ARTICLE

The power of rap in music education: a study of undergraduate students' original rap creations

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Abstract

An undergraduate music class was examined that incorporated the creation of students' individual original raps. Research was conducted to understand the value of studying rap and its impact upon students' education. This instrumental case study utilised students' individual raps as an art-based research component to address three research questions: 1.) How, if at all, does studying hip-hop through the creation of a rap provide a transformative experience and growth in students? 2.) How are student experiences reflected in the use of music composition through the creation of an original rap? and 3.) How does the process of creating an original rap provide insight into students' experiences?

Keywords: Rap; Hip-hop; Hip-hop-based education; music education; music composition

Introduction

Should music educators teach hip-hop and rap in undergraduate music classes? If so, why and how? If not, why not? These questions have been discussed by many (Rose, 1994; Irby & Hall, 2010; Petchauer, 2011a, 2011b; Tucker, 2012: McFarland, 2013; Tobias, 2014; Travis & Maston, 2014; Travis, 2016; Emdin et al., 2018). As a result, research of hip-hop's inclusion in elementary and secondary schools have expanded significantly. However, research of hip-hop's inclusion in higher education has not (Irby & Hall, 2010; Thibeault, 2010; Petchauer, 2011a; Tobias, 2014).

Hip-hop is a multidimensional sociocultural phenomenon that encompasses, but is not limited to, music (beats and/or rap), art (graffiti), dancing (b-boy/b-girl breakdancing) and fashion (Kitwana, 2003; Irby & Hall, 2010; Kruse, 2014; Travis, 2016; Emdin et al., 2018; Karvelis, 2018). Individuals and communities create and integrate these elements differently given hip-hop's breadth of unique experiences. Not surprisingly, hip-hop's popularity affects many forms of mass media and pop culture in a cyclical manner. This results in rap/hip-hop usually ranking at the top of the music charts (Kitwana, 2003; Seidel, 2011; Travis, 2013; Kline, 2014; Kruse, 2014; Karvelis, 2018; Billboard, 2019). Despite this, reasonable explanations as to the whys-and-hows of teaching and learning hip-hop at the higher education level remain scarce (Irby & Hall, 2010; Petchauer, 2011a, 2012; Tobias, 2014; Karvelis, 2018). While many avenues exist to engage hip-hop culture, the scope of this paper will focus upon rap within hip-hop.

Emdin et al. (2018) describe rap as an entry point for students who engage hip-hop culture; 'hip-hop is arguably the most expressive and self-reflective form of music' (p. 93). Rap provides students an opportunity to share personal stories and experiences through self- and critical reflection. This is a result of a student's multidimensional nature intersecting with hip-hop's multifaceted and rich history. Rap and hip-hop culture are rooted in African American, Caribbean and Latinx youth culture (Rose, 1994; Kitwana, 2003; Emdin, 2010; Emdin et al., 2018). However, the ideas and messages individuals present in a rap can transcend demographics, race and

generations. Authentic engagement in hip-hop is not limited to one colour or style (Emdin, 2010; Travis & Bowman, 2011; Low et al., 2013; Travis, 2013; Kruse, 2014). Students' educational experiences may become deep and robust when they have the opportunity to reflect and express their unique personal self through the creation of a rap.

Background and purpose

The apprehension of including hip-hop in compulsory and university music education may be attributed to offensive lyrical content (Emdin, 2010; Ahmadi & Oosthuizen, 2012; Travis, 2013; Tobias, 2014), implicit and explicit bias based upon race in educational practises (Emdin, 2010; Payne & Brown, 2010; Clark & Zygmut, 2014) and implicit and explicit bias based upon racial stereotypes associated with hip-hop socially (Seidel, 2011; Turner, 2017). Pedagogical approaches such as hip-hop-based education (HHBE), critical hip-hop pedagogy (CHHP) and #HipHopEd were developed to reframe this deficit narrative. These approaches also illuminated the impact an institution has upon hip-hop culture in academia (Rose, 1994; Seidel, 2011; Kruse, 2014; Travis, 2016; Karvelis, 2018). Educational institutions have the ability of 'taking away' the power and knowledge of those who participate in a music by redefining who is considered a knowledge bearer (Tucker, 2012). This led to a continued examination of the impact of hip-hop's inclusion in academia upon all who participate (Irby & Hall, 2010; Petchauer, 2011a, 2011b; Travis, 2013; Travis & Maston, 2014). Scholars argue that all elements/aspects of hip-hop culture should be included for an authentic education, developing from HHBE to a CHHP or #HipHopEd model (Hill, 2009; Emdin et al., 2018; Love, 2018). The creation and examination of each student's rap in an undergraduate class (*The History of Rap*) served as an entry point into hip-hop culture. This served to gain an understanding of the value of studying rap through hip-hop culture and its impact upon students' educational experiences (MacDonald & Viega, 2011; Tobias, 2014; Travis, 2016; Emdin et al., 2018; Karvelis, 2018).

Students' individual raps served as an Arts-based Research (ABR) component in this instrumental case study. ABR utilises art work, such as music, as a form of enquiry and is often combined with, but not limited to, other qualitative methodologies (Rankin, 2014; Leavy, 2018). This research methodology addressed three research questions: 1.) How, if at all, does studying hip-hop through the creation of an original rap provide a transformative experience and growth within students? 2.) How are student experiences reflected in the use of music composition through the creation of an original rap? and 3.) How does the process of creating an original rap provide insight into students' experiences?

Literature

McFarland (2013) describes the foundation and development of HHBE as based upon Freire's (1970, 2000) argument that a learning process begins from student strengths. Hill (2009) argues that hip-hop's significance can be found as a 'rich site for complex forms of identity work' (p. 223). Building upon this foundation, however, Hill (2009) argues that the tenets of HHBE need to move beyond the simple inclusion of beats and rhymes to incorporate all hip-hop cultural elements. The centring of students, their experiences and establishment of a setting for self-identity development are central to expanding HHBE practises.

#HipHopEd and #HipHopEd(ucators) provide educators opportunities to explore and gain an understanding of hip-hop's potential in academia. This includes developing and improving education practices and the students' education experience (Thibeault, 2010; Seidel, 2011; Travis & Maston, 2014; Emdin et al., 2018). #HipHopEd is a sociopolitical movement utilising 'the utility of hip-hop as a theoretical framework and practical approach to teaching and learning' (Emdin et al., 2018, p. 1). The exploratory process may be broad or specific to a particular aspect in hip-hop. In this research study, rap was explored to gain a better understanding of its, and by

extension hip-hop's, inclusion through the experiences of undergraduate students. #HipHopEd seeks to facilitate and encourage student reflection upon their views of rap and hip-hop culture to gain an understanding of this larger philosophy (Irby & Hall, 2010; Petchauer, 2011a; Seidel, 2011; Travis, 2013; Tobias, 2014; Travis & Maston, 2014; Emdin et al., 2018).

Petchauer (2011a, 2012) posited the term 'hip-hop collegians', which he defined as university students whose educational interests, motivations and perspectives are influenced by participation in hip-hop (p. 7). How one engages hip-hop and the depth of this engagement varies individually. However, the impact and influence hip-hop has upon an individual's learning experience may not reflect their level of involvement. Examination of undergraduate students' experiences creating an individual rap provided a glimpse into the unique and wide spectrum that the term 'hip-hop collegians' can manifest.

Beginning with the lived experiences of the black community in the United States, Travis (2016) discussed the healing power of hip-hop extending beyond a certain group of people. This is evident through the international impact and influence of rap. While rap and hip-hop are often used interchangeably, there are important distinctions between the two terms. Hip-hop is a culture, whereas rap is the practice of emceeing or rhyming over a beat (Travis, 2016; Turner, 2017; Emdin et al., 2018). Hip-hop culture encompasses rap, dee-jaying, breakdancing and art (Kitwana, 2003; Emdin, 2010; Irby & Hall, 2010; Kruse, 2014; Travis, 2016; Emdin et al., 2018; Karvelis, 2018). Therefore, rap is but one manner of expression in hip-hop culture. Debate exists regarding the perceived negative stereotypes perpetuated in the lyrical content of rap; however, this does not negate the potential for change, growth and positive impact rap and hip-hop culture may have (Kitwana, 2003; Ahmadi & Oosthuizen, 2012; Tobias, 2014; Travis, 2013, 2016; Turner, 2017). Rather, true to hip-hop culture and many rap lyricists, social and civil commentary are identified to make change and improve oneself and the community (Kitwana, 2003; Seidel, 2011; Ahmadi & Oosthuizen, 2012; Tobias, 2014; Travis, 2013, 2016; Travis & Maston, 2014). The creation of students' own raps provided an engagement in hip-hop culture unique and personal to the individual. This was in alignment with the central tenets of #HipHopEd and #HipHopEd(ucators).

Emdin et al. (2018) make clear that educators utilising #HipHopEd and/or #HipHopEd(ucators) approaches must not assume knowledge or absolute understanding of a particular topic or experience. All stakeholders, including parents, pupils, professionals, practitioners and pioneers of hip-hop, are equal producers of knowledge (Emdin et al., 2018). Students learning through music provided an opportunity to gain insight into the life, experiences and context of each as knowledge bearers.

A praxial approach informed the development and implementation of the original rap creation as a class project. This was with the aim of centring the student, their voice, and sociocultural situated self in their rap. Elliott and Silverman (2015) describe praxial music education as holistic, multidimensional, and social which fosters the positive transformation of students through active and critical reflection. Personhood, 'musicing', and human flourishing in relation to the student's education are central in a praxial music education (Elliott, 1995; Elliott & Silverman, 2015). Personhood is the holistic concept of a person as an embodied, enactive, sociocultural situated nondualist being (Elliott, 1995; Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Silverman, 2012, 2020). A contraction of music making, 'musicing' includes all forms of music making and praxis-specific forms such as performing, composing, beatboxing, rapping, and worshiping (Elliott, 1995; Silverman et al., 2014; Elliott & Silverman, 2015). A praxial music education which encourages and empowers life-long musicing fosters an opportunity for students to achieve eudaimonia, the 'good life', or human flourishing (Silverman, 2012; van der Schyff, 2015; Regelski, 2019; Smith & Silverman, 2020). An individual's human flourishing is fostered and empowered through 'musicing' as their holistic self intersects with their education. In alignment with HHBE, #HipHopEd and #HipHopEd(ucators) tenets, a praxial approach provides the possibility for a meaningful connection between student and curriculum through participation in rap and hip-hop culture.

Music educators and scholars have incorporated multiculturalism and transculturalism to address the socially and culturally diverse nature of music education (Schippers, 2009; Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Sarath et al., 2017; Sarath, 2018). The debate between multiculturalism and transculturalism in music education is beyond the scope of this article. My aim is not to add to this debate but to illustrate that both concepts situated in a praxial framework present all music praxes as valuable and rich resources. Transculturalism in music education is the engagement of diverse epistemologies and the incorporation of differing music domains (Sarath, 2013, 2018; Sarath et al., 2017). Multiculturalism in music education is the equitable presentation, discussion and engagement of different music praxes and cultures (Schippers, 2009). Elliott and Silverman (2015) extend the definition to include that authentic 'musicing' specific to the sociocultural context of a music praxis is essential in preserving the integrity of all music cultures. They identify this concept as '*dynamic multicultural (intercultural) curriculum*' (Elliott, 1985, 1995; Elliott & Silverman, 2015). An ethical and educative learning experience situated in a praxial framework is central to a music education which equally values all music praxes. This is true whether multicultural, transcultural or '*dynamic multicultural (intercultural) curriculum* concepts are utilised. Situated within a praxial music education, students had the opportunity to share their contextual aspects, self-reflect, explore their culture(s) and incorporate these influences (musical or not) into their rap.

The creation of individual student raps reflects the benefits of incorporating arts in qualitative research. This derives from an understanding that music may inform research and research may inform music (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Gouzouasis, 2013, 2018; Hartwig, 2014; Rankin, 2014; Leavy, 2018). This medium provided validity of the findings and illustrated an expanded HHBE concept in action through its use in eliciting, analysing and sharing students' personhood (Stovall, 2006; Hill, 2009; Petchauer, 2011a, 2012; McFarland, 2013; Travis, 2013; Kruse, 2014; Travis & Maston, 2014; Tobias, 2014). Students creating and sharing their own rap were engaged in expressions of hip-hop, or 'hip-hopness' (Emdin et al., 2018, p. 5). As a result, students' musical experiences and education were guided by their own interests and context.

Concepts posited by the above hip-hop scholars, situated in a praxial framework, informed this research. #HipHopEd tenets intertwined with the above literature of music education pedagogy demonstrate rap, and by extension hip-hop, as a rich and valuable resource for students' educational experiences. This not only centres the student's voice and experiences in their education but also centred students' voices and experiences in this research.

Research design

A qualitative instrumental case study utilising students' original raps as an ABR component was the research methodology (Stake, 1995; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This case study took place in an undergraduate class during the Autumn term at a university in the northeast United States. Each student submitted a rap consisting of an original beat and lyrics (minimum of two verses). These raps served as the primary data collection method which provided the opportunity for the generation of complex and rich analysis (Leavy, 2018). These music-based responses served to gain a better understanding of music enquiry.

Positionality

Rap in music education was researched with my own students in a rap-based music class entitled *The History of Rap.* Research is a lived experience that involves subjectivity (Silverman, 2011). Memoing was conducted throughout the study to identify my subjectivity and position during the research process (Emerson et al., 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Validity

Similar to the structure and role of a Research Ethics Committee, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was given for the research study to protect the rights and welfare of the human research participants. An IRB-approved research assistant discussed the study, disseminated and collected the informed consents without my presence. Additionally, informed consent was stored in a locked cabinet in which I gained access after final grade submission. Participation in the research study was not a requirement of the class. As professor, I provided students assistance when approached with questions. However, I worked alongside students to brainstorm ideas without direct suggestions or answers to avoid influencing their creative process as much as possible (Wiggins, 2009).

Methods

Examination of each student's rap (original beat and lyrics) provided a deeper understanding and unique perspective of undergraduate students' perception of studying rap and its impact upon their education. Students answered two questions in their rap; What does hip-hop mean to you? How does hip-hop relate to your education? Creating a rap provided a unique approach to understanding the student and topic, a different lens for research and utilised the power of creating in hip-hop culture (Gouzouasis, 2008; Travis, 2016). Students with little experience writing a rap or music had an opportunity to express themselves through art. Although challenging, the openness and self-reflective nature of creating a rap allowed for individuality in expression.

The rap project consisted of four components. Students responded anonymously to a pre-questionnaire of seven open-ended questions before beginning their rap. The aim of the pre-questionnaire was to gain insight into the students' initial perception of creating and using a rap to address the two posed questions.

I conducted a one-on-one semi-structured interview with each student. Lasting a minimum of forty-five minutes, interviews ranged in discussion from students' general views of music and rap to their creation process and challenges. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Students were given the opportunity to share their completed rap with the class. Students could perform their rap live, play a recording, play a recording anonymously or abstain. Students wishing anonymity were made aware of the possibility of the recognition of their voice. All students were required to share their inspiration and experience in creating their rap.

At the end of the term, students responded to a post-questionnaire. Consisting of seven open-ended questions, it expanded upon the pre-questionnaire to illuminate any changes or growth after their experience creating music.

Sample and recruitment

Participants ranged from 18 to 22 years of age and were enrolled in an undergraduate music class entitled *The History of Rap* at a private four-year university. Nineteen students were earning degrees in Music Industry, Music Education or Music. Five students were not studying music as a degree. Class demographics of the 24 students were 11 whites, 7 blacks, 5 Latinx and 1 Asian. Participants were recruited by a research assistant who presented the research study design and distributed and collected the informed consent.

Data collection

Each student submitted their rap (original beat and lyrics) as an audio recording, submitted a pre- and post-questionnaire and participated in a one-on-one interview. Data were collected from

the pre- and post-questionnaire, one-on-one semi-structured interviews and each student's rap. The rap project required creation of an original beat with a minimum of two verses of lyrical content and the submission of lyrics as a word document. Different recording programmes and sound libraries were demonstrated to the students. Recording programmes free of charge were highlighted so as not to privilege socioeconomic status. Students were encouraged to use their preferred recording methods and programmes.

Data analysis

The pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire, interview transcripts and lyrics were analysed for recurring and overlapping ideas which were organised into codes. The initial coding process included open and in vivo coding (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldana, 2016). A second round of coding resulted in pattern and focused coding (Saldana, 2016). Codes were generated from each above component. No judgement and critique of the raps were made. 'Rather, the emphasis is an analysis and critique of the possibilities of how best to use art or what it inspires as an educational tool' (Travis, 2016, p. 215). Re-occurring and overlapping codes led to the emergence of four themes.

Findings

The four emergent themes were 1.) Self-Expression, 2.) Speak Out, 3.) Develop a Craft, Ability, Skill and 4.) Personal/Health. Formal and informal conversations, lyrics and sharing of the rap revealed each student's unique and individual education experience. This provided a unique perspective and approach to better understand students' experiences and perspectives of the overall creative process. Specifically, how, if at all, does a transformative experience manifest for students studying hip-hop through the creation of an original rap.

Self-expression

Students' raps exhibited the importance of expressing oneself through music. This included the creation of the beat, lyrics or a combination of the two. One student stated, 'making music is more satisfying when you make everything yourself'. This statement was made in contrast to their previous experiences of writing music. The sense of creative control provided the student an opportunity for a personal connection and to fully express themselves.

Students drew inspiration for their raps from private experiences. Despite the vulnerability students would encounter in sharing these private moments, they served as lyrical content. 'I wouldn't expose personal information such as that [lyrical content] and I feel hip-hop gives students that platform'. A student sharing personal experiences illustrated how self-expression manifested in the raps; and furthermore, how self-expression provided a learning experience beyond simply studying music practises and elements. While students learned about specific music practises in creating a rap, the power of self-expression inspired and drove these musical practises. 'Hip-Hop to me is the highest degree. I can rant, I can scream, I can say what I mean'.

Speak out

Students directly and indirectly referenced the importance of speaking out when discussing lyrical content. This included referencing and addressing topics with personal impact, or more broadly, civil and social commentary. In both instances, students addressed their personal connection to these issues and the importance of commenting upon them from an informed viewpoint. This was in hopes of inspiring change. Reflecting upon the intended message within their lyrics, a student described their commentary as addressing, 'the way I see things happening around us and talking

about how the world teaches us that we can't be ourselves'. The student continued in stating that 'finding my own voice' was a way to address this sentiment.

One student provided a stark contrast about the history and positive impact rap and hip-hop can have upon individuals and a community. Unfortunately based in reality, his lyrics stated, 'this hip-hop they won't stop me until they murder me'. After providing a grim warning, however, the student provided hope by stating, 'even when its dark I can see the music shine. If there's a disconnect we can reconnect the lines right'. The rap's central focus was personal growth within hip-hop culture through familial relationships and the impact previous rappers had upon their development as a person and rapper.

Develop a craft, ability and skill

In addition to looking inward, students incorporated elements outside the field of music. Some of these elements inspired the beat and/or the lyrical content, while others informed the approach in constructing their individual rap. Students also took the opportunity to develop a skill, ability or craft which then could be incorporated into their own rap. This practise simultaneously had an immediate impact with future implications in mind.

An interdisciplinary approach exhibited itself when students looked to different sources as inspiration for their rap. Examples included 'Dr. Seuss, Hamilton (the musical) and my experiences with rap'. Furthermore, students looked to literary devices rappers use, such as wordplay, to improve their rap lines and to use in their writing. 'I think wordplay is probably the coolest thing that I've taken away from it [rap] . . . what I like is kind of unexpected wordplay and that's what is interesting to me . . . and that's what I've taken away from it [rap]. I kind of know how to not be so repetitive with my words, to use my words more cleverly'. The emphasis a melodic line places upon a lyric is important when considering the listener's reception of a message. Students paid careful attention to this detail when discussing lyric and melody/rap construction, 'writing a good flow that has an interesting pace that puts emphasis on where I want my message to stand out and saying all I want to say within that one rap'. The rap flow and lyrical content were important. However, equally important were how these two elements came together in sharing one's message.

Students also used their own rap to develop abilities and skills that they could apply to their careers. A student earning a music business degree, with hopes of becoming a producer, used this opportunity to learn how to mix and authentically apply effects to vocals in a recording within the rap tradition. 'I've never had to do vocal processing. So I feel like I should research that a little more before recording it. So the guy would be rapping and it would be the effects, echo, overdubs and then outlets and stuff like that. Just that in a sense is a big part of the rap beat or the song itself, so that's something I've never had to do so it's going to be an experiment'. Students took the opportunity to explore, incorporate and develop abilities and skills unique to their own interests. This was with the aim of having a positive impact upon their development as professionals in their respective fields.

Personal/health

Participants spoke of instances in which hip-hop, rap and creating a rap for class served a need for personal growth, healing and guidance. Experiences ranged from fostering a connection with parents and family, learning about one's culture and heritage to gaining strength and healing during personal struggles. One student wrote a rap to help them through 'a situation that I was going through when I lost my best friend', another wrote about their personal struggles throughout their university experience. Writing a rap served a therapeutic need in both instances.

Participants' research while creating their rap led to a unique and personal learning experience. Participants incorporated these experiences in their rap to reach listeners on a personal level. 'The lyrics and his [Mac Miller] personality and just from like as an artist doing research and

stuff, knowing more about him, his music is beneficial. So I really learned and then I was able to help other people from his music specifically. There's a lot of hip-hop music that I've listened to that I've learned historical facts from about my heritage and where I'm from that I didn't really know before listening to that song'.

Students often spoke of the importance of family, particularly in conjunction with exploring and understanding culture. 'I figured out what I probably am going to write about cause I would say what hip-hop means to me is it's kind of helped my bond with my dad . . . at least like how my dad used to explain hip-hop to me, the meaning is kind of a big way for our culture to have an outlet. And because it was way different than what pop and classical and everyone else had when hip-hop first started becoming a big thing. It was just a way for our culture, like black people to really express themselves in their own type of genre'.

Rap and hip-hop in students' lives often represented a personal experience. These experiences went beyond music and into foundational aspects of their lives which manifested in their beats and lyrics. As one student stated, 'I think of my songs as like my diary'.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to illuminate and examine the presence of a transformative experience for undergraduate students through the creation of their own original rap as a pedagogical tool. Undergraduate students' individual raps facilitated a unique perspective into what Emdin et al. (2018) identified as 'hip-hopness' (p. 5). Examination of the different raps provided a window into students' expressions of hip-hop as it related to their unique self and education. The benefits of studying rap, and by extension hip-hop, were illuminated through the experiences, perspectives, lyrics and voices of the students. The possibility of a transformative student experience when creating an individual rap was exhibited through students' self-expression and speaking out upon topics through music and lyrics while fostering personal development and health/growth.

Students looked to personal experiences and connections when creating, recording and sharing their rap. This included researching, listening and incorporating rap artists' practises into their education and life experiences. For example, the student who incorporated wordplay into the construction of their rap lines also sought to utilise this device in their writing style to use 'words more cleverly'. Students engaged in a personal, historical and culturally relevant educational experience as they created their own unique rap. The continuum in which this experience may manifest was revealed in two different student experiences: One in which a student's rap served the therapeutic need of dealing with the loss of a best friend; the second, in which a student simultaneously grew in her relationship with her dad and learned more about her African American culture and history. Hip-hop's multidimensional sociocultural nature was exemplified in students' unique and personal experiences when creating their individual raps (Kitwana, 2003; Irby & Hall, 2010; Kruse, 2014; Travis, 2016; Emdin et al., 2018; Karvelis, 2018). Students' education experience situated within their personal connection to their raps illustrated what it is to be a 'hip-hop collegian' (Petcahuer, 2011a, 2012). #HipHopEd and praxial music education practices were reflected in students' learning processes stemming from their strengths and knowledge.

An individual assignment or project will provide challenges unique to the individual student. These challenges may be procedural, conceptual or personal and will fluctuate. The challenges, complexities and issues to arise during the rap creation project differed between individual students. Challenges included writing lyrics, creating the beat, combining both elements or beginning the process. One example was the student who used the challenge of applying authentic vocal effects to simultaneously learn more about rap recording practises and develop a skill applicable to their future career. The student viewed this opportunity as 'an experiment' as she researched and practised a novel craft. This learning process reflected 'musicing' situated within a praxial music

education framework (Elliott, 1995; Silverman et al., 2014; Elliott & Silverman, 2015). The student engaged in critical and active reflection as she worked through a music praxis-specific form. Additionally, the foresight of developing and applying a skill in future music endeavors illustrated the impact of human flourishing (Silverman, 2012; van der Schyff, 2015; Regelski, 2019; Smith & Silverman, 2020). The student envisioned a need and desire for active participation in music from a personal perspective. Other students perceived their rap as addressing a need but from a broader perspective. Despite these differences, the creation of their respective raps illustrated human flourishing. One student wrote lyrics as a therapeutic process to address the struggles of their university experience. Another perceived their song 'as my diary'. These, and all the students' experiences and reflections, illustrated the impact the tenets of #HipHopEd have in academia. Student reflection and 'musicing' were situated within hip-hop culture through the creation of an individual rap. This facilitated and encouraged a personal and unique education experience with the opportunity to gain an understanding of hip-hop culture by experiencing an aspect of the culture (Thibeault, 2010; Seidel, 2011; Tobias, 2014; Travis & Maston, 2014; Emdin et al., 2018). Despite challenges, students engaged rap and hip-hop culture, and in some instances, used hip-hop itself to overcome these challenges.

A democratic and transactional classroom was exemplified in the student and teacher co-constructed learning experience through students creating and sharing their original rap (Silverman, 2013). This class setting was situated in the combination of transculturalism/multiculturalism and #HipHopEd informed practices. As a result, students' rap creation experiences were guided by group and individualised needs. For example, students shared their compositional successes and challenges with their classmates and teacher. Emerging interests and needs during the creative process provided an opportunity to adapt the class project to align with the class and students' needs and interests. Examples ranged from students reflecting upon and sharing private feelings in their lyrics to developing music and recording abilities. The aim of each student's rap differed individually. However, the common thread was the use of their individual rap to express their unique and personal self. This was evident in their lyrics, beats and self-reflections. The cyclical and reflective process between the student(s) and teacher exemplified a democratic and transactional class (Silverman, 2013). This was a result of abandoning the assumption that the teacher possesses all knowledge and maintains power in alignment with the tenets of #HipHopEd and #HipHopEd(ucators) (Emdin et al., 2018). Democratic and transactional classes can be found in HHBE practises: 'the classroom must be as democratic as possible . . . A hip-hop based approach can begin to overcome these obstacles in the classroom' (McFarland, 2013, p. 223). Students creating and sharing their rap facilitated a democratic class situated in a #HipHopEd and praxial music education framework.

Examination of students' raps illuminated the abundance of what educators and students can learn from the exploration and creation of a rap within hip-hop culture. As one student stated, 'I definitely think education is in rap more so than rap is in education'. This article's opening question, should music educators teach hip-hop and rap in undergraduate music classes? is not answered with a 'yes' or 'no', but of 'how'.

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