

COMBATING HEGEMONIC FORCES, FROM THE CONTINENT
TO THE BEAT: CONNECTING AFRICANA PHILOSOPHY
TO CRITICAL HIP-HOP PEDAGOGY

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DeChana M. Roberts
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Dr. C. Amari Johnson, Thesis Advisor, African American Studies

ABSTRACT

One of the most critical issues impeding African American liberation today is the American education system, which overwhelmingly and disproportionately, negatively impacts African American youth. In defiance of the hegemonic system, African American adolescents have created alternative modes of expressing their native African sensibilities, connecting them back to traditional ancestral philosophy; one of the resulting cultural productions is Hip-Hop. The proceeding pages will offer a critical analysis of literature on Philosophy for Children (PFC/PWC), Africana Philosophy, and the use of Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool in the classroom (CHHP), in order to discover connections between these three elements. The results showed significant similarities in the PFC/PWC and CHHP programs, supporting the hypothesis to develop a program incorporating both practices in the classroom as an alternative to Eurocentric pedagogy. Additionally this project creates space for future consideration of the connections between traditional Africana philosophy as praxis and Hip-Hop performance.

This project is dedicated to
My mother, Chequetta Roberts,
My father, Myron Roberts,
My partner, Nitoshia Ford,
and
My ancestors
who have prepared me for the fight.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

People of the African diaspora have long been objectified throughout the history of Western civilization. Today this objectification by the dominant culture persists amongst African American adolescents. However African American youth in defiance of the hegemonic system, have created alternative modes of expressing forms of native Africana philosophy, which has endured through generations of oppression. Fluctuating over the beat and in sync with the rhythmic bass of the drum, Hip-Hop artists spit sankofic tales about a philosophy of life and lessons of resilience.

Hip-Hop has the capacity to “open up a critical space to ‘undo’ hegemonic performances” (Prier, 2012). Unfortunately, this cultural brilliance has been relegated to a level of inconsequential jargon, resulting in the deliberate neglect of an entire adolescent population. While the American education system seeks to “educate” African American students, it does so without serious consideration for their collective perspective, individual life experiences or cultural sensibilities. This practice has, for centuries, kept African Americans subordinated as second-class citizens, without a true sense of liberty.

One of the most critical issues impeding African American liberation today is the American education system, which overwhelmingly and disproportionately, negatively impacts African American youth. Scholars (Apple, 2004; Perry, 2003; Prier, 2012; Murrell, 2002) have noted several structural impediments within the education system effecting African American youth, including universalized pedagogy, deficit perspective, inequitable funding, and high-stakes testing. This thesis will focus on the potentiality of Africana Philosophy, and Philosophy for Children and Critical Hip-Hop pedagogy as a means to combat deficit ideology, universalized pedagogy and Eurocentric education, which have effectively undermined the progress of African American youth.

Statement of the Hypothesis

The proceeding pages will offer a critical analysis of literature on Philosophy for Children (PFC/PWC), Africana Philosophy, and the use of Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool in the classroom (CHHP). The purpose of this study is to extrapolate recommendations from the literature to develop a framework for utilizing Hip-Hop to engage adolescents in Africana philosophy, as a means to help better prepare students to effectively interrogate the societal structures that seek to oppress them.

I assert that the research will show that utilizing a Critical Hip-Hop curriculum focused on exposing African American adolescents to Africana Philosophy, is a logical alternative to the deficit perspective, universalized pedagogy and Eurocentric education. I will also present the existing connections between the CHHP and PFC/PWC programs to further emphasize the applicability of a joint program, as well as provide a sample lesson plan that engages the similarities between Hip-Hop and Africana Philosophy.

Significance of the Study/Justification for the Research

Many revolutionary African American leaders have emphasized the importance of education for African American progress, however this was not done without criticism of the system. Malcolm X said, “education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today,” however, he also said, “only a fool would let his enemy teach his children.” Unfortunately, white supremacist ideology is so imbedded in the U.S. government that it has ensured that this very nation, of which we are citizens, is also our “enemy.” The American education system, being an extension of the government, does not benefit African American youth, because it teaches them that they are empty vessels waiting to be filled with supreme Eurocentric knowledge, without any critique of this knowledge, or without providing exposure to alternative epistemologies, while lacking consideration for how they best learn (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Murrell 2002; Freire 1995).

This theoretical thesis is unique in that it is the first to consider the amalgamation of Critical Hip-Hop Pedagogy, Philosophy for Children and Africana Philosophy to be explored within an educational context. There has been some research on using Hip-Hop to teach other subjects such as reading, math and history, however the research has not considered Philosophy for Children (PFC) and/or Africana Philosophy along with Critical Hip-Hop Pedagogy (CHHP).

As will be discussed in the literature review, some texts have suggested the use of Africana Philosophy in the PFC program (Ndofirepi, 2014), however within these texts Hip-Hop is a missing element from the conversation. Hence the proposal to bring together each of these as a mechanism for producing more critical and reflective students. Each of these components, Hip-Hop and Africana philosophy, individually have immense liberatory potential which suggests that the meeting of the two can be even more so powerful. As the popularity of Hip-Hop music has remained a constant among African American youth culture, it is essential that we continue to explore the possibilities of its utility as a pedagogical tool. Africana philosophy is gaining more relevance particularly in regard to its ability to understand and address Pan-African issues, and connect various African communities in a common ontology and cosmology, across the diaspora (Outlaw, 1998). While Hip-Hop has been considered a language that speaks to several oppressed groups, framing the dialogue in an African-centered perspective and addressing the philosophical aspects, this thesis will bring focus specifically to those African American youths for whom Hip-Hop provides a voice in a world where they have been silenced.

The goal of this endeavor is to synthesize relevant literature on Africana philosophy, Philosophy for Children programs, and Critical Hip-Hop Pedagogy, using the Afrocentric paradigm to perform a content analysis. After gathering a wide range of sources for review, literature will be categorized based on significant themes discovered across the texts. These themes will then be utilized to draw conclusions to develop an Africana philosophy-based Hip-Hop lesson plan, geared towards African American

adolescents. The current state of the African American community along with the potentiality of Philosophy for Children, Africana Philosophy and Critical Hip-Hop Pedagogy make a compelling case for further exploration into the viability of these components as tools for liberation.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

I am an Africana Studies scholar, whose work is grounded in an Afrocentric perspective which is concerned with Africana agency, unity of the Africana community, and the total liberation of Africana people throughout the diaspora. However, my goal is also, as stated in my dedication, for my work to inform additional ways in which all individuals can collectively dismantle any and all systems of oppression throughout the world.

I refrained from doing research with actual human subjects for two reasons: 1) I felt it was beneficial to first complete a theoretical thesis as a foundation for future research with actual participants. 2) I did not have access to an adequate sample size of African American adolescents that would result in significant data. I limited the scope of my research to accessible literature which was specific to my research topic. I also assumed that all literary research reviewed was conducted thoroughly and ethically, following the guidelines of institutional review boards and other supervising entities.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Philosophy for Children Literature Review

Philosophy for Children (PFC) is a fairly new concept in the history of philosophy itself. However, since its inception in 1976 with Matthew Lipman, several authorities have branched off to define varying concepts and ideals in relation to practicing philosophy in the K-12 setting. To adequately assess the applicability of Philosophy for Children in the context of critical consciousness for African American students the preceding pages will delve into the many approaches researched and developed over the past 40 years.

Matthew Lipman began with the idea of teaching philosophy to children in the context of critical thinking; he did not set out to teach students logic in the formal sense as within the university classroom, rather it was a matter of encouraging students to be more reflective and consider their own thought processes (Lipman, 1976). The idea behind Lipman's work was that poor performance could be significantly improved by helping students to practice proper critical thinking in the primary subject areas.

Lipman was not a teacher by trade, he was a philosopher, however he felt it important to use pedagogical tools that were specific to children. For this reason, he created a series of books that were specifically designed to engage primary school students in practicing philosophy. The stories in the texts represented events that were relatable and relevant to children. In this same vein he did not think it appropriate to teach specific aspects of philosophy such as logic, ethics or metaphysics, those more formal aspects should be reserved for the university classroom (Lipman, 1976).

Following on the heels of Lipman, Gareth Matthews also believed that children were capable of logical reasoning and would be better prepared if they were treated as such. However, an important distinction between Matthews and Lipman, is Matthews' focus on the child as a "rational agent" with the ability to reason philosophically (Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011). Matthews work resulted in what he termed the Philosophy of Childhood where he suggests a new distinction for the ways in which children wonder and process the world they encounter.

For Matthews, the issue with education is that children are perceived only as sponges for information and not as potential purveyors of knowledge. He felt that this approach was limiting and that the relationship between the adult and child should be more reciprocal in nature, arguing that children too ask philosophical questions, although it may be presented differently (Matthews, 1994). Although both Matthews and Lipman supported that pedagogical approaches should seek to cultivate stimulating thought in children, Matthews thought it most important to focus more on pondering ideas about the world and Lipman was focused on critical thinking skills.

Ekkehard Martens, a German author, was a proponent for yet another argument in the PFC camp, asserting the need for a critical dialogue which unpacks pervasive power dynamics within society (Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011). The goal being to create opportunities for various perspectives to be engaged, dissected and interrogated in hopes of arriving in a space of a "rationally founded consensus" (Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011). When developing a philosophy for children program Martens discusses two key components: a dialogical-based critical method and "Homeric themes." As a result of being exposed to this "philosophical knowledge" it is believed that learners will be

enabled to think critically and ask questions regarding life's experiences, in order to make more responsible decisions (Vansielegem & Kennedy, 2011).

With a solid foundation laid by pioneering theorists, new researchers have emerged to put forth their own perspectives on Philosophy for Children. For the purpose of distinguishing between the two approaches I will refer to the contemporary as Philosophy *with* Children (PWC), a major distinction being PWC places an even greater emphasis on “openness, symmetry and reciprocity” (Valitalo, Juuso, & Sutinen, 2016). New theorists, which include Ann Margaret Sharp, David Kennedy, Karin Murriss and Walter Kohan, offer insights based on an ever-evolving society and a shifting perspective in valuing the ability and perspective of the child.

Karin Murriss specifically argues that children may have an advantage over adults in that they have not yet been taught how or what to think. Educators problematize this fact rather than see the value in it and this, according to Murriss, can cause the relationship between the teacher and student to be asymmetrical and non-reciprocal (Murriss, 2013). Further, she makes a point that it's necessary for educators to shift their perspectives in order to have a more authentic experience with students, to where they can be seen as someone who also possesses valuable knowledge. Also in agreement with Murriss are Walter Kohan and David Kennedy.

Kohan also takes a more controversial stance in saying that the categorization of 'child' and 'adult' are mere social constructs and don't actually exist naturally in the world (Kohan, 2015). The problem with this stance is that this dismissal of categorization opens a space of extreme vulnerability for the 'child.' Essentially if there is no 'child' is there also no 'baby'? Are we to treat all beings without categorization because it isn't

‘natural’ even in the likelihood of someone being harmed because we should not treat them as anything other than human. This also ignores the obvious that some things are learned through experience and given that adults have been living longer than children they naturally have some understanding of the world that children won’t have.

According to Murriss, although there is extensive literature discussing the “epistemic injustices” of individuals as it pertains to race and gender, however children have been marginalized in this regard as ageism has not been addressed (2013). She asserts that learning *with* children has the potential to educate children and adults alike, as long as the adult is open to embracing a “methodological and ontological paradigm shift (Murriss, 2013).” Lastly, Murriss dedicates a significant section to the discussion of Black children in particular, stressing that they are more likely to be ignored by educators (2013); this makes a strong case in support of a culturally relevant approach to PWC.

Ann Margaret Sharp although placed under the second wave by some authors is best placed somewhere in between. Like Martens she also makes mention of the liberatory potential of philosophy especially for those children who find themselves in “oppressive contexts” (Sharp, 2004). She was also heavily influenced by Lipman and coauthored texts with him. However, her work much like others in the PWC community, does lean more towards a more mutually reciprocal relationship between teacher and learner. She highlights essential components for the community of inquiry including egalitarianism, “philosophical deliberation,” respect and pluralism, leading to a self-reflexive unit of individuals who think for themselves and “in a very important sense, are free” (Sharp, 2004).

Catherine McCall another scholar who worked closely with Lipman has specific suggestions on what should be included in successful PFC program, which she calls CoPI (Community of Philosophical Inquiry). McCall asserts that frequency and duration of lessons are essential, along with class size which should be about fifteen students (2009). The author also noted that working with teenagers could be a challenge in that they may try to provide answers that the teachers want because they are easily embarrassed or self-conscious of their own answers (McCall, 2009).

Patricia Hannam and Eugenio Echeverria offer another text that discusses practicing PFC with teenagers, that is based on ten vital characteristics (see figure 1). Along with these characteristics, the authors emphasize that the “topics around which the thinking skills are practiced and developed [should be] topics important to the experience of the students” (Hannam & Echeverria, 2009). The authors also discuss additional benefits of PFC which include an increased understanding of civic engagement, democracy and healthy identity development (Hannam & Echeverria, 2009).

Gert Biesta writes an important review of PFC where he warns against the “instrumentalization” of PFC, that is implementing the program specifically to help students “construct knowledge,” determine truth, acquire cognitive, moral and social skills (2011). He is concerned with which “particular selection [of] the philosophical tradition” is being qualified (Biesta, 2011). Here Biesta leans into the argument of Eurocentric epistemologies being used as universal standards for all people, especially in regards to what it means to be human, who gets to be human, and who is characterized as ‘other;’ philosophy “as an instrument to ‘produce’ a particular kind of human subjectivity (2011).” The author offers a “post-humanist” approach to PFC which focuses on how

students come into their identities, what he refers to as “coming into the world (Biesta, 2011).”

Up until now the texts have focused on implementing PFC in America or other European countries (with the exception of Karin Murriss who did discuss her experience in observing a classroom in South Africa). However, a few African scholars have written about the applicability of PFC in African nations. Matsephe Letseka and Amasa Ndofirepi offer their perspectives on an African PFC program. Letseka offers that implementing PFC at the K-12 level may help students become stronger intellectually at a younger age so that they can be successful at the university level (2013); similar issues persist within American education. Letseka argues that PFC and African communal interdependence have “unmistakable similarities (2013).” While she asserts that implementing PFC would be helpful in educating students about Africana philosophy she doesn’t specifically address that PFC is not culturally specific to Africana people, or discuss how a Eurocentric framework could be damaging.

Ndofirepi also asserts the potential of PFC in African schools, however he goes a step further and emphasizes the importance of a culturally specific adaptation of the program (2014). More than merely teaching Africana philosophy in place of Western philosophy it is important that the lessons are framed in ways that are natural to the students, in their authentic culture; he calls for a hybrid approach to implementing PFC in African nations (Ndofirepi, 2014). A hybrid approach allows for an understanding of one’s native cultural philosophy and those others found in a global context; the “hybrid discourse” allows for a mutual exchange that does not equate to “assimilation of one culture by another (Ndofirepi, 2014).”

PFC/PWC		CHHP
Topics for discussion are based on student interest		It is participatory and youth-driven
Cooperative endeavor		It is cooperative, engaging students in a joint research process in which each contributes equitably
Expressing disagreement		It foregrounds race, racism, gender, and other axis of social difference in the design, data collection, and analysis
Topics discussed are philosophical		It helps prospective teachers focus on the racialized, gendered, and other intersections of social difference, experiences within and by communities of color
Safe environment		It challenges the traditional paradigms, methods, and texts as a way to engage in a discourse on race that is informed by the actual conditions and experiences of people of color
A space for the development of a personal and social project		It involves local capacity building
Knowledge is understood as evolving constantly		It is trans-disciplinary, drawing on Black/Africana Studies, Raza Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Women's Studies, to name a few
Knowledge is co-constructed		It is committed to co-learning, co-facilitating, and multi-directionality
Teacher and student are co-enquirers in the search for meaning		It is an empowering process through which all participants can increase control of their lives
Practice and development of thinking skills		It seeks a balance among critical thinking, reflection, analysis, and action
		It emphasizes a union of mind, body, and spirit rather than a separation of these elements

Figure 1- A comparison of some primary elements of PFC/PWC (Hannam & Echeverria, 2009) and CHHP (Akom, 2009). The shaded portions in the table shows the areas in which the two concepts share some similarities.

Africana Philosophy Literature Review

For the purpose of this thesis Africana philosophy refers to the act of intentional and sustained reflection, from an Afrocentric perspective, on a particular aspect of the Pan-African experience, resulting in an epistemological view that is used to inform practice. Considering the world we live in today, philosophy must be more than theorizing and pontificating. Although philosophy may have been previously reserved for the elite in the academy, the time for purposeful utility on the ground is long overdue and we would be remiss if we didn't expose our youth to this knowledge.

Some scholars (Wiredu, 1984; Hountondji, 1996), who may not consider themselves as aligning with positivistic approaches to philosophy, support that *real* or modern philosophy has a scientific component that is missing from what some term traditional Africana philosophy, in order to maintain its historicity. These philosophers, perhaps without intending to, use language that undermines the significance of some forms of Africana philosophy merely because the process by which these philosophies came into existence is unknown, untraceable to a single individual or there is a question of rigor in the vetting process.

These philosophers (Wiredu, 1984; Hountondji, 1996) are proponents of a universal perspective in philosophy, one that is applicable to all cultures regardless of cultural nuances. It is in this vein that they attempt to erase the contributions of ancient African philosophers. Under a universal approach to philosophy some aspects of traditional African philosophy are reduced to African thought (Asouzu, 2007). The raiment of an one-size-fits-all concept for philosophy reeks of the fragrance of Eurocentric beliefs that have oppressed African people for centuries. For it is not really a

question of the historicity of Africana philosophy, rather a question of the validity of Africana people stemming from persistent racism in academia, which has resulted in the dismissal of Africana Philosophy as a respectable field of inquiry.

Several philosophers (Wiredu, 1984; Hengelbrock, retrieved 12/13/2015; Crahay as cited by Outlaw, 1998; Hountondji, 1996) African and otherwise, have dismissed the relevance of traditional African philosophy, negating its existence or minimizing it to “community thought,” or “wisdom.” To be fair it would not be accurate to say these philosophers all held the same perspective of African societies, after all Hegel must be clearly distinguished as a racist philosopher that believed Africa to be “undeveloped and unhistorical” as a whole (Onyewuenyi, 1993). While other philosophers like Tempels, under the guise of the “white savior,” were audacious enough to suggest Africans (specifically the Bantu) did not possess the capability to express their own philosophical beliefs; only through the European lens could they begin to see themselves as philosophers, but on their own they would not be able to articulate a method of analysis and synthesis (1959).

Those African philosophers that argue against the existence of, or call for the exclusion of traditional African philosophy, can be considered as succumbing to some sense of self- deprecation, predicated by Eurocentric ideology that propagates Africans being inferior to White individuals. However, one need not ignore traditions for the sake of progress, rather we must learn from our historical philosophy and use whichever wisdoms can be beneficial in the struggle against oppression.

Makinde discusses aspects of philosophy in terms of doing philosophy, writing philosophy and teaching philosophy (1988). African philosophy is at a disadvantage

because it is difficult for people to understand something that is not written; it lacks a tangible element which scholars, especially those of the positivist ilk, cling to as proof of existence.

Africana Philosophy can be broken down into four primary branches: ethnophilosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalist-ideological, and professional philosophy (Okere, 1983). This categorization varies from the European taxonomy of philosophy which includes: ethics, epistemology, metaphysics (ontology), logic, social and political philosophy. Kenyan philosopher Henry Odera Oruka argues that an oral philosophy also exists within the discipline (Imbo, 1998); his thesis known as *Sagacity* notes that there were sages who were “philosophic in the strictest sense despite their illiteracy.” Oruka also raises the point that Socrates is considered a great philosopher yet he did not write down his philosophies (Imbo, 1998), they were later transcribed by his students, yet no one questions the historicity of Socrates’ words as philosophy.

Why should oral traditions be excluded from philosophy? How does it compromise the process for determining the philosophical validity of an item? It is necessary to have stringent criteria when operationalizing terms however, these criteria must be logical in terms of its teleology. It seems the purpose to exclude oral culture from philosophy is to exclude African people, because it is well-known that in African cultures that orality has been a fundamental form of communication, highly utilized since ancient times.

Charles Taylor, as cited by Oguejiofor, suggests the history of philosophy is forgotten as it becomes commonplace and unquestionable (2012)- this is why teaching it is important so as not to forget why and how the philosophy came to be. Slavery resulted

in African philosophy becoming increasingly fragmented and incomplete; such philosophies that may have been normally be passed on through oral tradition were only partially transferred, leading to a contemporary pseudo-African philosophy in America, with few remnants of the original historical African philosophies.

If doing philosophy does not equate solely to writing philosophy, the disparity of written philosophies by African philosophers does not negate the existence of African philosophy (Makinde, 1988). Some Western philosophers are skeptical of the existence of a philosophy that is not written down. How much history has been dismissed or overlooked prior to the written language being a means of reproduction?

Another European philosopher that asserts the belief in an African philosophy is Heinz Kimmerle. However, Asouzu asserts that his perspective on African philosophy is “colored” by his “penchant to see African philosophy from the background of ethnology” (Asouzu, 2007). Jurg n Hengelbrock another European philosopher critiques Kimmerle by comparing him to Hegel, in that he reduces African philosophy to myths, proverbs, folklore and wisdom (Hengelbrock, retrieved 12/13/2015).

Asouzu agrees that this reductionism is one of the primary issues with Kimmerle and emphasizes that African philosophy has aspects that differ, possibly even “supersede” African cultural productions. The issue with Hengelbrock however is that he attempts to dismiss *all* of African philosophy without considering other aspects of African philosophical components, even going as far as to insinuate in profound Hegelian fashion that African philosophers can only imitate or copy European style of philosophizing (Asouzu, 2007).

Asouzu (2007) asserts well-intended western scholars often have “good dispositions towards an egalitarian type of trans-cultural philosophy, where the interest of every culture should be equally represented.” In a sense, Eurocentric scholars must make the case that African wisdoms, folklore, proverbs and ancient practices do not account for philosophy in Africa, because if it is affirmed that philosophy existed in Africa it would raise the question as to whether or not philosophy was actually first practiced in Africa. This specific argument has been made by several scholars, including George James, author of *Stolen Legacy*, and Innocent Onyewuenyi author of *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentrism*.

Onyewuenyi asserts that Greek philosophers Thales (who is actually Phoenician) and Aristotle have both been influenced by Egyptian scholars (1993). Quoting Aristotle directly “the mathematical arts [science of precise knowledge or philosophy] were founded in Egypt.” Even Greek historian, Herodotus speaks to some philosophies attributed to Aristotle actually originating in Egypt (Onyewuenyi 1993). The list of Greek scholars influenced by Egypt, in addition to those listed previously, include Pythagoras, Plato, Eudoxus, and potentially others. So not only does an African philosophy exist, Africans were the originators of philosophy, however some scholars will have you believe that Africans, in regard to philosophy, have contributed little to nothing to civilization.

Although African philosophy originated in Egypt there were several African philosophies that were born and developed outside of Egypt. The African continent is home to 47 contiguous countries and 6 island nations, so it would be an insurmountable task to discuss all the traditional philosophies on the continent. However, many of

them share similarities therefore I will discuss two examples of traditional African philosophical concepts.

Janheinz Jahn (1990) notes that there are four categories of African philosophy, Muntu- human being, Kintu- thing, Hantu- place or time, Kuntu- modality. Ntu, the root of each word, translates into “beingness.” Ntu, the universal force, does not exist on its own; it is always connected to a term (Jahn, 1990). Now consider the Bantu word *ubuntu* and its meaning. Ubuntu “is the root of African philosophy,” (Ramosé, 2003) translated as I am because we are. “To be a human being is to affirm one’s humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis establish humane relations with them” (Ramosé, 2003). It is not enough to exist as a human, your becoming a human being is connected to the humanity you acknowledge in others. This philosophy of connection is a praxis taken so seriously down to the word itself; it is an “indivisible whole-ness” (Ramosé, 2003). The Bantu language is beautiful in that there is profound meaning in the structure of the language and it is translated into the lives of the Bantu people as an active commitment to one another.

Although ubuntu is a Bantu term other African traditions, including Zimbabwe and Zambia, have similar words that also refer to a deep sense of connectedness. For example, the Zimbabwean proverb, “if you want to walk fast, walk alone; if you want to walk far, walk with others” and the Zambian proverb, “to protect an individual is to protect society” (Press & Miller, 2013); utilizing a hermeneutical philosophical approach you could interpret each of these proverbs as having an ubuntu-like quality to them, the emphasis being on the importance of connecting to one another.

Arguably the most significant defining principles to come out of Egypt is the concept of Ma'at. Ma'at dates back to the beginning of ancient Egypt, rather surprisingly it begins as an ideal for tangible items, referring to “straightness, evenness, levelness, correctness... a general concept of rightness,” existing subsequently in the realm of social behavior (Karenga, 2012).

Several texts suggest that Ma'at is a multi-layered concept with various meanings, therefore it is generally defined based on the context (Karenga, 2012). There are seven primary tenets of Ma'at- truth, justice, balance, order, harmony, righteousness and reciprocity. Ma'at could be defined as the presence of appropriate and righteous order in all things, in all beings, at all times, in all places, relative to each community and existing throughout the universe, connecting individuals to a higher, purposeful goal. Like Ubuntu, Ma'at also carries a profound meaning in that it is a way of life that permeates all things.

Leonard Harris, as cited by Outlaw, asserts African American philosophy is a “philosophy born of struggle” (1996), and perhaps this represents another distinction from that of European philosophy. The development of contemporary African and African American philosophy is coterminous to a common enemy, that is colonialism. As asserted in the beginning of the paper, Cruse traces the issue of the “Negro Intellectual” to a crisis of identity; Serequeberhan makes this same point in regards to Africa misunderstanding itself (1998). Africans and African Americans have been indoctrinated with the false belief that the cessation of physical slavery and colonialism, along with integration equates to “freedom” and “liberation.” It is in the crucible of neocolonialism and post-racial society that the next wave of philosophers has been developed.

Leopold Senghor makes the bold statement that “freedom without consciousness is worse than slavery...” (as cited by Serequeberhan, 1994). Without a critical consciousness it is impossible to extricate a community of citizens from the grasp of white supremacy, because without consciousness there will be no action only the perpetuation of “...the lethargic inertness of neocolonialism [that] passes for the actuality of ‘freedom’ and ‘liberation’” (Serequeberhan, 1998).

The hermeneutical orientation in contemporary African philosophy is focused on the demise of the European domination of African people (Serequeberhan, 1998). Contemporary African philosophers may agree on a common enemy, however the point of departure is which direction African philosophy should take. To make this point legible consider two prominent philosophers in African society Kwesi Wiredu and Theophilus Okere.

Wiredu finds fault in the lack of discursiveness in traditional African philosophy and praises the European for challenging and objecting rather than accepting the philosophy on the basis of what the ancestors said (1984); Paulin Hountondji strongly agrees with this notion (1996). In contrast, Okere believes there is value in sifting through the wisdom of our past and extracting what is beneficial (Nwigwe, 2005). Of Wiredu and Hountondji I would suggest they consider an inquiry into the teleology of traditional African philosophical concepts in order to develop a more comprehensive contemporary African philosophy rather than dismissing the tradition. Serequeberhan too proposes a synthesis of the old and the new as he highlights the words of Marcien Towa who states “I do not see what we have to gain from such...amnesia, not even to consider the thought of our ancestors as worthy of being examined and discussed” (1991).

Contemporary African philosophy is in its developmental stages, some of the philosophers have been noted above. While African American philosophy has produced many noteworthy scholars, Outlaw asserts that African American philosophers produce work with limited awareness and knowledge of African philosophy in the diaspora (1998). These disparities in understanding African culture may present significant limitations to African American philosophy, because they “contribute to deficiencies in our historically informed self-understandings” and there is an invaluable benefit to connecting theory and praxis to a shared historical experience of African people (Outlaw, 1998).

There are few texts dedicated to African American philosophy, one being *Philosophy Born of Struggle*, edited by Leonard Harris. The text includes works by notable African Americans such as David Walker, Maria Stewart, Frances Harper, W.E.B. DuBois, Frederick Douglass, Anna Julia Cooper, MLK Jr, Alaine Locke, Cornel West, and Angela Davis. This text is complete with suggested readings, assignments and potential questions for classroom discussion. The last section focuses on more current trends in African American philosophy one trend being the same question on the state of Africana philosophy and how to advance the discipline.

J. Everet Green discusses the viability of the Afrocentric Movement in the struggle against oppression and Africana Philosophy’s quest to decolonize the minds of Pan-African people. Green asserts that an Afrocentric perspective provides an opportunity for critical reflection on the reason behind our enslavement and genocide, which is key to “creating a clear vision” for our future (1983). He continues, critiquing philosophers such as Karl Marx and Jean Paul Sartre as not having considered the

subordinate conditions of African American in their works (Green, 1983), further solidifying the fact that the Pan-African community cannot rely on Eurocentric philosophy to legitimize or liberate African people. Instead he posits we must turn to late African American philosophers, the original Afrocentrists, such as W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Alain Locke, Ida Wells-Barnett, Mary Church Terrell and Claude McKay, to name a few (Green, 1983). Ultimately these early African American philosophers act as a guide in the struggle for Pan-African liberation which can only be achieved through the “decolonization of our Black minds through...critical philosophy (Green, 1983).”

African American philosopher Lucius Outlaw rejects the idea of the “melting pot” of America and assimilation under the guise of “integration,” rather he calls for a first step in nationalist fashion for African people to “understand our own life-world” (Outlaw, 1983). He puts forth his first challenge to the next generation of African philosophers to attack the academy with unwavering, critical, dialectical prose, armed with a discourse grounded in the “historical struggles of African people,” to serve in the “emancipatory efforts” (1983).

As asserted by other African philosophers (Okere, 1983; Serequeberhan, 1994), Outlaw agrees that hermeneutics will play a crucial role in African people achieving a “progressively liberating existence,” for the goal in hermeneutics is “self-transparency” (1983), an increased sense and understanding of self, authentically and entirely. Only when African people have a complete understanding of themselves, in the historical and contemporary context, can they begin to unite in the common struggle for “progressive human development” with other oppressed people (Outlaw, 1983). Ultimately, “we can

be for ourselves only, then, if we are for others; these others can only be for themselves only if they are for us,” (Outlaw, 1983) but first things must come first.

Today’s African American youth have created their own mediums by which to understand their authentic selves. Hip-Hop specifically offers the space to explore the philosophical narrative of African American youth who have long been overlooked by society. Much like Africana Philosophy, Hip-Hop has often been disregarded within the academy as well as its own sphere of influence. As the fight for the legitimacy of Hip-Hop persists, African American youth continue to prove its utility in being an ideal outlet and space for processing life as an adolescent in a “post-racial” society that vehemently collides with who they are becoming.

A major connection between Africana philosophy and Hip-Hop is the oral tradition. Consider the freestyle where participants are expected to orally recite their lyrics without any reference to written text. Several rap artists have been highly regarded for their ability to produce “dope” lyrics without ever writing them down. This practice is specific to Hip-Hop music which makes a strong case for a connection to African oral philosophy. I imagine that oral philosophers would be held in high esteem for retaining all their philosophies without pen and paper. This is an example of how students would be able to connect to oral tradition of philosophy. This unlikely parallel that exists with Hip-Hop and Africana philosophy creates an opportunity to explore the commonalities in an educational context.

Critical Hip-Hop Pedagogy Literature Review

Over the past decade there has been an increasing interest in the role of hip-hop culture in education. Educators have completed numerous studies on the benefits and issues, stemming from the widespread impact of Hip-Hop music on youth culture. This following section will review the literature on the use of Critical Hip-Hop pedagogy in the classroom.

These pedagogical practices are more of a framework and guide to how to develop a classroom where students are fully engaged and invested in their own learning. There is no special lesson plan or materials used that will produce the desired results. Critical pedagogy is concerned with moving away from traditional forms of education that are often too focused on teaching to the test to adapt to learners from various backgrounds.

David Stovall presents a study of high school students involved in a social studies curriculum that uses Hip-Hop as a central theme in developing critical consciousness. Framed using a culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), lyrical content from the songs was used to discuss historical social inequalities; the students were active participants in the process, drawing on everyday experiences and the facilitator allowed for a certain amount of vulnerability in learning from the students (Stovall, 2006). Throughout the lesson the facilitator made connections between the course content and the song lyrics allowing for a fluid critical dialogue to take place.

Essential parts to take away from the study were challenging students to consider how they could enact change in their everyday lives, centering the experience on engaging in dialogue versus debate, and allowing students to select song material for

lesson plans. Stovall suggests that further investigation into student performance in a longitudinal study (2006).

Another study offered on the value of Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool looks at the impact of engaging urban youth of color and within the university classroom with preservice educators (Rodriguez, 2009). The author addresses the significance of dialogue between these two groups by discussing common issues and offers practical solution for more effective engagement.

Within the classroom setting, Rodriguez leverages his Hip-Hop capital to establish a relationship with a student, connecting to the student's interest immediately removing any barriers their individual roles within the school may have put in place. This initial interaction was a way to validate the student in the context of a dominant space that places him in the margins, which is a critical element when implementing CHHP (Rodriguez, 2009).

In the university the author challenges the preservice educators' knowledge of Hip-Hop and he finds that many of them are disconnected from Hip-Hop culture. While they may possess the dominant cultural capital, they lacked the ability to connect with those students who feel affirmed in Hip-Hop culture, therefore it is unlikely that they would be able to establish the same relationship he was able to with the student (Rodriguez, 2009). It is true that not all urban students of color relate to Hip-Hop, however for many it is a medium to dialogue with the world (Rodriguez, 2009).

The final experience brought together secondary students and preservice educators where the students conducted research on critical issues present within the school system. The educators were not entirely receptive to the findings; some were

critical of the students' methods and presentation style, and seemed to miss the bottom line because of it. Rodriguez concluded that universities should address Hip-Hop within their teacher prep courses, and dialogues between educators and students of Hip-Hop culture are critical (2009).

Kim & Pulido explore the ways in which Hip-Hop can be implemented with culturally relevant pedagogy effectively as well as the mistakes many educators have made, such as simply adding it to the curriculum. They conducted two studies where Hip-Hop was used as a pedagogical tool and provided results, conclusions and offered future implications.

The first study is set in a high school classroom where an experienced educator incorporates select Hip-Hop songs in the curriculum. The educator connects with the students and is an active member in the community in which they all live. When the researcher asks students about the educator using Hip-Hop in class the students dismiss these attempts and say she doesn't *do* Hip-Hop. While it is clear that the educator connects with the students, it is not through the use of Hip-Hop. Students state that they don't connect to the Hip-Hop she uses in class (she uses more conscious artists such as Lupe Fiasco) and that they prefer mainstream Hip-Hop.

The second study takes place within two community-based, youth organizations- AYDE/Adelante. Students here don't connect with the mainstream music and prefer the more conscious Hip-Hop music. Students are active participants in the Hip-Hop culture; hip-hop is something they do at AYDE/Adelante and provides a means of expression.

Kim & Pulido conclude that there are a myriad of factors that account for successfully using Hip-Hop as a component of CRP, but that adding Hip-Hop to a

curriculum is not enough (2015). They point out that the most significant factors in the different results in each study suggest that effective implementation requires collaboration in choosing material and exercises to create a more “participatory engagement” with Hip-Hop (2015).

Educators privilege dominant culture over other cultures which are seen as degraded forms of existence. Classroom teachers, wearing the mask of the dominant cultural hegemony, indoctrinate students to see their own knowledge as inferior or useless, while pedestalizing knowledge of the dominant society (Williams, 2009). Hip-Hop has long been seen as a culture that is problematic and subversive in the eyes of society and classroom educators are no different in this estimation, even though Hip-Hop serves as a community where many urban students of color feel welcomed (Williams, 2009). Williams discusses the conflict between mainstream academic culture (rugged individualism) and Hip-Hop (community empowerment). However as Hip-Hop music has become popularized some of the narratives have shifted to align with the message of individualism found in dominant culture. The students recognized that the dominant narrative in the media of Hip-Hop was “static, compartmentalized, and predictable” growing tired of this single-story, they developed their own counter-narratives about Hip-Hop (2009).

In the *Critical Cultural Cypher*, Williams notes the impact on changing certain terminology within the classroom to redefine the space without “the baggage of mainstream academic culture” (2009). The author allowed the lesson plans to develop organically beginning with two core questions, “What is hip-hop?” and “What are some problems with hip-hop?” from which rose a series of themes to be explored in future

lessons. Williams provides numerous examples in which students make profound statements about their new understanding of how they are impacted by the media and how they have the power to push back on certain messages they receive from Hip-Hop and the dominant culture, transforming the world they live in.

Baszile describes the education system as not only exclusive in the construction of knowledge (epistemology), but also narrow in its inclusion of who's way of being (ontology) is validated in the classroom (2009). This dominant "onto-epistemology," a term used by the author, creates a space where students of color must "make meaning of self" only within and through the Eurocentric representations (Baszile, 2009).

She continues underscoring the fact that there are multiple narratives within Hip-Hop some of which do reinforce the dominant narrative. This poses the question of how to incorporate Hip-Hop into the curriculum if it possesses conflicting narratives. While Hip-Hop acts as a "counter-curriculum" to traditional education, it does not always equate to a conscious or progressive narrative, it can also act as an oppressive agent (Baszile, 2009).

Baszile concludes that while Hip-Hop can be a powerful pedagogical tool it is not necessarily realistic component of education reform (2009). She asserts that the "badly needed revolution in education" will not occur within the confines of the classroom, only through grassroots efforts will the necessary changes in education occur (Baszile, 2009).

Michael Newman discusses how in the classroom some students reject the "progressive rap" narratives with a more political message in favor of mainstream Hip-Hop (2007). This text is important because it shows the diversity in students' interest in relation to Hip-Hop music. Not all urban African American students will relate to hip-hop

and those that do will vary in the types of Hip-Hop they enjoy. He also notes that one of the students of Caribbean heritage may not have felt connected to the Black identity in the way that other African American students feel connected (2007). This serves as a reminder that blackness is not a monolith and those students with African or Caribbean roots have very different lived experiences from those whose ancestors can be traced to America since the time of slavery. Newman's study suggested that urban students of color are more attracted to the capitalistic values of mainstream Hip-Hop music than they are to the socially conscious Hip-Hop that emphasizes unity in the struggle.

The growing popularity of Hip-Hop has prompted universities to capitalize on its clout with young students by developing courses as a way to cash in on its commercialization. As this phenomenon progresses, the debate has ensued over whether or not Hip-Hop can be, or should be appropriated by the academic sector. Some argue that allowing Hip-Hop to enter academia will lead scholars to "impose elitist and academic canon" that undermines Hip-Hop agency and legitimacy as a voice of the urban youth (Forman & Neal, 2011 as cited by Miyakawa & Mook, 2014).

Miyakawa & Mook discuss ways to construct an "Ethical Hip-Hop Curriculum" by avoiding the "Culture Vulture" paradigm which simply appropriates Hip-Hop for its "aesthetic" value without engaging it in an authentic manner (2014). According to the authors, Hip-Hop when engaged in the classroom setting must be presented as a "culturally grounded artistic creation" to avoid its de-legitimization (2014). Suggestions to constructing an authentic Hip-Hop curriculum include the collaboration with actual Hip-Hop artists, involve the local community, require students leave their desks "to engage in the creative space," utilize student talent and interests to produce Hip-Hop

expression as a course assignment, and having cypher sessions in the classroom (Miyakawa & Mook, 2014).

In another study in implementing a Hip-Hop curriculum with college students, Akom uses a term Critical Hip-Hop Pedagogy or CHHP (2009). Akom combines the work from critical race theorists Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, the principles of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) from Cammarota & Fine, and Paulo Freire's critical praxis, to form CHHP as a means to engage students in Hip-Hop as a "field of academic inquiry" (2009).

There are eleven fundamental elements of CHHP (see table 1), the collaborative combination of which promote the equitable value of all participants and upholds the "principles of agency, equity and self-determination" (Akom, 2009). Some of the methods used by Akom include providing opportunities for continuous participant feedback, incorporation of local community, creating an environment that removes certain classroom norms for authenticity purposes, inviting Hip-Hop artists to the classroom and developing a "cyber-civilization" for Hip-Hop dialogues (Akom, 2009). He also connected the learning to social realities by assigning a case study in which each group chose a social issue and used Hip-Hop to educate the general public on the proposed issue.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Theoretical Framework

This research seeks to address one of the most pressing issues in the African American community, related to its subjugation- education. The Afrocentric paradigm is a model for liberation from subjugation in its many forms, so its employment in reviewing the literature is critical for achievement of the research goals. At the foundation of the Afrocentric framework is a purposeful focus cloaked in the historical intimacy of contemporary events, resulting in liberatory praxis based on a comprehensive critical analysis of the African diaspora.

In considering a pedagogical model for educating African American students it is paramount that we determine how such a model fulfills the ultimate “Afrocentric objective” which, as stated by Modupe, is “African development” (2003). This research is concerned particularly with the development of African American students and as the Afrocentric framework closely aligns with the purpose of this thesis, it will be used as a guide for the overall analysis, valuation and categorization of the literature, as well as informing the results, discussion, conclusion and the development of a sample lesson plan.

The Afrocentric Paradigm, developed by Molefi K. Asante, is driven by three elements: grounding, orientation and perspective (Modupe, 2003). The grounding focuses on knowing and understanding African history and cultural traditions; orientation means that one is concerned with the lived experience of African people; perspective is rooted in

determining the best methods for increasing the agency of African people who seek to liberate themselves from imperial domination (McDougal, 2014).

Grounding is a critical piece because without knowledge and understanding of the lived experiences of the African diaspora, African people will continue to be marginalized and dismissed, as is the practice of most standardized curriculums in contemporary education, whose content is generally Eurocentric.

Orientation refers to the psycho-intellectual position in relation to axiology, that is what is your intellectual perspective on what is morally good and aesthetically valuable. Do you value the cultural aesthetics of African people and does your moral compass bend towards what is right for African people? Many pedagogical models act from a deficit perspective, unable to recognize the value in the cultural aesthetics African American students possess or consider if what is good is actually what is best for African American students.

Perspective is concerned with the interplay between grounding and orientation as it occurs, shaping reality and determining the ontology of a construction or individual. The issue with standard pedagogy is that it ignores alternative axiologies and epistemologies, therefore also dismissing specific ontologies and cosmologies, in the name of universalism which is actually just a platform for Eurocentric perspectives.

Afrocentricity is grounded in the assertion that individuals of African descent should engage the world as African subjects, with a knowledge and appreciation of their native culture and a determination to act in the best interest of African people. This paradigm is especially critical in regards to educating African American youth who shoulder the weight of performing to the Eurocentric standards placed on them. A critical

analysis of the texts will further elucidate the relevance and application of the Afrocentric paradigm. To further signify the relevance of the Afrocentric Paradigm

Content Analysis

As stated in the introduction, this thesis looked at a wide range of literary sources for review. The scope of the research was limited to accessible literature from the author's personal library as well as from the Temple University Library Database. Texts written in a language other than English were excluded for limited fluency purposes. The search for texts ended at the point of saturation, where the same assertions were made, and the same authors were discovered writing on the same subject. Specific criteria used for each topic is listed below.

For the Africana Philosophy portion, the following search terms were used: "African philosophy" "African American philosophy" and texts were limited to those who are in the discipline. While academics outside the discipline of Africana philosophy may have made contributions or have opinions on the discipline, the scope of this research is concerned with writings that come from within. Not all are trained in formal philosophy; there is a range of experiences in the profession in order to gain a wide-range of perspectives. Africana philosophy has an extensive number of texts therefore the research was specific in reviewing items that discussed the current state of Africana philosophy.

There were many texts discovered that discussed PFC in some form, ranging from its initial development in 1976 to the second generation of practitioners. Search terms used for gathering literature were "PFC" "Philosophy for Children" "P4C" "Philosophy

with children” “Philosophy with adolescents” “Philosophy with teenagers” “Philosophy in the school.” Literature from other countries was included in the review as long as it was written in English. The literature discussed specifics of various PFC/PWC programs, results from studies performed, suggested improvements, effective implementation, and cultural relevance. The research included texts referring to various grades levels in order to provide a full understanding of the objectives of the program.

In compiling texts for Hip-Hop pedagogy, the search terms “critical hip-hop pedagogy” “hip-hop pedagogy” “hip-hop curriculum” “hip-hop in school” “culturally relevant pedagogy” were used. Most of the literature on Hip-Hop pedagogy was written within the last ten years this is most likely because it is a fairly recent area of study. Many authors referred to Hip-Hop pedagogy as a component of critical pedagogy and/or culturally relevant pedagogy. Some texts discussed the implementation of Hip-Hop pedagogy in the university classroom, these texts were included as a way to gain additional data that may be applicable at the secondary level. In order focus more on Hip-Hop, only texts that discussed the use of Hip-Hop for primary subject matter were used.

The unit of analysis for the study was texts from Africana philosophy, PFC/PWC and Hip-Hop pedagogy. To perform the content analysis each text was read and highlights were made when the authors made assertions about the given topic. Once the review of the materials was completed, a list of all highlighted items (attributes) was compiled then examined for common themes (nominal variable). Attributes that connected through latent content were grouped together in order to extrapolate potential themes. Data was then coded based on four main themes present, which represent the nominal variables, under each of the topics: Issues in the Discipline, Benefits of Practice,

Best Practices and Needs Assessment. While not all attributes were represented in the content analysis, other attributes that were found to be significant will also be addressed in the results and discussion section.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will present a synthesis of the literature for Philosophy for children (see figure 2), Africana philosophy (see figure 3), and Hip-Hop pedagogy (see figure 4). The breakdown for literature assessed are as follows: in Philosophy for Children, a total of twelve texts were used, for Africana philosophy section, a total of fourteen texts were used, and for Hip-Hop pedagogy a total of eight texts were used. The number of texts for each section used varied based on the specific information that was provided in each text. The results are listed in the corresponding order of the literature review (Philosophy for Children, Africana philosophy, and Critical Hip-Hop pedagogy), also presenting each of the themes for each topic (challenges, benefits, best practice, suggestions for improvement). The results include the major themes that were discovered from the dominant attributes that were pulled from the literature. The results will be discussed in further detail in the discussion chapter.

Philosophy for Children

The results show two primary challenges in implementing PFC/PWC, the overall Westernized approach of the program, especially as it pertains to children of African descent and teachers engaging from the dominant culture as an “epistemic authority.” The benefits presented by scholars include the enhancement of critical thinking skills, empowering the student voice and providing the opportunity for students to reflect on their role in shaping their world.

In the implementation of PFC/PWC the best practices highlighted were: encouraging critical reflection through the use of applicable questions; allowing student to select some of the content used; use of the community of inquiry/Socratic circle as practice. Suggestions for improvement include a greater emphasis on seeing the student as a knowledgeable, independent thinker; increased vulnerability on the educator’s part; and development of an African-based approach that uses hermeneutics to analyze previously ignored texts.

Africana Philosophy

The main challenge presented in Africana philosophy was a lack of agreement on three questions: what is Africana philosophy, should the oral tradition be included as a part of the canon, and should African communities employ philosophical traditions of the past for contemporary use. More scholars were in agreement on the benefits of Africana philosophy for the future of African communities. The benefits include: it provides wisdom and epistemological perspectives to counteract colonial regimes, presents

contributions of African people that have otherwise been ignored, and acts as an avenue for African people to gain a better understanding of themselves as African people.

Without many African philosophers agreeing on what African philosophy is, there were only two best practices that arose. First, scholars emphasized that Africa cannot ignore Western forms of philosophy because of the residual impact on Africa, secondly, however African scholars must determine for themselves what the future of African philosophy will be rather than its fate resting in the hands of its colonizers.

The suggestions for improvement correspond to the challenges the discipline is facing, however the perspectives are somewhat conflicting, which illustrates the discord on how to move forward. Some scholars believe that hermeneutics must be the first step in determining what African philosophy is to be and where it is to go. Others scholars assert that the discipline must build on the contemporary forms of philosophy in order to create a new African philosophy. Lastly, it is suggested that African philosophy should be a combination of analytical and “pre-logical” philosophy.

Critical Hip-Hop Pedagogy

The texts on Hip-Hop pedagogy revealed four main challenges to its implementation: educators taking a more surface level approach to its use, some African American students don't connect with hip-hop in the same way, its overtly dialectical nature may be seen as subversive by the education administration, some song lyrics may be deemed inappropriate for school which prevents a more authentic engagement with the culture.

The key benefits and utility of Hip-Hop pedagogy are summarized as: enhanced critical thinking skills, connects to students in a meaningful way, empowers students to dialogue about societal issues and the role they can play in improving the world, and students are often more engaged.

The best practices theme revealed a resounding eleven attributes in the literature: allow students to choose some content; ask for student feedback on their experience; empower students to have agency over their story; involve hip-hop artists when possible; incorporate a cypher circle to provide a more authentic experience; educators must be open to seeing students as having valuable knowledge; educators need a certain level of vulnerability to let go of authority; connect Hip-Hop themes to real world experiences and subject matter; Hip-Hop pedagogy must be utilized within the framework of critical pedagogy; the music (beat) is important to maintain student engagement; and provide opportunities for students to *do* Hip-Hop in addition to discussion.

Finally, the suggestions for improving hip-hop pedagogy practices are: better pre-service preparation regarding relating to students of color in an urban environment; further research on how students relate to Hip-Hop; and a better understanding of political, economic and social dynamics of Hip-Hop.

PFC/PWC			
Issues/Challenges w/Implementation	Benefits/Utility	Best Practice	Needs/Suggestions for Improvement
Materials and practices don't align with the African worldview	Enhances critical thinking skills	Community of Inquiry (equitable participation)	Greater emphasis on seeing the child as an independent thinker with knowledge to contribute
Teachers engaging from the dominant culture as an "epistemic authority."	Empowers students to consider what their role is in shaping the world they live in (civic engagement/democratic process)	Encourage critical reflection	A culturally relevant approach
	Empowers the voice of the student	Create an equitable space for participation	A certain level of vulnerability is required by the educator
		Allow students to choose some content	Educators still struggle with constraints of their formal education

Figure 2- The chart above represents the findings on each of the themes for Philosophy for Children. Comparing the shaded areas you are able to see the commonalities between PFC/PWC and CHHP.

Africana Philosophy			
Issues/Challenges w/Implementation	Benefits/Utility	Best Practice	Needs/Suggestions for Improvement
Defining Africana Philosophy	An avenue to connect people to their historical legacy	Pan-African scholars must determine for themselves what will be the future of Africana philosophy	Utilize hermeneutics in order to reveal underlying themes in African philosophy
Lack of consensus on utility for more traditional forms	Presents the contributions of Africana people that have been otherwise ignored and silenced; challenges Eurocentric epistemological notions		A combination of analytical and "pre-logical" philosophy
Oral philosophy is not respected	Can provide potential wisdom for contemporary use against post-colonial doctrines/ideology		Build on contemporary studies of philosophy to create a new Africana philosophy
	Role modeling for youth		

Figure 3- The chart above represents the findings on each of the themes for Africana philosophy.

Critical Hip-Hop Pedagogy				
Issues/Challenges w/Implementation	Benefits/Utility	Best Practice		Needs/Suggestions for Improvement
Some song lyrics may be deemed inappropriate for school which prevents a more authentic engagement	Empowers the student voice in dialoguing about societal issues	A certain level a vulnerability is required by the educator	Cypher circle allows students to engage with the material in a way that is authentic for them	Better preservice teacher preparation, in terms of relating to students of color in an urban setting
Effective implementation; educators taking a more surface level approach to its use	Students are often more engaged	Educators must be open to seeing students as logical beings with knowledge to contribute to the world	The music (beat) is important to keep students interested	A better understanding of political, economic and social dynamics of Hip-Hop
It's very implementation may be seen as subversive to the education administration	Empowers students to consider what their role is in changing the world	Invite Hip-Hop artists to the classroom if/when possible	Providing opportunities for students to practice Hip-Hop in the classroom	Further research on how students relate to Hip- Hop in general
All students don't relate to hip hop in the same way	Connects to students in a way that is meaningful to them	Empower students to have authority over their story	Hip-Hop pedagogy must be utilized within the framework of critical pedagogy	
	Enhances critical thinking skills	Ask for students' feedback on their experience	Ask critical questions to connect Hip-Hop to real world experiences and subject matter	
Allow students to choose some content				

Figure 4- The chart above represents the findings on each of the themes for CHHP. Comparing the shaded areas you are able to see the commonalities between PFC/PWC and CHHP.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction, I am an African Studies scholar concerned with the liberation of Africana people throughout the Diaspora. The Diaspora in many ways has been enslaved psychologically/emotionally, physically and economically. As Steve Biko asserts, “the most potent weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed” along with John Dewey who states “the basic freedom is that of freedom of *mind*.” Successful reversal of the prolonged mental enslavement of the African American community through countless generations, requires a sustained commitment to the decolonization of the mind. Total liberation rests on the initial freedom of the mind hence the focus on the education of African American youth. The following is an interpretation of key results presented in the previous chapter, along with concluding assertions by the author. The results from the content analysis present several implications for PFC/PWC, Africana philosophy and Critical Hip-Hop pedagogy. These implications are worthy of attention in regard to effective education of African American students.

Philosophy for Children

Philosophy for Children was birthed from the notion that, as Gareth Matthews puts it, there is a philosophy of childhood (1994); children, like adults are capable, thinking beings that consider meaningful questions about life. The results suggest that the primary challenge for effective implementation a PFC program is the educator’s inability or intentional refusal to think beyond the traditional culture of teaching, where the

student's only role is that of a learner receiving information. This one-directional approach to education has created a stratification of sorts where most students are prepared to be low-level employees; they are programmed to regurgitate pre-populated answers that require little critical thinking on their part. The reality of this challenge is confirmed in America's education system being overly focused on high-stakes testing (Apple, 2004), the end goal being to pass the test which does not adequately assess alternative epistemologies or autonomous, critical thinking.

Most educators are unwittingly a product of the system that molded them which is why they are unable or unwilling to think beyond the traditional culture of teaching. Those educators that are unable have been conditioned by personal biases and/or the influence of the dominant narrative. In other words, the system has taught them that one is either an educator, a knower of things, or a student, a learner of things; this dichotomous relationship leaves no space for the two to exist simultaneously.

Perhaps more troubling are the educators that are unwilling to *act* beyond the traditional culture of teaching. These educators may believe that there is a better way to teach but refuse to consider practices that may be outside of the norm; they are so committed to doing things the way they've always done them simply for the sake of tradition. Regardless of which of these two categories an educator falls into the result is a poor implementation of Philosophy for Children, making it nearly impossible for critical engagement to thrive in the classroom.

Students of color, particularly African American students, are more likely to see the classroom as a place that "demands conformity" (Murrell, 2002), a conformity which tracks them to be the low-level employees within the hegemonic culture. This

normalization of the dominant culture has serious, far-reaching implications for all students, but especially for African American students. The educator's "pedagogical beliefs in the traditional culture of teaching (Topping & Trickey, 2007)" is a symptom of the larger issue of white supremacy's refusal to provide an environment that cultivates the critical consciousness of "the other." Murriss asserts that the other is the child, but also notes that the "Black child" has an additional burden of otherness when implementing PFC/PWC (2013).

This presents another challenge for PFC/PWC, in its applicability to African and African American students. While there have been several studies that have discussed the effectiveness of PFC/PWC in the classroom, the concern for implementing such a program with African or African American learners cannot be overstated. This concern is two-fold in that it is concerned with the lack of culturally specific materials and practices, as well as educators' perception of African or African American students.

It is common for experts to create programs that are considered to be universal, while resting on the foundation of the dominant culture; PFC/PWC is no different. While it touts creating a community of inquiry for all students, the very questions and language used to engage students can be subjective. For example, Martens states the need for "Homeric themes" this reference to Homer is subjective in nature, specifically supporting the ideology of a Eurocentric scholar; it goes to Biesta's point in that they are looking for a particular kind of answer (2011). I argue that such an answer acknowledges Eurocentric notions as the default, leaving African-centered epistemologies in the margins at best.

Therefore, if it is common practice (and potentially inevitable given the subjective nature of philosophy due to its basic connection to culture) to create a program that is

Eurocentric in nature, it should not be a stretch to create an Afrocentric PFC program that reveres African philosophy and aligns with African cultural sensibilities. Some may argue that creating a framework using an Afrocentric perspective negates the goal of authentic philosophy in that it provides a platform on which to stand when assessing and critiquing, however I assert that part of philosophy is to develop subjective notions about experience. To have a philosophy of one's own is to assert one's understanding of life; it is a personal and subjective endeavor that becomes also interpersonal when the assertion is shared with another.

While America boasts of "inclusive" and "integrated" approach for society's epistemological grounding, it actually only masks the reality of assimilationist practices (Outlaw, 1984). Furthermore, research shows that Eurocentric frameworks have been increasingly damaging to African American youth self-concepts and when employing a strong African-centered framework students begin to understand themselves as autonomous beings with the ability to create a world where they can be accepted as such (Murrell, 2002).

To assume a culturally relevant approach to Philosophy for Children significantly buttresses its applicability to a diverse group of students. There have been countless educators in support of having a culturally relevant approach to education, creating a Philosophy for Children curriculum that is culturally relevant to African American students is no different. This means using examples and situations from the lived-experience of the student as well as exposing African American students to knowledge created by individuals of the African aesthetic i.e. people that look like them. In doing so

we present the opportunity to bring forth Africana philosophies that may otherwise be disregarded.

To gain a better understanding of students' lived experiences, educators should allow students to select some of the content, leaving space for a dialogue surrounding the reason a student selected a particular interest. Consider also African American students, who may have a difficult time connecting with Eurocentric-focused curriculums, often taught by White teachers, that may feel empowered to contribute when the content is both African-centered and relevant to their own lived-experiences. This cultural disconnect between educator and student is not common only to the implementation of PFC, it is a problem within the American education system in general which must be addressed within teacher preparation programs (Ladson-Billings, 1992; 1995; 2006; Rodriguez, 2009).

Ladson-Billings suggests pre-service educators spend time with students of outside of the classroom so that they may become “observers of culture,” seeing students in their entirety rather than only in the classroom (2006). This experience may provide the opportunity to humanize students, especially African American students who are often viewed as uncivilized. This may require a certain level of vulnerability by the educator, especially White educators, because it forces one to be self-reflexive about implicit biases which can sometimes produce a strong defensiveness of personhood to ensure that one’s self is not perceived as racist. Some educators may also require vulnerability in accepting that a student knows something they do not, which can be especially jarring if the student is seen as culturally deficient or inferior, and this is often the perception of African American students.

As stated earlier several studies have reported the success of PFC/PWC programs (Topping & Trickey, 2004). Three main benefits have been, enhanced critical thinking skills, giving power to the student voice, and student empowerment in considering their role in civic engagement. These benefits stem from educators' best practice in encouraging critical reflection and allowing students to select some of the content focused on, within the community of inquiry.

Going back to the original purpose for the research, one element being to offer an "alternative to the deficit perspective," one of the benefits of PFC/PWC is that it offers the student voice as an authority rather than one without knowledge or contribution. A principle practice in PFC/PWC is the act of reciprocity; PFC/PWC provides an opportunity for students to discuss their knowledge and perspective and have the educator receive them and vice versa, giving power to the students' voice. However, it is necessary to take it a step further by incorporating the Afrocentric framework, specifically employing PWC/PFC using an axiology that aligns with African sensibilities. This one benefit alone has great liberatory potential considering that most students of color in urban settings are often dismissed as having cultural defects (Ladson-Billings, 2006)

Africana Philosophy

America has a longstanding tradition of dismissing "the other," i.e. the African, as substandard, yet strong cultural foundations exist still today on the continent and throughout the diaspora. Long before colonization, individual African communities determined for themselves what the world was, and defined what it meant to live as a human being, and the role of its citizens. Colonization disrupted these philosophies and

epistemologies and replaced them with “civilization.” While imperialism almost completely decimated Africana philosophies and epistemologies, breadcrumbs remain from pre-colonial Africa that offer the opportunity for reclamation of an original African cosmology and cosmogony.

The purpose of the incorporating Africana philosophy into a PFC/PWC program is not to return and live in pre-colonial Africa, rather it is about returning to pre-colonial Africa to retrieve philosophies that were left behind, for potential use against the current post-colonial doctrines/ideologies that have perpetuated the deterioration of the African American community. The very practice of capturing the wreckage of the past as a guide for present and future, is an African concept of the Akan people known as Sankofa, meaning “to go back and fetch it.”

Africana philosophy can provide students the opportunity to connect to their historical legacy and access native phenomenologies and epistemologies for the purpose of interrogating their present conditions within American society and gain a stronger understanding of their place in world. It strengthens the curriculum by presenting the contributions of Africana people, that have been otherwise ignored and silenced, while challenging Eurocentric epistemological notions.

As addressed in chapter three, the Afrocentric paradigm was the lens utilized in determining the applicability of the various texts and conclusions drawn by the authors. Selecting writings specifically about Africana philosophy asserts the importance of understanding oneself through the eyes of Africa. This offers the possibility to affirm the students’ ontology whereas Eurocentric education can strongly influence students to conform to the dominant culture where they are dehumanized and reduced to mere

physical objects. One of the most apparent benefits of utilizing African philosophy in the classroom is the opportunity it provides the students to connect to their historical legacy in order to gain a stronger sense of self, which allows them to be fully represented in all their humanity. It is important that African American students see themselves in various roles especially those which validate their ability to be critically conscious.

Philosophy for centuries has been limited to a few individuals deemed worthy of the knowledge and responsibility that comes with it. However, we must revisit this practice and consider a contemporary application of philosophy in education. Utilizing a fusion of Africana philosophy and contemporary forms of popular culture (i.e. hip-hop, social media, film) to engage students is the next step in the revolutionary and evolutionary process. Wiredu wisely puts forth that education must be reformed to teach people to think critically (1984). We need to ensure that our students, from a young age, are able to thinking critically and autonomously about culture, life and society.

As the results suggest, Africa cannot ignore current forms of Western practices in philosophy because of their place in a contemporary technological and industrial society. Colonization and continuous cultural exchange has made it nearly impossible for Africa to completely extricate itself from Western influence. However, it can persist toward an Afrocentric experience in that the diaspora is presented as the primary source for knowledge and other sources are viewed as supplementary. We would be doing African American students a disservice if we did not expose them to some of the frameworks that operate within the society they inhabit. If nothing else, it can be framed for them to understand what they are up against. Still it is important that we make the distinction that learning Western philosophies does not equate to depending on these philosophies as the

standard. Pan-African scholars must determine for themselves what will be the future of Africana philosophy; it cannot be determined by using Western standards.

The lack of a unified definition of what Africana philosophy is, presents the challenge of creating a curriculum based on the undefined or ambiguous. However, rather than tagging this fluidity as problematic, it may be beneficial to offer students the opportunity to explore for themselves what Africana philosophy means to them. Finally, one of the main points of a PFC/PWC program is seeing young people as having valuable knowledge to contribute, so I would argue that a student also has something to contribute in helping to shape the future of Africana philosophy.

While there is no central definition of Africana philosophy it is important to note that Africana philosophy at its core is concerned with seeing the connection in all things; it is very much a holistic endeavor and therefore should consider all potential forms, even oral and traditional which some argue is not philosophy at all. The oral tradition of Africana philosophy is a good way to connect to Hip-Hop because many Hip-Hop artists use lyrics that convey certain philosophies about life. I argue that some Hip-Hop artists produce music that is philosophical in nature because they offer insight on their reality and existence in the world.

Many of the texts when referring to “traditional” Africana philosophy specifically mentioned the concepts of Ma'at and Ubuntu. Ma'at is generally represented by seven tenets (truth, justice, balance, order, harmony, righteousness and reciprocity) which equate to a philosophy of how humanity should exist. Ubuntu is translated to mean “I am, because we are,” referring to the connectedness of all people; I am human because of

how I relate to you as a human. I argue that this may be a good starting point to introduce youth to the idea of African people practicing philosophy.

Africana philosophy offers an acceptable alternative to “Eurocentric education,” as it brings forth the sensibilities and accomplishments of the diaspora and allows for a more holistic focus of what it means to be human and to exist in the world from an Afrocentric perspective. It is imperative that we begin to think more broadly about how this impacts our liberation as Africana people. Outlaw sums it up rather well stating “African and African-descended philosophers in America are perhaps long overdue for coming together for a sustained, systematic, critical reconstruction of our intellectual histories” (1998). We have been fragmented long enough, it is now time for a Pan-African, diasporic collaboration in the fight against epistemological imperialism.

The results strongly suggest that Africana Philosophy is at a critical juncture in regards to its identity in the field of philosophy and within Pan-African discourse. While it is clear that many scholars believe Africana philosophy has the capacity and responsibility to guide our next generation into a renaissance of consciousness, it may be necessary to present adolescents with the current state of Africana philosophy and deconstruct the why behind the lack of a unified definition within the discipline.

Critical Hip-Hop Pedagogy

The language of Hip-Hop is the narrative of youth largely discarded and misunderstood by society at large. This same subculture exists today as society has continued to undervalue Black and Brown youth in urban neighborhoods especially, so Hip-Hop remains a viable entry-point into the world of African American students.

However, use of Hip-Hop as critical pedagogy is not without its challenges in the classroom, as research suggests.

Several of the studies suggested that educators did not fully engage Hip-Hop in the classroom, often limiting which songs were used for content. This poses an issue for authentic discourse with students who may be interested in songs that educators deem inappropriate for the classroom or songs that are not “conscious.” If educators intend to truly create a space where students are valued and affirmed as having respected knowledge they must relinquish some authority over what content is worthy of critical engagement. As long as teachers continue to navigate Hip-Hop on the surface students will see through the thinly veiled attempts at real connection and collaboration.

The challenge with some educators lies in the dialectical nature Hip-Hop possesses in relation to the education system being a part of the larger hegemonic structure. Hip-Hop in some sense can be considered subversive to the practice of organized education because it often dismisses the education system for its inconsistency and its inability to provide an escape from the perils of poor urban neighborhoods. How difficult might it be for an educator to engage lyrics that critique them as a part of the problem? Hip-Hop’s overall critique of the system may conflict with some educators’ personal views on society or cause them to feel they are doing something wrong as an employee of the state by allowing such discourse to occur. These barriers, some of which are similar to those of PFC/PWC, can prove to be a challenge in successful implementation of a truly *Critical* Hip-Hop Pedagogy.

Returning to the original thesis, education, more specifically universalized pedagogy where students are seen as depositories for information, has been largely

unsuccessful in becoming the great equalizer for extreme racial and income disparities. African American, urban neighborhoods struggling to overcome extreme poverty continue to reproduce nihilistic youth who lack a sense of connection to the school that is supposed to provide them with a bounty of knowledge to help them transcend their harrowing conditions. The school plays a role in reinforcing this nihilism in that it undervalues the voice of the African American student by limiting education to high-stakes testing. As Freire asserts, “apart from inquiry, apart from praxis, individuals cannot be truly human (1995).” Educators have a responsibility to allow the humanity of students to be fully expressed by creating a space for critical inquiry to inform future practice. One of the benefits of CHHP is that opens the door to critical inquiry in a language that connects with African American youth.

The goal of such a program is to encourage students to break through the boundaries of normative education into a space of organic critical inquiry in hopes of attaining an authentic identity fueled by purposeful responsibility and autonomous direction. To borrow from Henry Giroux, we are in need of the next generation of “social agents capable of addressing the political, economic, and social injustices that diminish the reality and promise of a substantive democracy at home and abroad.”

A Collaborative Effort: PFC/PWC, CHHP and Africana Philosophy

Cornel West asserts that “the major enemy” of the African American community today is not oppression rather it is the “nihilistic threat” (1993). I would argue that this threat is the result of the persistent objectification by white supremacy, of which the education system is a part of. West continues, offering that an “ahistorical” (and

uncritical) perspective contributes to this nihilistic threat, including a tenuous connection to one's native culture; a disconnect from one's history is a disconnect from one's identity, breeding confusion as to what purpose one serves in this world.

Nihilism, this "absence of meaning," presents in the classroom as low self-efficacy, low self-esteem and distorted self-concept, a result of universalized pedagogical practices saturated with Eurocentric epistemology, ontology and axiology. There is an apparent connection between academic achievement and identity development especially in the African American community, as purported by Na'ilah Nasir, identity and learning are "individual processes" within the education system occurring simultaneously "that involve agency and personal sense-making... [and are] deeply influenced by social context norms and interactions with others in learning setting" (2012). This tethered connection between academic achievement and identity development offer valid implications on the impact of traditional education on the African American student. While the author recognizes there are other contributing factors to the rise of nihilism in African Americans, the scope of this thesis focuses on thwarting the threats within education.

PFC/PWC, CHHP and Africana Philosophy have been presented as potential alternatives to traditional Eurocentric education. The benefits and best practices highlighted in the results present items which directly counteract the resulting negative impacts (i.e. low self-efficacy, distorted self-concept, low self-esteem) of Eurocentric frameworks, and reveal a promising alternative for African American adolescents. Scholars suggest that self-efficacy and self-concept play a significant role in a student's academic achievement (Bandura, 1997; Pajares & Schunk, 2009), this is not surprising

considering that self-efficacy and self-concept are integral aspects of identity development.

A distorted self-concept arises as the result of constant exposure to positive portrayals of whiteness, alongside limited positive representations of African Americans, and a lack of importance given to African American students' lived experience- that is their ontology, epistemology and axiology. Using CHHP and Africana philosophy framed by PFC/PWC addresses these issues, by allowing for student input and expressing value for students' knowledge and experience which opens the door to benefits such as increased student empowerment and encourages students to be better engaged with the content.

Low self-esteem can be addressed by providing adequate representation of African American accomplishments and introducing students to Africana epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies. These practices invite students to see themselves as having the ability to positively contribute to the canon of humanity, thus encouraging them to also strive to leave their mark of accomplishment.

The concern of low self-efficacy is multi-layered in that it is due in part to representation and also students learning to think critically. If a student is not exposed to examples or models of others like him or her in a role of importance they are not likely to believe that they can aspire to such a role. However, representation is not enough, students must also be challenged consistently in order to believe they can rise to the challenge. Initially they may be hesitant but over time they can gain confidence in their ability to perform. Students with low self-efficacy are more likely to avoid a task if they

believe they will not be successful (Bandura, 1997), however students who are consistently challenged may eventually gain higher self-efficacy.

Low self-efficacy, low self-esteem and distorted self-concept are not easy obstacles to overcome. Furthermore, the author acknowledges that no learning program can erase the more palpable issues some African American youth face, such as extreme poverty and violence, it is possible to provide students with some sense of reprieve, a way to connect to an ontology that embraces their sensibilities, helping them to see themselves as whole autonomous and capable individuals.

While individually PFC/PWC, CHHP and Africana Philosophy have much to offer African American students, a blending of the three elements offer greater opportunity for each aspect to fill in the gaps where the others lack; collectively, they form a symbiotic relationship which exponentially increases exposure to a community of critical consciousness.

Within the text *Yurugu*, Ani examines the meaning of humanness in the European context and the African context. Here it is explained that the late Greek philosopher, Plato, asserted that there is an “autonomous, thinking self” which is separate from a cosmic self (1994). This introduction of the “thinking self” is an example of how Eurocentric ideology begins to deconstruct and disconnect from wholeness, and view the world from an overtly individualistic perspective. It is this disconnect and compartmentalization that has persisted over centuries, and permeated the African American community leading to a fragmented self and a lack of unity amongst its people.

A crucial point of departure in Eurocentric philosophy, influenced by a cohort of fifth century Greek philosophers, is Socrates’ discovery of the “psyche,” and Plato’s

separation of the “Knower from the known,” (Havelock, 1967). This fascination with examining internal components of the self in place of reverence for the existing wholeness, is tantamount to dissecting a living human body in order to understand how it lives; the result being complete destruction of the very thing you desired to understand. One could argue that this rejection of holistic beingness has manifested a severe side effect in today’s American culture in the form of individualism.

In the European context of understanding the world, everything is dissected and examined as individual components. Henry Giroux speaks about a noticeable shift in American culture beginning in the 1920s where industrialization “radically transformed daily life” and a more “fragmented work process” for the sake of technological advancements (2011). This more scientific approach to engaging the world permeated all aspects of life including the realm of socialization where a more “rugged individualism” began to take shape. This Western ideology understands the world through an extremely individualistic lens and promotes this “rugged individualism” as the natural way of existence. Progress was now less concerned with “ameliorating the human condition” and focused primarily on financial prosperity through technological advancement (Giroux, 2011).

The results showed several overlapping features of the PFC/PWC and CHHP programs (see figure 1) which further suggest the potential for a “cosmic interrelationship.” Ani explains how the African philosophy of humanness is one of a “cosmic interrelationship” where the cosmic being must be whole and cannot exist as “disparate, unconnected and, antagonistic” (1994). This African philosophy of being and existence is one that is ubiquitous to all aspects of life, including how various systems

and aspects of life impact one another. At its foundation, Africana philosophy is concerned with discovering the connection and embracing wholeness, this is in direct opposition to Eurocentric philosophy. While it is true that Africana philosophers have not fully defined the discipline, this “cosmic interrelationship” offers a solid foundation for Africana philosophy that transcends all definitions.

It is with the perspective of this “cosmic interrelationship” that the author has come to see the importance in the connection of these three elements- PFC/PWC, Africana Philosophy and CHHP. Fragmented pedagogical praxis utilized in the American education system has only perpetuated a perspective of the world that is individualistic and disconnected. It is time that we help African American students understand how their life experiences and cultural productions (Hip-Hop), connect to the knowledge (Africana philosophy) and is related to their place in society. As long as there is a platform for deficit ideology, Eurocentric epistemologies and universalized pedagogy to be used to “educate” African Americans, students will continue to struggle with understanding their circumstances, developing a strong sense of self, and lack the critical consciousness that is necessary for navigating the structural impediments they will continuously confront.

Connecting Hip-Hop to its ancestral roots in Africana philosophy, refutes society’s assertion that Hip-Hop is anti-intellectual, and opens the door to a more culturally relevant and engaging learning experience, focused more on developing critical consciousness in African American students. To provide an example of how to connect Hip-Hop to Africana philosophy in the classroom and emphasize the applicability of this thesis the author developed a sample lesson plan (see appendix A).

Developing a foundation for the liberation of African people, specifically African American adolescents, is the ultimate goal of this project, but unity and a collective critical consciousness must precede true liberation. In their journey to find a space in the world to express themselves African American adolescents have unknowingly connected with their historical roots, reviving the oral tradition of their ancestors. It is crucial that we help them explore this knowledge as autonomous subjects with the agency to challenge the system and create their world. We must welcome them into the fold because they have returned home.

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APPENDIX

LESSON PLAN

Standards

CC.8.5.11-12.G

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CC.8.5.11-12.H

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CC.8.5.11-12.I

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Objectives

1. Students will be able to critically reflect on song lyrics and their message.
2. Students will be able to critically reflect on the concept of Ubuntu and its meaning.
3. Students will be able to develop their own philosophy of the application of Ubuntu in their life.
4. Students will be able to collectively develop a philosophy of the application of Ubuntu as it relates to the relationship with their peers.
5. Students will be able to discuss how the song lyrics and the concept of Ubuntu apply to their individual lives.
6. Students will be able to provide connections between the song lyrics and the concept of Ubuntu.
7. Students will be able to discuss connections between the song lyrics and the concept of Ubuntu.

Lesson Guide

1. Teacher and students will move chairs/desks to form a circle in order to create the space for the community of inquiry/cypher circle.
2. Teacher will explain the purpose of a cypher circle and provide initial community agreements, and invite questions from students. (see attached)
3. Teacher will distribute song lyrics to students and play the song “Changes” by Tupac (in snippets). (see attached)
4. Teacher will invite initial responses from students using open-ended questions. (see attached)
5. Teacher will introduce the concept of Ubuntu. (see attached)
6. Teacher will allow for questions and responses.
7. Teacher will allow time for individual reflection.
8. Dependent upon class size teacher will ask students to share their thoughts about Ubuntu in relation to the song lyrics and the idea of community and what it means to them. This may also be done in pairs, with a few groups sharing to the larger group.
9. Collectively the students will develop their own philosophy of Ubuntu within the community of their peers to be posted in the classroom’s website where the teacher will keep updates and information about what the class is learning and how they are developing as a community.
10. Teacher and students will close the cypher circle with a take away from the lesson, mention the upcoming cypher circle song/topic, end with an affirmation to sustain the community until the next cypher session.

Community Agreements

Use “I” statements

RESPECT

Step Up, Step Back

Be present

Be engaged

Don’t spill the tea

Dialogue, not debate

“CHANGES” BY TUPAC LYRICS

[1]

Come on come on

I see no changes. Wake up in the morning and I ask myself,

"Is life worth living? Should I blast myself?"

I'm tired of bein' poor and even worse I'm black.

My stomach hurts, so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch.

Cops give a damn about a negro? Pull the trigger, kill a nigga, he's a hero.

Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares? One less hungry mouth on the welfare.

First ship 'em dope and let 'em deal to brothers.

Give 'em guns, step back, and watch 'em kill each other.

"It's time to fight back", that's what Huey said.

2 shots in the dark now Huey's dead.

I got love for my brother, but we can never go nowhere
unless we share with each other. We gotta start makin' changes.

Learn to see me as a brother 'stead of 2 distant strangers.

And that's how it's supposed to be.

How can the Devil take a brother if he's close to me?

I'd love to go back to when we played as kids

but things changed, and that's the way it is

[Bridge w/ changing ad libs]

Come on come on

That's just the way it is

Things'll never be the same

That's just the way it is

aww yeah

[Repeat]

I see no changes. All I see is racist faces.
Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races we under.
I wonder what it takes to make this one better place...
let's erase the wasted.
Take the evil out the people, they'll be acting right.
'Cause both black and white are smokin' crack tonight.
And only time we chill is when we kill each other.
It takes skill to be real, time to heal each other.
And although it seems heaven sent,
we ain't ready to see a black President, uhh.
It ain't a secret don't conceal the fact...
the penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks.
But some things will never change.
Try to show another way, but they stayin' in the dope game.
Now tell me what's a mother to do?
Bein' real don't appeal to the brother in you.
You gotta operate the easy way.
"I made a G today" But you made it in a sleazy way.
Sellin' crack to the kids. "I gotta get paid,"
Well hey, well that's the way it is.
[Bridge]
[Talking:]
We gotta make a change...
It's time for us as a people to start makin' some changes.
Let's change the way we eat, let's change the way we live
and let's change the way we treat each other.

You see the old way wasn't working so it's on us to do
what we gotta do, to survive.

And still I see no changes. Can't a brother get a little peace?

There's war on the streets and the war in the Middle East.

Instead of war on poverty,

they got a war on drugs so the police can bother me.

And I ain't never did a crime I ain't have to do.

But now I'm back with the facts givin' 'em back to you.

Don't let 'em jack you up, back you up, crack you up and pimp smack you up.

You gotta learn to hold ya own.

They get jealous when they see ya with ya mobile phone.

But tell the cops they can't touch this.

I don't trust this, when they try to rush I bust this.

That's the sound of my tool. You say it ain't cool, but mama didn't raise no fool.

And as long as I stay black, I gotta stay strapped and I never get to lay back.

'Cause I always got to worry 'bout the payback.

Some buck that I roughed up way back... comin' back after all these years.

Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat. That's the way it is. uhh

[Bridge 'til fade:]

Some things will never change

Cypher Circle Processing Questions

1. What stands out to you about this song? Which lyrics resonate with you and why?
2. Who is his audience? Who is he speaking to? How do you know?
3. Why is he speaking to this audience?
4. What is he trying to tell his audience?
5. What do you think about what he is saying? How does it make you feel?
6. If he doesn't directly address you, is he still talking to you? How do you know?

“I got love for my brother, but we can never go nowhere
unless we share with each other. We gotta start makin' changes.

Learn to see me as a brother 'stead of 2 distant strangers.

And that's how it's supposed to be.

How can the Devil take a brother if he's close to me?

I'd love to go back to when we played as kids”

What is Tupac saying in this verse?

UBUNTU

Ubuntu “is the root of African philosophy,” (Ramose, 2003) translated as I am because we are. What does this phrase mean?

“To be a human being is to affirm one’s humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis establish humane relations with them” (Ramose, 2003). It is not enough to exist as a human, your becoming a human being is connected to the humanity you acknowledge in others. Take some time to reflect on what this means to you. Think of some examples or ways in which you practice Ubuntu in your everyday life. (The teacher may allow students to pair up to share their thoughts with their partner, if time permits)

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Ubuntu is an African philosophy that is widely valued throughout the continent. Read the excerpts provided and also search for additional sources that discuss the concept of Ubuntu and its application. Using the excerpts provided and other sources discovered, develop your own interpretation of Ubuntu. Consider your interpretation of Ubuntu and express your understanding of it in a poem, song, essay, drawing, painting or other original creation to be shared with the community. Also prepare two to three sentences to summarize your piece and cite any other sources you used in your analysis.

PART II

Students will have the opportunity to present their assignment to the class community. After student presentations the community will discuss what Ubuntu means within the class community and collectively add to the community agreements based on the concept of Ubuntu. You may use the same questions from the previous Cypher Circle to debrief.

EXCERPTS ON UBUNTU

Ubuntu Orality as a Living Philosophy by Devi Dee Mucina

Ubuntu is a philosophical theory that guides our action in order to maintain all our relational bonds within an Ubuntu worldview. We need to remember that ideas and philosophies created in one language cannot always be adequately translated into another language without losing some meaning because each language speaks to a specific contextual symbolic encoding. Knowing these language translational limitations, here are some Ubuntu philosophical principles taught to me by my family and community:

- * I am a reflection of the existence of my ancestors--I exist because they exist or as we say "Umuntu ngumuntu ngubuntu"--A person is a person through other people or we could also say, 'A thing is a thing through other things.' Meaning all things know each other in relationship to each other.
- * We come from the energy flux and are the energy flux. This is why the circle is important to the Ubuntu spirituality. The circle shows that we are one.
- * We respect and give thanks for all of our relations because all elements are part of the energy flux that makes up life.
- * We try to live Ubuntu life with the aim of finding integrity and wholeness in the balance of nature, which is to see the energy flux in everything.
- * To each person, place, animal, or object we ask for permission before taking and give thanks for that which we have received. These prayers are directed to the spirit of the desired object. These prayers explain our actions and give justification for our actions because we respect the spirit of all things.
- * Birth and death reflects the life cycle in all things and in all places.
- * The spirit of the land and the spirit of the water we honor in special ways. In fact, it is said that the experience we have with specific elements helps us to develop language and knowledge as an effort to respect the space we occupy.
- * Our traditional governance institutions are inclusive of nature as a decision making relational member of Ubuntu. We honor the intelligibility of nature.
- * We honor the dead because they live in a parallel world to that of the living.

No Future Without Forgiveness
by Desmond Tutu

Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks to the very essence of being human. When you want to give high praise to someone we say, 'Yu, u Nobuntu'; he or she has Ubuntu. This means that they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means that my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'a person is a person through other people' (in Xhosa Ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu and in Zulu Umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye). I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share. A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good; for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes with knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are. (Tutu, 1999, pp. 34–5)