *Boyz'n the hood* [Motion picture]. Paris: Columbia Tristar.

St. Pierre, E. (2011). Post Qualitative Research: The critique and coming after. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stewart, J. (2009). Real to reel: Filmic constructions of Hip hop cultures and Hip Hop identities. *Interdisciplinary Humanities, 26*(2), 49-67.

STIC MAN. (n.d.). *The Workout* [CD].

TI. (2007). *Good Life* [CD]. Pharrell. (2007). Retrieved from

> http://www.amazon.com/Goodlife-feat-Pharrell-Common-
> Explicit/dp/B0011Z8PFU

Tisdell, E., & Thompson, P. (2007). 'Seeing from a different angle': The role of pop

> culture in teaching for diversity and critical media literacy in adult education.
> *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 26*(6), 651-673. doi:
> 10.1080/02601370701711349

Tisdell, E. J. (2003). *Exploring spirituality and culture in adult and higher education*.

> San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Travis, R., & Bowman, S. (2012). Ethnic identity, self-esteem and variability in

> perceptions of rap music's empowering and risky influences. *Journal of Youth
> Studies,* 1-25. doi: 10.1080/13676261.2012.663898

Travis, R., & Deepak, A. (2010). Empowerment in context: Lessons from hip-hop culture

> for social work practice. *Journal of Ethnic And Cultural Diversity in Social Work,
> 20*(3), 203-222. doi: 10.1080/15313204.2011.594993

Travis, R. (2012). Rap music and the empowerment of today's youth: Evidence in

> everyday music listening, music therapy, and commercial rap music. *Child and
> Adolescent Social Work Journal,* 1-31. doi: 10.1007/s10560-012-0285

Valadez, M. (2012). *Surveying and living critical consciousness : From critical

> awareness of self to our action within spaces of learning* (Unpublished doctoral
> dissertation). Texas State University.

Vannini, P. (2012). *Popularizing research: Engaging new genres, media, and audiences*.

> New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Watkins, R. (2010). From Black theology and black power to afrocentric theology and

    hip hop power: An extension and socio-re-theological conceptualization of cone's

    theology in conversation with the Hip Hop generation. *Black Theology:An*

    International Journal, 8(3), 327-340. doi: 10.1558/blth.v8i3.327

Webster, M. (n.d.). Repentance. In *Merriam-Webster*. Retrieved 2012, from

    http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/repent

Weems, A. (1993). *Kneeling in Bethlehem*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.

Weems, M. (2012). Sadie Stories. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in*

    Education, 25(2), 169-172. doi: 10.1080/09518398.2011.649699.

Weems, R. (1993). *Just a sister away: A womanist vision of women's relationships in the*

    Bible . San Diego: LuraMedia Press

Weisman, E. M., & Garza, S. A. (2002). Preservice teacher attitudes toward diversity:

    Can one class make a difference? *Equity & Excellence in Education, 35*(1), 28-34.

    doi: 10.1080/713845246

West, C., & Yancy, G. (2001). *Cornel West: A critical reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell

    Pub.

Wibberley, C. (2012). Getting to Grips with Bricolage: A personal account. *The*

    Qualitative Report, 17(50), 1-8.

Williams, A. D. (2007). *The critical cultural cypher hip hop's role in engaging students*

    in a discourse of enlightenment (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of

    Maryland, College Park. Retrieved May 2, 2011, from ProQuest Dissertations and

    Theses.

Williams, T. (Writer). (1993). *Menace II society* [Motion picture]. United States: New Line Cinema.

Witherspoon, N., & Mitchell, R. (2009). Critical race theory as ordinary theology of African American principals. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,, 22*(6), 655-670.

Witherspoon, T. (2008). *Ordinary theologies: Spiritual narratives of Black female principals* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Alabama. doi: 3371463

Wright, R. R., & Sandlin, J. A. (2009). Cult tv, hip hop, shape-shifters, and vampire Slayers: A review of the literature at the intersection of Adult Education and Popular Culture. *Adult Education Quarterly, 59*(2), 118-141. doi: 10.1177/0741713608327368