

CUT FROM A DIFFERENT CLOTH: EXAMINING THE ROLE HIP-HOP PLAYS IN
BELONGING AT SELECT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

My dissertation is dedicated to my family, support system, and those that have inspired me throughout my life. Thanks to my wife, Laah, for staying with me through this crazy journey of peaks and valleys. You have taken on more with our young sons when I was taking night classes, completing assignments, research, attending conferences, and writing this dissertation. Our home and family would not be whole without you. Thank you to my parents, Joseph and Sandra Sherman who always encouraged me to aim big and made me believe I could do anything I put my mind to. Thank you for nurturing and exposing my brother, Ledric, and I to so many things that broadened our horizons. Thanks to my brother Ledric, who has always been so reliable and supportive throughout my life. We know we can always vent to one another and because you have gone through this process before, you are one of few that could truly give me firsthand advice that truly helped me along the way. I could not have done this without you! I would like to thank my grandparents, Eddie Pearl Allen & Leroy and Tommie Sherman for the support and lessons they taught me growing up. I will never forget what you taught me, as they were the building blocks for the man I am today.

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G.C. Scarborough High School, Southern University and A&M College, and Webster University. Wonderful memories and experiences from each school played a part in molding me into the man I have become. Thanks to my ice-cold frat brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., specifically that Bloody Beta Sigma Chapter! It is always great times when we connect, and we have always been supportive of one another reaching higher heights. Thanks to my student affairs colleagues and cohort 37 for support and help to get to this point. Last, but not least, thank you Hip-Hop! Along with my family, you raised me. I hope I made you proud and I hope this work helps other Hip-Hop scholars that are coming around the corner take our culture to even higher heights!

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ABSTRACT

Sherman, Jerrell R., *Cut from a different cloth: Examining the role hip-hop plays in belonging at select institutions of higher education*. Doctor of Education (Educational Leadership), May, 2021, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

Hip-Hop initially was the soundtrack of suppressed inner city Black and Latino people, Hip-Hop culture is comprised of a historical timeline that recounts the experiences and influences of its participants. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the impact that Hip-Hop culture and organizational involvement had on sense of belonging and academic achievement for students of color enrolled at Historically White Institutions during the 2020-2021 academic year. Interview questions were developed for the purpose of examining Hip-Hop culture's impact on the study participants through their lived experiences as relates to their sense of belonging to their HWI and academic success at their HWI. This qualitative research study, framed by student engagement and retention theories, strived to fill the gap in the scholarship of Hip-Hop research. Data collection was comprised of in-depth personal interviews conducted virtually via Zoom. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was the preferred method for this research because of its "concern with exploring experience in its own terms;" IPA permits academic scholars to explore how people make sense of important life experiences (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1). Interpretive phenomenological analysis served as both the process and product used to describe the participants' experiences as students of color holding membership in Hip-Hop student organizations at HWIs. Utilizing the participants' lived experiences, their personal narratives were fashioned into a detailed study. This study, based on the lived experiences shared by students of color a part of

Hip-Hop organizations at HWIs, could provide a foundation for other scholars looking to comprehend the impact of Hip-Hop culture on students globally.

KEY WORDS: Hip-Hop, HWI, Sense of belonging, Engagement, Persist, Retention,

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

“No matter where you go, you are what you are player. And you can try to change but that's just the top layer. Man, you was who you was 'fore you got here.” (Carter, S., 2003, track 10).

Hip-Hop artist and mogul, Jay-Z, reminds us with these powerful lyrics that, despite your surroundings, whether they are new or old, the characteristics that make you who you genuinely are will always be present. Even if you try to talk differently, dress differently, associate with different types of people, you are not being true to who you are, and deep down, you know what kind of person you really are even if others do not recognize it. Who you indeed are and the life experiences that brought you to your current status will always prevail and have some type of influence in your life.

Students are who they are before they arrive on their college campus. Despite the campus culture and the politics that exist at the college, students are bringing with them personal experiences that have molded them to be the individuals they indeed are. Institutions of higher education and society, in general, can take steps to use facets of the cultures of students of color to connect with them and aid them in being successful. Historically, people of color in America have been marginalized to the point that this discrimination has had adverse socioeconomic effects on their educational attainment, finances, social class, and health (Gardenhire, Cerna, & Ivery, 2016; Llamas et al., 2018; Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016; Michael-Chadwell, 2010). They have been treated as if they are cut from a different cloth than the majority with regards to society. The Hip-Hop

cloth is one that seems to be growing globally in its influence on a variety of young people in a myriad of ways.

In this study, I explored whether college students of color “cut from a different cloth,” were able to find connections to their campus through their involvement in Hip-Hop spaces at their institutions or in their surrounding community. One of the Hip-Hop spaces that was examined was Hip Hop Congress, an organization that exists in various high schools, colleges and universities, and communities throughout the country. According to the Hip Hop Congress (2019b) chapter constitution, the purpose of Hip Hop Congress is:

to provide the Hip Hop Generation and the Post Hip Hop Generation with the tools, resources, and opportunities to make social, economic and political change on a local, regional and national level. Hip Hop Congress is the product of a merger of artists, activists and students, music, and community. It is significant because it provides one of few paths for highly creative and often disenfranchised people where they can channel their energy into a strong and organized force aimed at improving their community. (p. 17)

For my study, I chose to examine the Hip Hop Congress because of its reach and recognition as a Hip-Hop organization. The organization has four chapters internationally and 24 chapters throughout the United States in communities, colleges, and high schools, making it a worthwhile exploration (Hip Hop Congress, 2019a).

Statement of the Problem

Higher education administrators are continually working to obtain and retain students at their institutions with the aims of producing more well-rounded, educated

citizens, and robust labor force (Xu & Webber, 2016). Granted, entrance into college has improved; however, other concerns have arisen. A large percentage of people of color have experienced walking in and out of a revolving door concerning higher education in America. The hard truth is that even though access to higher education has improved for people of color, the percentages of individuals from that demographic obtaining a college diploma are not favorable. In the past, the tools needed for students of color to be successful in college and the world many times were overlooked (McClain & Perry, 2017; Peralta & Klonowski, 2017). However, over time the population of the United States is becoming less White dominant (John & Stage, 2014; Maramba & Velasquez, 2012). Moreover, the underachieving of students of color can no longer be overlooked (Gummadam, Pittman, & Ioffe, 2015; Maramba & Velasquez, 2012; Museus, 2008; Swail, Redd, & Perna 2003).

Furthermore, various policies have emerged to increase access and groundbreaking changes, for example, the Civil Rights movement established opportunities for African Americans, Asians, Latina/os, Native Americans, and first-generation students to attend college to improve their lives and the futures of their families (Michael-Chadwell, 2010; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Robinson, 2005;). People striving to improve their economic and societal place in the world must realize that a high school diploma is not suitable for career and personal advancement as it may have been 20 to 30 years ago (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016). Swail et al. (2003) stated:

Given that the U.S. will become significantly “less White” over the course of the next 50 years, issues of color cannot be ignored. California is already a “majority-minority” state, but its flagship public institutions of higher education have

embarrassing low participation rates among African American and Hispanic students. Texas, Florida, and several other states host similar problems. (p. 6)

Retention of college students has been studied extensively in the field of higher education (Laskey & Hetzel, 2011; Pratt, Harwood, Cavazos, & Ditzfeld, 2019; Strayhorn, 2008; Tinto, 2006). While researchers (Astin, 1977; Bean, 1980; Kamens, 1974; Tinto, 1975) were some of the first theorists to explore student retention in higher education, research on higher education student retention has been added to over the last four decades by Bai and Pan, 2009; Berger and Braxton, 1998; Mallinckrodt and Sedlacek, 2009; Millea, Wills, Elder, and Molina, 2018; and Tinto, 1993. Despite all of the previous research, graduation, and persistence rates of college students in the last two decades have not improved (Caruth, 2018).

There are many parents of high school graduates and high school graduates who wonder if institutions of higher education are indeed providing the necessary resources required for all students to persevere to obtain college degrees (Allen, Robbins, Casillas & Oh, 2008). Also, many colleges and universities boast about having diverse campuses and establishing inclusive atmospheres; however, large percentages of students of color are not graduating from these institutions (John & Stage, 2014; Seidman, 2005). What can be implemented to increase the number of students of color to not just start, but most importantly, finish college successfully earning a degree? Harper (2013) proposed the ensuing ideas to address this enigma: (a) create and uphold standards for assisting students of color to be successful, (b) understand they are not all the same and approaches must be versatile, (c) identify strengths and weaknesses, (d) develop resources that fit the student's needs at your campus, and (e) form support systems and organizations for

students to get involved in (pp. 5-8). That is not to say that all institutions of higher education have to do is implement the suggestions made by Harper (2013) and students of color will automatically have high graduation rates. However, the offer strategies that can be used to foster an environment where students of color feel as if they belong and can achieve their goals.

Purpose of the Study

Hip-Hop culture makes people from different walks of life feel valued and embraced (Sulé, 2016). According to Sulé (2016), what was “most compelling about hip-hop is its ability to promote racially and ethnically diverse counter spaces, thereby facilitating interactional diversity” (p. 195). Kezar, Acuna Avilez, Drivalas, and Wheaton (2017) revealed that the lack of support from collegiate institutions with assisting underrepresented student populations acclimate to college is a duty which frequently has been handled by student social clubs to develop engaging support groups that stimulate social capital and scholastic success for students. A limited amount of research is available regarding college students who partake in Hip-Hop culture. Consequently, an even more significant gap exists in the literature regarding Hip-Hop student organizational involvement. Scholars have uncovered and suggested that participation in cultural and Hip-Hop student organizations aids with acclimating to college campuses and retention for students of color attending Historically White Institutions, be they men or women (Bowman, Park, & Denson, 2014; Quaye, Griffin, & Museus, 2015; Sulé, 2016).

The findings of the study enlarge the data on Hip-Hop and the influence its culture has on college campuses. Given the information as mentioned earlier, the purpose

of this phenomenological study was to determine the extent to which aspects of Hip-Hop culture and Hip-Hop student organizational involvement might foster a sense of belonging and student success for students of color who are enrolled at HWIs throughout the United States of America. Also, the second purpose of this study was to investigate the campus social identities of students of color who are members of Hip-Hop student organizations at their institution. The study also explored whether students of color who are participants in the Hip-Hop community share comparable character traits and viewpoints. Examples of comparable character traits are similar interests, childhood experiences, environments they grew up in, and values. This study also aimed to determine the extent to which Hip-Hop culture influences the scholastic experience of participants. Thus, the aim of this study was to explore the impact Hip-Hop has on the identity of college students from a qualitative manner.

Significance of the Study

Walton and Cohen (2007) defined social belonging as an essential human need to experience positive connections with people. The reason for conducting this research is to add to the literature on belonging, persistence, and student engagement by way of Hip-Hop in higher education to build a new level of respect for Hip-Hop culture by the academy. In the same ways that prior literature has signaled that extra-curricular involvement enhances persistence and retention in higher education (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Stuber, 2011), Hip-Hop has been identified as another agent of belonging and engagement on college campuses (Petchauer, 2010; Sulé, 2016; Wessel & Wallaert, 2011).

Sulé (2016) expressed that Hip-Hop is effective at appealing to followers from wide-ranging backgrounds and could be a powerful resource for colleges in regard to easing the collegiate transition process, while improving cross-cultural relations on college campuses. Based on Sulé's (2016) research on how involvement in Hip-Hop culture may help students fit into the college campus community and aid with diversity relations in the college environment, suggestions were made that more spaces be formed on college campuses besides student organizations for those members of the Hip-Hop community. Sulé (2016) concluded that Hip-Hop can, "optimize a unique and influential intercultural counter space that has implications for student learning and development" (p. 195).

Williams (2017) performed research on the factors as they relate to African American student success in higher education and determined the factors that influenced academic success of African American students were the following: "family support, community member and community educator support, intrinsic motivation, high school and college educator support, college attendance expectations, peer influence and motivation, and financial assistance" (p. 195). Community member support and peer influence areas are experiences utilized to measure the impact of Hip-Hop student organizational participation on African American student's academic success. Druery (2018) suggested a need for more research of African American student sense of belonging and student success in higher education.

A goal of this study was to uncover whether involvement in a Hip-Hop student organization truly enhanced environmental and social traits that are alleged to impact scholastic success of students of color at institutions of higher education. Another aim of

this study was to advance the research bank on Hip-Hop student organizations influence on sense of belonging and persistence for students of color in higher education. The outcomes of this study provide scholars, parents, and society with traits that increase the collegiate success students of color.

The study also adds to previously conducted research on how students' connections with Hip-Hop culture cultivated a sense of belonging and the student engagement needed to retain students more effectively. Expanding the research centered around the possible effect of social-belonging initiatives regarding continuance and retention of college students is necessary, especially for underrepresented students, based on the high dropout percentages in higher education and the adverse consequences of this decline (Williams, Smiley, Davis, & Lamb, 2018). College and university objectives should be to support all students that are enrolled effectively to enhance students' sense of belonging, regardless of their cultural background (Shanks, 2017). By conducting interviews with students who are members of Hip-Hop based organizations enrolled at HWIs, the study explored whether Hip-Hop culture and Hip-Hop organizational involvement have any effect on fostering a sense of belonging on college campuses for participants in the study.

Theoretical Framework

The retention and success of students enrolled in higher education should be the priority of administrators at any college or university who want their institutions to remain competitive and highly regarded (Swanger, 2016; Woods, 2016). Previously performed research on retention factors and student engagement has led investigators (Astin, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993) to recommend that students are

more likely to remain enrolled at their institutions should they get engaged, involved, or immersed soon after they arrive at their institution. The aim of this study was to investigate and uncover whether students of color developed a sense of belonging to the HWI they were enrolled in based on their participation in Hip-Hop spaces and organizations at their institution. When conducting the study, my research centered on two theories, Astin's (1984, 1999) Student Involvement Theory and the Sense of Belonging Theory offered by Strayhorn (2012).

Astin (1999) declared that, "the greater the student's involvement in college, the greater will be the amount of learning and personal development" (p. 529). Astin's (1984) theory is comprised of four rudimentary thoughts: (a) involvement occurs along a continuum; different students exhibit different levels of involvement in different activities at different times; (b) involvement has both quantitative aspects, how much time a student spends doing something, and qualitative aspects, how focused the student's time is; (c) the amount of personal development and learning that can occur is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement; and (d) the effectiveness of educational policies, practices, or programs is directly related to the policy, practice, or program's commitment to increasing student involvement (p. 298). Student involvement was summed up by Astin (1999) as being the "quantity and quality of the physical and physiological energy that students invest in college experience" (p. 528).

Engaging students is important, but a prospective outcome of engaging students, is the notion that they will feel as if they belong at the institution by way of their involvement. Strayhorn (2012) described sense of belonging as, "students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling

cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g. faculty, peers)” (p. 3). People who historically have been marginalized, such as racially or culturally diverse individuals, first-generation college students, or students who have a low-socioeconomic status, are typically thought of regarding sense of belonging due to not feeling a connection and acceptance to the majority institutional culture (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012). Strayhorn contends that students’ journeys to foster a sense of belonging to their new collegiate environment will guide their choices and performance on campus.

For this study, the two theories aforementioned in this section mutually emphasize aspects that aid with engagement and belonging in higher education, particularly for student communities of color via their involvement in Hip-Hop spaces and organizations. Innovative and up-to-date methods and theories to engage students inside and outside of the classroom, along with environments that are conducive to making students feel comfortable, are topics worth exploring by administrators at institutions of higher education to ascertain how they can improve support and retention for their student body. Alexander Astin’s theory offers insight into variables that engage students by using the student’s background along with the culture of the institution to shape the student experience at the institution. Astin (1984) described involvement as being the extent to which students participate in the learning process by studying, committing time to campus activities joining student groups, and engaging with faculty and their peers.

Astin (1993) established the Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) which serves as one of three frameworks for this study. Figure 1 illustrates the way the three different factors intermingle, with input factors, having the biggest influence on both the

environment and outcomes. Institutions of higher education recognizing the traits of each of the factors is imperative to grasping the reason this theory was selected for this study involving Hip-Hop culture and student engagement. Input variables or factors are traits that accompany each student to their institution (Astin, 1993). Inputs include, but are not limited to demographics, educational background, political alliance, behavior pattern, degree goal, motive for enrolling at institution, economic situation, disability status, occupation selection, field of concentration, aspirations in life, and purpose for degree attainment (Astin, 1993). Environmental variables or factors “refer to the various programs, policies, faculty, peers and educational experiences to which the student is exposed” (Astin, 1993, p. 7). Environmental factors can be comprised of academic experiences, customs, programs, employees, courses, professors, amenities, institutional environment, lecture method, associates, dorm mates, extra-curricular opportunities and organizational memberships (Astin, 1993). Outcomes “refer to the student’s characteristics after exposure to the environment” (Astin, 1993, p. 7). Outputs consist of result gauges for example grades, course completion outcomes, student retention, and degree attainment (Astin, 1993).

To demonstrate how Astin’s (1993) theory could be explained using the elements of Hip-Hop and Hip-Hop student organizations, the inputs for a student would be the elements of Hip-Hop with which the student identifies, such as being an emcee. Other possible elements of Hip-Hop would be if a student is a DJ, produces Hip-Hop music, or possibly participates in Hip-Hop dance crews as well. The environment in which the student was raised, their hobbies, their ethnicity, and economic background also are key inputs to consider. Environment for the purpose of this study was their peer environment,

in general, on campus, their peer involvement in the Hip-Hop student organization or space in which they are involved, and their interactions with faculty and staff. Outcomes were the student's performance at the institution along with ways the student interacted with and what they thought of their peers and institution after engagement with the Hip-Hop organization or space.

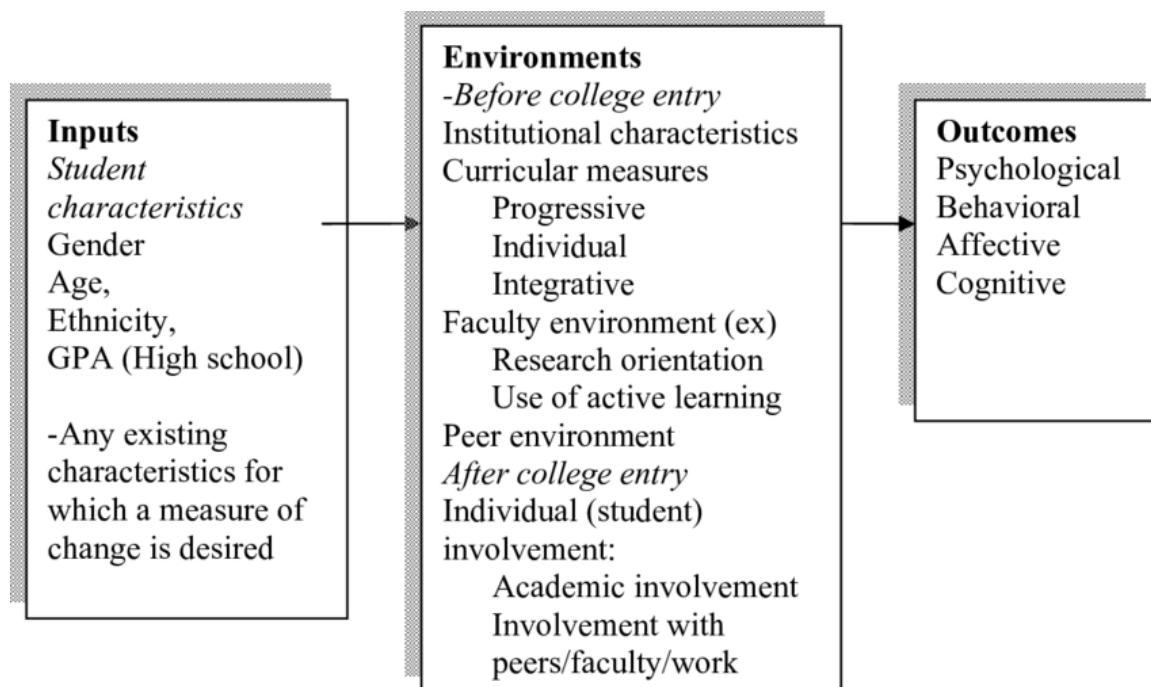


Figure 1. Astin's Input-Environment-Outcome Model (1993).

Whether referring to students feeling acceptance inside the classroom, in the residence halls, in campus common areas, or among their peers, belonging is a vital component of success in higher education (Strayhorn, 2018). Some early studies on sense of belonging were conducted by Bollen and Hoyle (1990), who focused on the impact of fusing college student experiences with heightening students' sense of belonging. Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) research was grounded on the concept of speculated interrelation, which the scholars explained as being "an individual's sense of belonging to a particular group and his or her feelings of morale associated with membership in the group" (p.

482). Bollen and Hoyle created the Perceived Cohesion Scale, which encompasses Likert scaled replies to two factors—one determining sense of belonging and the other determining feelings of morale. Bollen and Hoyle (1990) deemed a sense of belonging is comprised of a cognitive domain, which includes “information about experiences with the group as a whole and with other group members,” and an affective domain involving “feelings that reflect the individuals’ appraisal of their experiences with the group and group members”. (p. 483) Various scholars (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Jacoby & Garland, 2004; Kember & Leung, 2004; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Strayhorn, 2012) followed Bollen & Hoyle’s (1990) research by conducting studies investigating sense of belonging’s effectiveness on the success of college students. The scholars reviewed the experiences of commuter students, part-time students, and students of color in the studies aforementioned.

Strayhorn (2012) examined a sense of belonging and its value to institutions of higher education. The researcher reasoned that sense of belonging contains a give-and-take attribute whereby both the individual improves the group and the group advances due to the input of every individual. Strayhorn (2012) created the following explanation of sense of belonging after his evaluation of numerous other descriptions, “a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)” (p. 3). As a result of Strayhorn’s (2012) analysis of previously conducted research on sense of belonging, the scholar identified seven key facets of sense of belonging:

1. Sense of belonging is a basic human need.

2. Sense of belonging is a fundamental motive, sufficient to drive human behavior.
3. Sense of belonging takes on heightened importance (a) in certain contexts...
(b) At certain times...as well as (c) among certain populations.
4. Sense of belonging is related to, and seemingly a consequence of, mattering.
5. Social identities intersect and affect college students' sense of belonging.
6. Sense of belonging engenders other positive outcomes.
7. Sense of belonging must be satisfied on a continual basis and likely changes as circumstances, conditions, and contexts change. (pp. 18-22)

The key facets aforesaid from Strayhorn's (2012) study are fundamental to leaving an impact in the college student experiences by presenting groundwork for thought into the reason sense of belonging is vital and identifies stimuli that form the cultivation of sense of belonging. Institutions of higher education have the ability and obligation to foster inclusive campus settings to enhance their entire student body's collegiate experiences inside and outside of the classroom to build a strong sense of belonging. Researchers (Guiffrida, 2003; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Quaye, Griffin, & Museus, 2015; Negy & Lunt, 2008) conducted studies on social integration into college settings and reported that membership in ethnic student organizations offers students a way to cultivate a sense of belonging to their college campus. Campus engagement, satisfaction, and retention are notable results for students who foster a sense of belonging in accordance with Strayhorn's model (Figure 2).

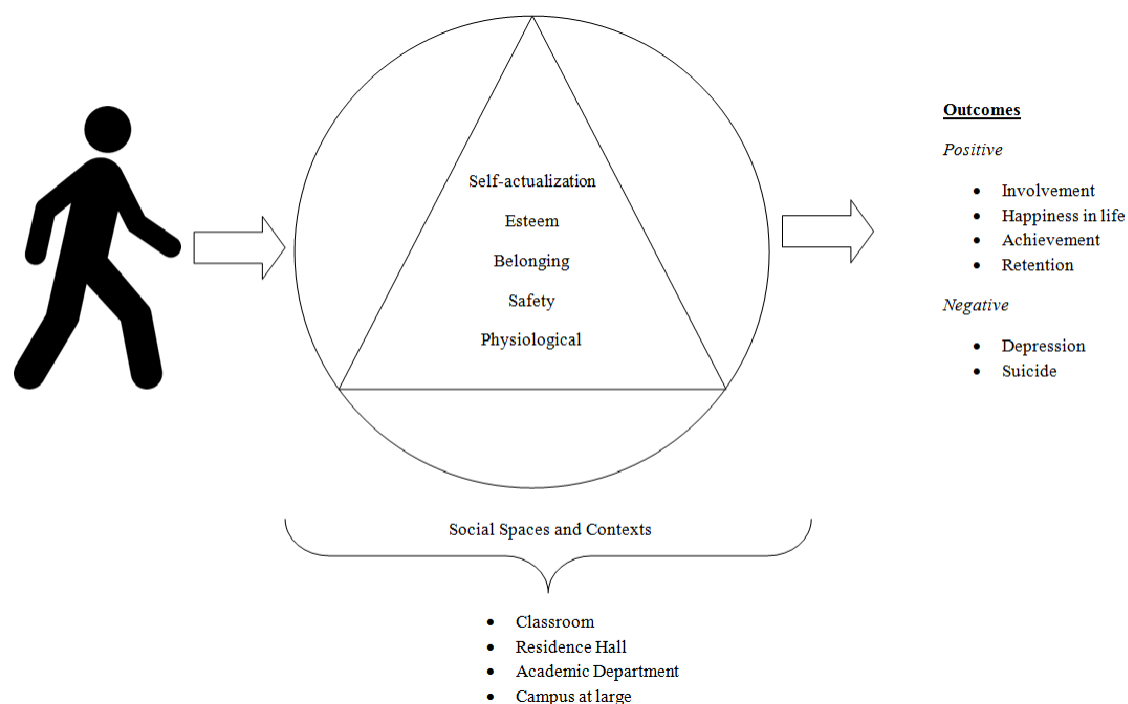


Figure 2. Strayhorn's Model of College Students' Sense of Belonging (2012).

Both frameworks covered in this section have a component that focuses on the environments and spaces outside of the classroom that engage students. Positive engagement aids in building a sense of belonging, which is a basic human need. If a student does not feel that they belong at their campus, it is easy for them to have feelings of exclusion, rejection, or lack of acceptance. If students feel as if they belong, the positives associated with belonging will serve as forerunners to other phases of productive operating inside and outside of the classroom during their time in college. Therefore, social belonging is a primary task that institutions of higher education should focus on because when it is inadequate, students, especially minority students, will discover its challenging to achieve academic success and improbable to prosper.

Students of color that fail to nurture a sense of belonging to their collegiate environment run the risk for adverse results, such as unhappiness, stress, suicidal ideation, or withdrawing from the institution.

This study utilized the sense of belonging theory because it sheds light on a variety of atmospheres and circumstances whereby students of color face their institution's authentic culture. Spaces where students may experience their institution's authentic culture include, but are not limited to, the campus as a whole, lecture halls, dorms, student union, dining halls, and academic departments. This investigation strived to ascertain whether or not sense of belonging, by way of engagement in Hip-Hop spaces and student organizations, influenced students of color beliefs that they fit in at their institution.

Research Questions

Research questions for this qualitative study were:

1. What aspects of Hip-Hop student organizational involvement might foster a sense of belonging for students of color at a Historically White Institution (HWI)?
2. How do students of color at a Historically White Institution (HWI) describe the influence of Hip-Hop culture on their scholastic experience?

Definition of Terms

This section provides an explanation of frequently used terms and these were the following definition of the terms.

African American - denotes to a U.S. citizen of African descent, who was born, raised, and resides in the United States, Bi-racial or mixed-race included (Brown, 2013).

Hip-Hop (noun) - participatory, resistant culture or subculture comprised of

numerous hybrid traits of Black culture exhibited usually by way of four interconnected components: rapping, deejaying, b-boying/b-girling dancing, and graffiti writing (Shanks, 2017). Hip-Hop has been written in several ways including Hip Hop, hip-hop, Hiphop, Hip hop, and hip hop by Hip-Hop artists, enthusiasts, scholarly writers, organizations within its culture and various forms of media. In this study, it will be written as Hip-Hop.

Hip-Hop Culture – Hip-Hop’s cultural expressions are independent pieces that make its culture. There are nine elements of Hip-Hop culture: b-boying/b-girling (break dancing), emceeing (rapping; term derived from MC/master of ceremonies), deejaying (spinning records as in DJ/disc jockey), graffiti (aerosol art), beat boxing (making music with the mouth), street fashion (clothing/style), street language (lingo), knowledge of self (self-awareness), and street entrepreneurialism (Jenkins, 2012).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) - HBCUs are degree-granting institutions that were established in the 1800s and prior to 1964 with the principal mission of providing educational opportunity and access for African Americans (Scott, 2014). While HBCUs have traditionally and contemporarily served mainly African Americans, enrollment is available to all students regardless of their ethnic make-up or background (Scott, 2014).

Historically White Institutions (HWIs) - is typically interchangeable with the term “predominantly white institution” (PWIs), which denotes institutions with white student enrollment of 50% or more (Johnson, 2019).

Latina/o - refers to all types of men and women whose ethnic origins are found in Central America, Caribbean, and South American countries (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2011). As a researcher, I am aware that *Latinx* is used in scholarship, that term

is a more all-encompassing word signifying all gender identifications, differing from the customary usage of Latino or Latina/o (De Onis, 2017). I am using a/o to focus on female and male contributions, but I am aware that more identities exist in this ethnic group.

Rap music – Rap is a form of spoken word delivered over a beat. It can be improvised or written out in advance (Clark, Heflin, Kluball, & Kramer, 2015).

Sense of belonging - a students' realization of social support at an institution of higher education, an experience or impression of connectedness, encountering a feeling that you matter, are embraced, and valued by, and the collegiate community (e.g., faculty, peers, staff) (Strayhorn, 2012)

Student of color - any college student whose ethnicity is not classified as Caucasian (Maramba & Velasquez, 2012).

Delimitations

In this dissertation, I only interviewed students of color who held membership in Hip-Hop organizations at public 4-year HWIs during the 2019-2020 calendar year. The research in this particular investigation was confined to students enrolled at the HWIs during the 2019-2020 calendar year and for that reason the findings should not be generalized to student bodies of other institutions of higher education. The participant group was restricted to students of color who were involved in Hip-Hop based organizations.

Assumptions and Limitations

It was the assumption that all the participants in this investigation had a strong awareness of the questions they were asked and responded truthfully to all questions. In addition, the participants in this investigation were assumed to have done so of their own

accord and free will. The participants in this study were no younger than 18 years old and were enrolled in an HWI at the time the investigation was conducted. Information for the examination was gathered through criterion and purposive sampling. Finally, I must point out that there was also a conceivability for examiner bias because of my connection to and extensive fascination with Hip-Hop culture.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I states the problem that needed to be addressed, significance of this study was covered, and the theoretical frameworks were explained. In addition, chapter I contained the research questions that guided this study and the key terms used throughout the study. Chapter II includes an analysis of the literature correlated to the investigation. The chapter contains the origins and components of Hip-Hop. An evaluation regarding outcomes of prior conducted studies are also contained in the chapter. Chapter III explains the methodology and the techniques utilized to obtain information, as well as an explanation of the population and demographics, information collection tool, and in what manner the information was examined. Chapter IV describes the evaluation of the data according to Moustakas's (1994) procedures as outlined in the third chapter of this study. Finding the invariant meaning units of the lived experiences and "clustering the invariant meaning units into themes" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122) were completed. Chapter V's purpose was to integrate the themes discovered into a thorough explanation of the phenomenon and address the implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

The Genesis of Hip-Hop Culture

Hip-Hop started to take shape in a low socioeconomic New York borough called the South Bronx early in the 1970s (Blanchard, 1999). Price (2006) shed light on the fact that, “while Hip-Hop was built on practices of African Americans, first- and second-generation Latinos, and Afro Caribbeans; Hip-Hop culture is a descendant of African heritage” (p. 1). Break dancers, deejays, emcees, and graffiti artists became the four elements that served as the pillars of Hip-Hop culture (Chang, 2005). The culture of Hip-Hop extends to encompass actions demonstrated by way of fashion, slang utilized, and acts connected to local neighborhood culture (Chang, 2005; LaVoulle, 2014). Throughout its existence, Hip-Hop has developed a diverse fan base; prior researchers (Mattar, 2003; Sulé, 2015) reported that Hip-Hop culture created an environment for people to engage with one another. Hip-Hop has expanded to personify inner city, countryside, suburban, and international publics of various age groups, sex, faiths, socioeconomic groups, and ethnicities (Price, 2006).

In the face of Hip-Hop, as a whole and in particularly rap music, receiving criticism over the years for aiding in the growth of crimes and murders in the United States, the music produced from Hip-Hop is a manifestation of violence in America, not the source of it (Blanchard, 1999). According to Blanchard (1999), politicians and others who make allegations of Hip-Hop causing more harm than good must first understand that inequality in income along with lack of career choices for people of color and other issues need to be persistently addressed. Those individuals who have the power to make

changes must do so because those concerns along with a host of others are the origins of the issues that created Hip-Hop (Blanchard, 1999). Some people in society do not recognize that to understand the big picture about Hip-Hop, the movement must be viewed as the result of chronological, civil, and fiscal conditions that existed before rap genre was created and that still exist to this day that Hip-Hop combats. The following sections will explain the four central building blocks of Hip-Hop.

Graffiti

Graffiti is a key element of Hip-Hop that is the least utilized and embraced by young people in present time compared to when it was first recognized during the 1950s when neighborhood gangs would mark their territory (Price, 2006). A brief history of graffiti will now be given; however, graffiti student organizations and graffiti being practiced in Hip-Hop spaces in present day are no longer common, meaning it will not be a major focus of this study. Bates (2014) explained that, “the basic form of graffiti is simply the artist’s name on the wall, known as a ‘tag,’ as a means of announcing their existence, documenting themselves and establishing an identity within a space” (p. 3). Later, in the 1960s in Philadelphia, two African American teenagers, who went by the nicknames Cool Earl and Cornbread, started being recognized for their graffiti around the city (Price, 2006). A decade later, an article in the *New York Times* gave recognition to a graffiti artist known as TAKI 183 for his works of art. That article in the *New York Times* assisted in helping graffiti spread all over the inner cities and beyond (Price, 2006). Young graffiti artists’ rise in tagging city’s transit vehicles, buildings, highway overpasses, telephone poles, tunnels, and various other public spaces served as their display canvas (Price, 2006). By the late 1980s, graffiti transitioned to almost being a

thing of the past. Although tags are still visible in some metropolitan areas, graffiti has yet to regain the popularity it once held in the 1970s (Price, 2006).

Deejaying

Deejaying (DJing) is a product of *toasting*, which is a method that sprung from the Jamaican dancehall arena. Toasting consisted of speaking while the music plays to get the crowd to participate and enjoy themselves at the event. Disc Jockey (DJ) Kool Herc, also referred to as the Father of Hip-Hop, started hosting some of the first Hip-Hop block parties in the Bronx in New York at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue in the recreation room of his apartment building in 1973 (Price, 2006). Because DJ Kool Herc's mother and father came from Jamaica, his Jamaican heritage stimulated some aspects of his DJing style, particularly toasting. Price (2006) wrote,

DJ Kool Herc's decision to mix the breaks in sections in various songs together gave birth to a new form of DJing and was so admired by the dancers that before long they started to go by the name b-boys and b-girls, short for break boys and break girls. (p. 22)

The block parties that DJ Kool Herc hosted provided opportunities for emcees and dance crews and inspired fashionistas to showcase their skills and build up their notoriety. Four DJs are often referred to as the originators of Hip-Hop, and they are Afrika Bambaataa, DJ Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, and Grand Wizard Theodore (Hazzard-Donald, 2004). These DJs laid the foundation for countless Hip-Hop DJs and producers to follow in provided soundtracks to Hip-Hop culture.

DJing as a practice in student organizations on college campuses, produces spaces for aspiring DJs to hone their craft. The DJ competitions hosted by Hip-Hop or other

music organizations, DJ opportunities at Greek or general student organization's events, university functions, and in the local community surrounding the campus allow for the students be engaged in and around their collegiate environment, thus giving them a sense of belonging and value. For student DJs who are able to garner a solid customer base, some have even been able to pay for their education or at least pay for their books, grocery, rent, and other expenses that come with being a college student. The money students have the ability to make from their DJing can eliminate having financial challenges that prevent some students of color from persisting to graduate from college.

Breakdancing

The breakdancing (b-boy and b-girl) element of Hip-Hop culture fostered a setting that focalized on urban city dance routines (Banes, 2004). DJ Kool Herc created the moniker *b-boy* (Miller & Ferrell, 2012). The terms *b-boys* and *b-girls* refer to the skilled dancers that performed dance routines to DJ Kool Herc's break beats at parties (Miller & Ferrell, 2012). "B-boying" and "b-girling" grew from dance moves related to prior gang-connected simulated competitions, for example uprock and going off (Miller & Ferrell, 2012). Breakdancing delivered a revolutionary, creative type of art form that would go on to expand globally caused by fame in the media (Hazzard-Donald, 2004). Countries like South Korea, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia, and Japan, to name a few, started having factions of b-boys and b-girls materialize because of breakdancing's popularity from various forms of publicity (Hazzard-Donald, 2004). B-boy dance routines (breakdancing) are made up of particular breaking actions, such as down rock freezes, power moves, and top rock (Banes, 2004). Routinely, b-boys and b-girls danced to rap music and electronic rhythms with a unique *scratch* or *over dubbing*

noise (Rimer, 2012). To give a brief history lesson, a DJ by the name of Grand Wizard Theodore created ‘scratching’, which is the noise made when the music record is rubbed backward and forward (Edwards, 2015). The story goes that DJ Grand Wizard Theodore accidentally found the technique when he halted the record with his hand to listen to what his mother was yelling at him about (Broughton & Brewster, 2006). Hip-Hop culture, and in turn breakdancing, soon integrated interconnected art and rhythmic harmonies from Afro-Caribbean, African American, and Latino neighborhoods in New York City (Schloss, 2009).

In more recent years to expand on the growth and respect this dance form has garnered, in 2016 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced that in 2018, breakdancing would be included in the Youth Olympic Games (Ellis, 2016). A reporter from the CNN news station stated, “The IOC's decision is a clear sign that breakdancing—and Hip-Hop culture at large—continues to go global.” (Ellis, 2016, para. 8). Further, in 2019, breakdancing was suggested to the IOC to be included in the 2024 Olympic Games (Gleeson, 2019). This inclusion truly reflects how tremendously revolutionary this art form is, to have evolved from the ghettos in New York to the peak sports stage on planet Earth. Aside from activist and event centered Hip-Hop organization, such as Hip-Hop Congress, many college campuses have Hip-Hop dance clubs or organizations. In fact, it is becoming more and more common to have some type of Hip-Hop dance organization or space at four-year public collegiate institution in America. Some colleges and universities, along with youth dance gyms have even incorporated Hip-Hop dance into their curriculum. In a Lewis (2018) news article, a college student mentioned how students at their school have a vast amount of stress that

they are dealing with, and several members have utilized their dance and interactions within the organization as a way to cope with their stress. The same student in the article voiced that organizational involvement by Hip-Hop dance groups allowed them to meet new and interesting students at their school, relieved stress, and allowed them to learn exciting dance routines (Lewis, 2018). The student's explanation of how membership in their Hip-Hop dance student organizations assisted them and other members with sense of belonging at their campus, dealing with stress, and giving them an enjoyable and healthy exercise endorses how impactful Hip-Hop organizations are for students and their institution.

Emcees

Areas that consisted of large percentages of African American and Hispanic populations utilized the pillars of Hip-Hop culture as a tool to oppose the government and laws that cultivated inferiority of minority groups throughout America (Banks, 2010; Chang, 2005; Motley & Henderson, 2008). When looking at the ancestors of Hip-Hop, it connects the dots that the rapping or emceeing component of Hip-Hop serves in a role similar to that of the West African *griot* or *djeli*, which were a collection of singers and history narrators who conserved and conveyed West African Oral history (Abe, 2009; Banks, 2010; Else, 2018). The emcee, or rapper like griots, informs others of the problems they face, their morals, their forefathers, their idols, and their accomplishments (Banks, 2010). The key role of the emcee and rap music constantly informing their society of what is going on inside and outside of their world inserts the emcee directly in the position of being the griot, the story teller and courier of the cultural capital and supplier of vital knowledge (Banks, 2010; Morris, 2018).

Price (2006) acknowledged the emcee is the most recognized representation of Hip-Hop culture because they serve in a capacity best situated to influence a positive or negative revolution and be a voice for the whole community (p.41). As the illustrious, socially conscious emcee Chuck D from the well-known Hip-Hop group Public Enemy stated in 1998, "Rap is the black CNN" (Kitwana, 2002, p. 201). The legendary emcee went on to state that rap music is "our invisible TV network, the CNN Black people never had" (Kuwahara, 1992). Although the other elements of Hip-Hop have witnessed their star dwindle regarding their recognition within and outside of the Hip-Hop community, the emcee's status has sustained its spot as the leader of the culture (Price, 2006).

Similar to DJing, emcees, or rappers involved in Hip-Hop student organizations use that space at college campuses to hone their craft and connect with other emcees and DJs to make music. Emcee battles hosted by Hip-Hop or other music organizations allow emcees to develop their brand within the organization and with the members of the student body who support the Hip-Hop community. Also, emcees and DJs may get noticed by someone who can help their music career ambitions. Emcees also serve as the face for Hip-Hop student organizations and spaces on college campuses because of their skills to verbally address the masses, whether they are disseminating information, advocating for others, or protesting various issues. The supportive environment emcees join once entering a Hip-Hop organization is one that connects them with others whose experiences once shared have the ability to give emcees a wider array of content to use when developing their future music and artistry. The greatness of the emcee is that he or she can champion the student organization to others on campus and bring in new

members similar to that of a minister or pastor opening the doors of the church to call for visitors to join the church. The more growth that occurs in Hip-Hop student organizations, the more students who will have the ability to feel that they have a stronger connection to the institution and have a support system within their institution.

The Latina/o Contribution to Hip-Hop Culture

Although African Americans are widely recognized with being the originators of Hip-Hop, Latinos have been present in the culture since its formation as well. Hip-Hop researchers have stated that African Americans and Latinos, mainly Puerto Ricans, lived in areas considered ghettos of New York City, which served as the breeding grounds for Hip-Hop (Flores, 2000). New York Puerto Ricans served as vital contributors, as Hip-Hop music producers and patrons of all forms of Hip-Hop culture, from the beginning in the South Bronx in the early 1970's (Price, 2006). Media and African Americans are inclined to regard Hip-Hop as being exclusive to the African American community, and even Puerto Ricans and other Latinos tend to view it as "black" music (Flores, 2000). Nevertheless, Hip-Hop's origin and advancement was a shared artistic labor of love by African American and Latina/o Afro Caribbean youth, mainly, Puerto Ricans.

In 1973, a former African American gang member and person regarded as being the "Godfather of Hip-Hop," Afrika Bombaataa, wanted to form an inclusive and positive organization for youth in New York by converting violent gang conflicts into artistic battles (Lipsitz, 1994). Bombaataa created a nonviolent alliance named the Youth Organization, later rebranded as the Zulu Nation. The Zulu Nation was primarily a youth group comprised of break-dancers (mainly Latina/os), DJs, and graffiti artists (Lamotte, 2014). One of the first popular Latino Hip-Hop artists during the foundational years of

the Zulu Nation was DJ Charlie Chase of the Cold Crush Brothers (Flores, 2000). This highly influential DJ introduced musical bits from Latin music in his sets in a way that most people did not grasp they were partying to Latin music (Flores, 2000).

Despite the fact that Latinos visibly had a big effect on the creation and popularity of Hip-Hop, they were not largely recognized and respected as being a part of the mainstream or commercial Hip-Hop scene until 1990 (Flores, 2000). It is possible that this viewpoint is the aftermath of Hip-Hop being conquered with solely African American issues by popular rap artists during Hip-Hop's early years. It is reasonable to understand that the African American supremacy of rap music influences the masses to overlook the impact Latino artists have made and to correlate Hip-Hop as a pure African American cultural movement rather than a ghetto-driven movement of suppressed minorities consisting of African Americans and Latinos (Keyes, 2004). Consequently, the challenges faced by the Latina/o community was not recognized by the masses because of the issues the African American community was raising were pushed to the front of the line of mainstream Hip-Hop culture (Keyes, 2004). In a way, this divided Latinos and African Americans whilst uplifting African American Hip-Hop as being a cultural movement.

Widely recognized Latina/o rappers including Mellow Man Ace, Immortal Technique, Kid Frost, Big Pun, Cypress Hill, Fat Joe, and more recently, Cardi B are all credited with the expansion and respect of Latina/o Hip-Hop (Aahlin, 2013). Those rappers and so many other Latina/o contributions to Hip-Hop culture assure that rap will not be merely thought of as an African American cultural movement, but as an uproar made by underprivileged minority groups not just in America, but worldwide in this

current day and age (Persaud, 2011). When chronicling Hip-Hop, Latina/os have contributed greatly to the growth, circulation, and diversification of Hip-Hop culture (Reznowski, 2014, p. 89). While they have been valued by their peers and overlooked by the media until recently, the Latina/o Hip-Hop community similar to the African American Hip-Hop community has influenced the fashion, slang words used, and music produced within the Latina/o community for several decades.

Hip-Hop artists from the Latina/o community have pulled elements from down south Hip-Hop and west coast Hip-Hop, along with dembow, which is a Dominican style of Hip-Hop to produce appealing music. Another contribution by the Latina/o Hip-Hop culture is reggaeton, which is a Puerto Rican musical genre to add a different musical flavor to Hip-Hop culture. Latina/o Hip-Hop has grown into a popular genre on local rap radio stations, pop radio stations, and online media platforms such as YouTube, Apple Music, Pandora, and Spotify. At this time, a scant amount of research exists on Hip-Hop from the Latina/o community and its impact on people. This gap in the literature provides an opportunity for researchers to explore the topic. A hopeful outcome of this study is that future scholars examine how the Latina/o community is influenced by Hip-Hop, especially Latina/o youth.

Hip-Hop's Global and Youth Impact

Over the years, Hip-Hop shifted from being unsung to a dominant phenomenon not only in United States but around the world (Motley & Henderson, 2008). Hip-Hop culture has now morphed into a lifestyle that shapes many of its followers around the worlds' actions, thoughts, and vernacular used. American media's commercializing Hip-Hop throughout the years via interviews, news stories, music videos, television shows,

movies, and dedicated radio stations exposed the nation and the world to the cultural juggernaut (Faniel, 2013). Hip-Hop culture soon began being analyzed and written about by columnists and academic researchers during the 1990s and early 2000s (Faniel, 2013). Some of those pieces include William Perkins' *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture* (1996), Nelson George's *Hip-Hop in America* (1998), and Jeff Chang's *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (2005, as cited in Faniel, 2013).

Boyd (2003) argued that Hip-Hop's significant effect on American culture and throughout the world can be attributed to two factors: (a) Black culture's innovative and unique style and (b) Black culture's ability to wedge itself between terror and amusement for the White popular culture (Abe, 2009). Boyd (2003) posited that because of the monetary prospective placed on Hip-Hop by White corporations, its flame has not been extinguished when certain protesters have tried to censor elements of the genre (as cited in Abe, 2009). For many in America and around the world, Hip-Hop culture represents the current trend or the newest craze that young people flock to (Abe, 2009). Hip-Hop's global impact began to be fostered not only through music but by way of b-boy/b-girl dancing, graffiti, and movies (Price, 2006). The 1983 films "*Wild Style*" and "*Style Wars*" assisted in giving those components of Hip-Hop culture global exposure to break into global pop culture (Harkness, 2014). The success of those motion pictures and the embrace of Hip-Hop by Music Television led the way for movies such as *Beat Street*, *Breakin'*, *Breakin' 2*, and *Krush Groove* to bolster Hip-Hop's presence and popularity inside and outside of the United States (Harkness, 2014). The exposure of Hip-Hop through various forms of media soon gave birth to rappers, DJs, dance crews, graffiti

artists, and Hip-Hop spaces in Africa, Brazil, Europe, Japan, and throughout the Caribbean to name a few worldwide locales (Price, 2006).

Hip-Hop fashion, language, and entrepreneurial spirit assisted with furthering the culture, not only for Hip-Hop's American followers but its international supporters as well. Karl Kani, African American College Alliance; Michael Jordan, by way of Nike; Cross Colours, FUBU, Sean Jean, Ecko, Roc-A-Wear, Phat Farm, Baby Phat, Apple Bottom Jeans, and many other clothing companies emerged to create the attire many Hip-Hop emcees, DJs, break-dancers, and other followers of Hip-Hop would wear to signify their membership in the culture (Price, 2006). These clothing lines were not just worn in the United States but other countries as well. Hip-Hop videos and other forms of media exposed the world to the style of dress by influencers of Hip-Hop culture long before social media influencers existed (Clay, 2003). Young people, mainly, but not solely, African American youth, have been the largest supporters of these clothing brands in America. Hairstyles, durags, gold and platinum capped teeth, sagging pants, and oversized or tall t-shirts were additional types of dress associated with the Hip-Hop community (Clay, 2003; Price, 2006).

The vernacular used by the Hip-Hop community is one that is unique and innovative. The lingo from the streets has always been a component of Hip-Hop despite Hip-Hop becoming mainstream over the years (Price, 2006). Popular society has picked up some of the jargon originated in Hip-Hop culture, despite facing criticism over some of the phrases and colloquialisms that have been deemed obscene. Price (2006) wrote that the original Hip-Hop terms *dope*, *jiggy*, *bling*, and *phat* all currently exist in the latest

version of the Oxford English Dictionary, verifying its acceptance and use across the broader society outside of the Hip-Hop community.

Hip-Hop's influence on young people is one that has continued to evolve and stand the test of time since its formation in the 1970s. In 1992, the results of a Gallup nationwide survey of young people between the ages of thirteen and seventeen indicated that Hip-Hop music was the most desired musical genre of youth (26%), trailed narrowly by rock music (25%) (Morgan & Bennett, 2011). Moreover, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) reported that during the time period of 1999 to 2008, Hip-Hop music was the second-most-purchased music after rock for all age groups (Morgan & Bennett, 2011). To reveal the worldwide influence of Hip-Hop culture, E.M. Johnson (2014) conducted an investigation on the impact Hip-Hop culture and Hip-Hop spoken word had on young people. The results of Johnson's investigation indicated "their [young people] engagement level within their community, empowerment, adult interactions, educational skills, soft skills, and self-expression" was influenced by Hip-Hop culture (p. 53). In addition, E.M. Johnson's (2014) exploration recognized Hip-Hop as being culturally vital for young persons of color in realizing their strong suits and challenges in relation to their community of origin.

A favorable end product of Hip-Hop's influence is how it is able to bring people of various backgrounds and ethnicities from around the globe together. Hip-Hop began as a subset in African American society; however, it has morphed into being a phenomenon similar to a worldwide religion. It is evident that Hip-Hop culture has validated its transcendence to bond the masses of youth globally (Morgan & Bennett, 2011; Shanks, 2017).

Veltre and Hadley (2012) wrote that for countless young people, regardless of their gender, Hip-Hop is larger than the culture. Hip-Hop serves as a fantasy, an escape, an emotional conduit, an instrument for knowledge, a shoulder to lean on, a method of conveying messages, a political declaration, a manner to establish rapport, and a steady presence for its followers. Due to all of the roles that Hip-Hop fills for its followers, Ingalls (2012) stated that, "for urban youth, Hip-Hop is the predominant language" (p. 103). E.M. Johnson (2014) mentioned how several young people referred to Hip-Hop as being the core of their lives, with quotes stating its "like breathing," "in my veins and in my blood," "my language," and "home" (p. 46). A study on Hip-Hop videos, social websites, and cyberspace by Childs (2014), confirmed that those forms of media regularly inundate the youth of all races. Young people's actions, feelings, and values are either positively or negatively guided by those various forms of media (Hollie, 2018).

Hollie (2018) declared that parasocial relationships are formed by Hip-Hop artists and influencers by the witnesses of the media consumed, which only intensifies their affect. Gleason, Theran, and Newberg (2017) defined parasocial interactions and relationships as being "one-sided connections imagined with celebrities and media figures, are common in adolescence and might play a role in adolescent identity formation and autonomy development". Fowler (2017) reasoned that Hip-Hop is tailored by local neighborhoods that permit young people to cultivate deep-rooted bonds to the culture (Fowler, 2017). Hip-Hop culture does not change to fit in with the status quo; instead, it soaks up elements of its surroundings thus revealing the simplicity of entering various doorways of Hip-Hop culture (Fowler, 2017). For this reason, Hip-Hop will always be the voice, tool, and culture of youth not only in America, but worldwide. Thus,

making it worthwhile to investigate how Hip-Hop organizational involvement impacts young people at colleges and universities.

Hip-Hop as Spiritual and Therapeutic Restoration

“We missed a lot of church, so the music is our confessional” (Patton, 1998, track 5). Lyrics from rap songs, such as the one aforementioned, are examples of the abilities of some emcees to connect Hip-Hop and religion in a witty style that indicates their knowledge of standard religious practices. Elligan (2012) wrote about several spiritual figureheads who realized the power rap songs have at transmitting messages to young people and have integrated rap into religious music in recent years to connect with people who would not otherwise listen to their religious messages. Similar to ministers or preachers leading their flock using the word of God, emcees or rappers lead their fans by using lyrics and storytelling.

Hadley and Yancy (2012) reported that ministers and rappers each sprouted out of the same past, and that is why some individuals see parallels in both ministry and rap music. Three once famous rappers, MC Hammer, Run of Run-DMC, and Mase all transitioned from being rappers to preachers. This change may seem like it is from one extreme to the other at first glance; however, many rappers have referenced various aspects of spirituality in their songs, rap videos, and some in the artwork for their albums, such as Kanye West, DMX, Lauryn Hill, and Bone Thugs-n- Harmony. Some institutions of higher education have even experimented with offering Hip-Hop and religion courses, including Boston University, Duke University, Louisiana State University, Princeton University, Rice University, and the University of Arizona. Numerous scholars (Barnes, 2008; Erksine, 2003; Johnson, 2013; Miller, 2012; Miller, Pinn, & Freeman, 2015; Sorett,

2009; Tinajero, 2013) have been writing about the way Hip-Hop and religion impact and influence each other and the world to inform society of how these two elephants in the room guide their follower's lives in a variety of ways. More individuals inside and outside of the Hip-Hop community realize Hip-Hop culture is its own religion that can educate, empower, and be a form of therapy for those within its community.

Sermons written by ministers or pastors are a form of education and call to action to those individuals in the audience. As mentioned earlier in this document, emcees or rappers provide an almost identical service to their listeners. African American church leaders and churches have a long history of supplying imperative human necessities in the community, such as sustenance, clothing, and refuge (TraDer-Leigh, 2008). The African American church's legacy of opposing oppression, manipulation, and mistreatment gives the church a role that is consistently important today as it ever was in the past (TraDer-Leigh, 2008). This viewpoint is because Black church life and its responsibilities being molded by the African American experiences and encounters with social and economic inequalities (TraDer-Leigh, 2008). Like Hip-Hop, social and economic unrest within its community obliges the African American church to stay attentive in challenging the state of disparity in America (TraDer-Leigh, 2008).

Barnes (2015) defined the cultural capital of the Black Church as "tangible and intangible congregational assets that position it as a potential bridge between inadequate and improved academic outcomes for Black students" (p. 113). This definition was further elaborated by Barnes (2015), stating that church cultural capital and Black youth educational outcomes are also correlated. McCray, Grant, & Beachum (2010) presented pedagogy of self-development based on Black youth traits (i.e., aspirational, linguistic,

familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital) that can be harnessed for their educational success. Barrett (2010) contended that Black churches can apply and generate social and cultural capital to educate and empower Black youth. Prior researchers (Doane & Elliott, 2015; Jim et al., 2015; Seeman, Dubin, & Seeman, 2003) acknowledged that participation in forms of religion and spirituality aid in immune function, cardiovascular health, neuroendocrine function, and other physical health outcomes. Gallegos and Segrin (2019) reasoned that spirituality could contribute to a sense of connection and support that influence experiences of solitude. Hence, well-being based on their research aligns with Hill and Pargament's 2003 study on spirituality and mental health.

McKenzie and Rouse (2013) utilized a 2000 Religion and Politics Survey to examine the influences of race-specific religious theologies and habits on mass opinions. The results of their investigation uncovered that, on average, African Americans and Latinos were more religious than Whites across a range of personal beliefs and behavior measures (McKenzie & Rouse, 2013). Young people and people, in general, facing any type of discrimination or needing some inspiration while facing difficult times can not only find solace and encouragement from the church but from their involvement in Hip-Hop as well.

Hip-Hop as “Food for the Soul”

Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life. – Berthold Auerbach

To describe how music should be considered as being food for a person's soul, Aditi Sarawagi (2016) penned the following:

Food gives our bodies the energy it requires to function on a daily basis and this energy is used up and hence food is required on a regular basis to draw energy

regularly too. Music is energy too. It is a mix of vibrations and sounds which come together to create rhythm and hence an eclectic mix of energy. Just like our bodies need food and energy to thrive in this world, music acts as food for the soul rejuvenating it, filling it with energy and vitality. (para. 1)

African American and Latina/o communities have been influenced by Hip-Hop and religion (Barnes, 2008; Calvillo, 2019; Flores, 2000; Kirk-Duggan & Hall, 2011; Lorenz, 2013; Price, 2012; Watkins, 2015; Woodbine, 2016). African American males, in particular, have had an attraction to the culture of Hip-Hop and rap music because it voices the ambitions and obstacles of African American males and other minorities who have wrestled with societal roadblocks and racism (Greene, 2014; Kitwana, 2002; Washington, 2018). Researchers (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005; Travis, 2013) conducted studies prior that suggested a substantial proportion of African American males have a bond to Hip-Hop culture and its rap component in particular. In a study on patterns of audio and video media consumption, Roberts et al. (2005) reported that “over three-quarters of African American kids age 8- to 18-year-olds declared that they were rap/Hip-Hop listeners (81%), as compared to 60% for Whites and 70% for Hispanics” (pp. 28–29).

Authors, Elligan (2000, 2004) and Tyson (2002, 2006) are writers and researchers who are frequently acknowledged for opening eyes and minds to Hip-Hop culture and rap music being used for clinical social work. Dr. Edgar Tyson has completed several studies focusing on the ways Hip-Hop aids in fueling more in-depth counseling sessions with clients of different races from the inner city (Kobin & Tyson, 2006), and helping patients attain better treatment results (Elligan, 2004; Tyson, 2003). In the year 2000, Dr. Don

Elligan devised the catchphrase “rap therapy,” which is a five-step method for immersing Hip-Hop culture and lyrics from rap songs into counseling sessions conducted with African American male clientele (Washington, 2018). Rap therapy is a counseling format that incites thoughtful conversation where partakers can participate in critical thinking and evaluate the lyrics and meanings relative to themselves (Allen, 2005). This type of therapy is just one of several unique types that have developed to attract youth and older individuals who might not otherwise be open to counseling.

Culturally Sensitive Therapy is an approach that Hadley and Yancy (2012) stated would be suitable for those individuals who are members of the Hip-Hop community because the use of rap music would acknowledge, cherish, and appreciate the cultural features of the patient. The authors continued, stating that if rap songs are what affects the patient’s actions and mindset, the culturally sensitive approach is an excellent choice to help the individual. This type of therapy is helpful not only to people that are members of the Hip-Hop community, but to others outside of Hip-Hop because of the need for consideration of diversity and cultural competence being more and more critical as our world grows progressively diverse (Barnett & Bivings, 2002).

Hip-Hop allows for something that is typically feared by communities of color to be accepted uniquely. Mental illness is a disability that some communities find humiliating, especially African American and Latino communities (Alvarez, 2012). Reasons for this reaction from those two communities are gender expectations and universal skepticism of the mental health field, along with the fact that the mental health profession has its foundation in the White middle class (Alvarez, 2012). Alvarez (2012) revealed that men of color especially, are “groomed to be strong, suppress their pain,

keep their feelings under wrap, and to figure things out by themselves, deterring them from finding assistance, which causes some to begin using drugs and alcohol for alleviation, fostering supplementary well-being hazards.” (p. 121)

Hadley and Yancy’s (2012) outlined several ways Hip-Hop can be a coping mechanism for people: (a) listening, (b) performing, (c) creating, and (d) improvising (freestyling). Rap and Hip-Hop therapies have the potential to be a meaningful mechanism for growth with vulnerable inner-city young people, especially males. These therapies could forecast possible success for counselors in the education field, working in similar populations at their institution (Gonzalez & Hayes, 2009). According to Gonzalez and Hayes (2009), rap therapy can be a valuable instrument for school counselors to foster a better bond with students, conduct time-effective therapy, and utilize rap music to be a spark for transformation that completely engrosses the students.

Hip-Hop as a Coping Mechanism

Aside from institutions of higher education verifying they create welcoming and engaging environments, institutions must also have resources made available to assist students in coping with challenging times in their lives (Maina, Burrell, & Hampton, 2011). Bryant-Davis (2005) researched the coping methods used by African American adult survivors of adolescence violent behavior. The outcome of his interviews with the 73 participants of his study revealed that, “Hip-Hop along with community support, spirituality, activism, creativity, introspection, confrontation, therapy and/or medication, escapism, desensitization, transcendence, humor, safety precautions, and racial reframing/racial attribution were the coping methods utilized by the study participants” (p. 410). Similarly, in a case study performed by Wells-Wilbon, McPhatter, and Vakalahi

(2016), a teenage African American male that had a rough upbringing and was diagnosed with bipolar disorder was evaluated via group sessions at a group home during the assessment. The young man refused to remove his headphones during the sessions, and later the therapist realized that young man was listening to a rapper with whom he felt he could identify. This young man informed his therapist that the message in the song could inspire anyone that they could be successful in life (Wells-Wilbon et al., 2016). Over time, after experiencing his therapist's openness to his reflection on various rap songs by different rappers, the teen participant was able to discuss his perspective of being shunned by his relatives, doubt regarding his sexual identity, and anxiety of having to take care of himself. The African American teen in this particular study was able to show tremendous growth in giving a voice to his emotions and build upon the counseling he continued to receive after the evaluation was completed. The young man was able to use rap music as a coping tool to progress through challenges presented in his life (Wells-Wilbon et al., 2016).

Other forms of coping from Hip-Hop culture that do not always get the credit they deserve are graffiti and breakdancing. Ismer (2009) wrote about how graffiti and breakdancing were regarded as artistic ways that young people cope with trauma experienced in their lives via research by Klingman, Shalev, and Pearlman (2000) and Luzzatto and Jacobson (2001). Ismer (2009) mentioned that although the style of graffiti mentioned in Klingman et al. (2000) was not Hip-Hop graffiti because it dealt with the aftermath of a death of an Israeli politician, the artwork still represented how an unconventional method of releasing anger by young people aided them in expressing their feelings using nonviolent and therapeutic approaches.

Bohnsack and Nohl (2003) discussed how breakdancing allowed teenagers to use those creative environments as a means to engage with diverse people, while at the same time being a positive distraction for evading possible challenges that existed both in their homes and in their community. Young people being able to learn from and grow from difficulties in life assist them with transitioning into the global society as a competent, confident adult. If components of Hip-Hop culture aforementioned assisted young people with navigating their feelings and response in positive ways, instead of holding them in or making decisions that can alter their lives in negative ways, these types of therapies should be considered beneficial and be used. Hip-Hop groups or spaces offer young people a more serene and innovative method to deal with personal issues (Ismer, 2009). Hip-Hop culture offers young people “real-time coping response” (Spencer et al., 2003, p. 183) to the challenges faced in their environments. Ismer (2009) suggested the background and the core principles of Hip-Hop transformed young peoples’ experiences into a perfect setting to practice constructive reactions to life’s trials and tribulations.

Engaging and Supportive Environments for Students of Color Success

The terms involvement and engagement of higher education students have been acknowledged by scholars as being scholastically beneficial experiences inside and outside of the classroom that are positively connected to the development of students and the contentment of their collegiate experience (Komives, 2019; Kuh, 2003; Museus & Yi, 2015; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Quaye & Harper, 2014; Tinto, 1993; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). An institution’s culture and atmosphere are essential elements that shape students of color feeling of belonging and success throughout their college experience (Doan, 2011). In this section, research will be examined to explore the type of

environments and supportive organizations, students of color need to aid them in being successful. To conclude, research will be used to highlight the relevance of Hip-Hop spaces and organizations at institutions and their correlation to student engagement on campus (Petchauer, 2010), similar to the engagement of other student groups and subcultures (Guiffrida, 2003; Magolda & Ebben, 2007).

Campus Culture and Environment for African American Students Success

Scholars (Davis, 1994; Simmons, 2017; Strayhorn, 2008) have conducted research on retention of students of color and suggested that university's campus culture and environment are significant influences of how successful minority students are academically and how well they engage socially at their university. HWIs must create supportive places and spaces for African American students to feel as if they matter and are welcome, similar to the feeling of support they would experience attending a HBCUs. African American students should feel no differences in the support they receive in acclimating to the campus culture. Creating a campus climate that is all-encompassing for students, regardless of their ethnicity, and to fully support African American students' success should be essential goals for all institutions of higher education, not only HBCUs.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities were established before 1964. The Higher Education Act of 1965 (later revised in 1986 by Congress) recognized HBCUs as institutions whose primary aim was, and is, the teaching of African Americans (Pierre & Welch, 2011). At this present time, over 100 HBCUs serve students in America, and roughly half of them are publicly funded, and nearly half are privately funded (Pierre & Welch, 2011). Despite enrollment numbers of African American students who attend

HBCUs declining over the past four decades since the U.S. Supreme Court's verdict in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954, HBCUs continue to be important in fostering productive citizens (Brown, 2013). These colleges and universities will be crucial to the growth of the present and impending labor market (Knight, Davenport, Green-Powell, & Hilton, 2012). Historically Black College and Universities frequently struggle with resources and do not have the public awareness compared to HWIs; hence, it is vital to continuously evaluate their effectiveness in educating and supporting one of, if not the most, disadvantaged student demographics (i.e., African American males) in the higher education arena (Knight, et al., 2012).

Roper's (2008) research resulted in evidence that African American students are negatively affected by the lack of positive mentors. Gardenhire, Cerna, & Ivery (2016) identified not having good mentors as being a challenge for African American male students. The researchers stated that mentoring can offer African American male students with steady support and direction essential to being successful in college; however, the researchers were clear to acknowledge that it is complicated for colleges to supply this type of assistance. Key aspects the researchers identified that are vital to providing a valuable mentorship program involve a good match between mentor and mentee, thorough preparation of mentors, and continuousness contact by the mentor to the mentee. The next two paragraphs offer suggestions on methods that should be implemented to improve the success rate of African American students.

To understand how to attract and maintain African American students at HWIs, research should be conducted to examine how HBCUs recruit and nurture their students. Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek (2004) advised that HBCUs have a broader range of

culturally attractive settings for African American students to participate in the college community. However, some researchers (Bohr, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1994; Chen, Ingram, & Davis, 2014; Kim, 2002; Seifert, Drummond, & Pascarella, 2006; Strayhorn & DeVita, 2009) have noted that African American students' academic success and gratification with their institutions of higher education are contingent on the supportive and inclusive atmosphere of the campus, despite the institution being a HBCU or a HWI. Recommendations on ways institutions of higher education, in general, can create atmospheres inside and outside of the classroom for African American students to engage and persist are: (a) proactive academic advisors and mentors; (b) prompting student feedback on university policies and campus services; (c) having diverse faculty and staff; (d) engaging pedagogy being delivered inside the classroom; (e) enhancement of extracurricular activities, and (f) scholarships to aid students from low-income families (Brooms, Goodman, & Clark, 2015; Nelson Laird, Bridges, Morelan-Quainoo, Williams, & Holmes, 2007; Wiggan, 2008; Yearwood & Jones, 2012).

Institutions of higher education must embrace and implement recommendations by scholarly researchers throughout all levels of leadership and make it an ingrained mission of the university. University administration cannot rely on faculty and staff diversity committees to host meetings and sponsor sporadic events hoping these actions will result in minority students feeling welcomed and supported by the institution (Kuh Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek, 2006). All administrators, faculty, staff, and students must genuinely make a concerted effort to make everyone at their institution regardless of their race, faith, and so on feel as if they belong, are respected, and will be

supported inside and outside of the classroom (Berman, Chaffee, & Sarmiento, 2018; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).

Campus Culture and Environment for Latina/o Students Success

Transitioning to and being successful in college have been struggles because of cultural stressors for the largest growing ethnic group in the United States, Latina/os (Llamas, Morgan Consoli, Hendricks, & Nguyen, 2018). In 2013, 2.2 million Latina/os were enrolled in institutions of higher education; however, a mere 15% of Latina/os in the United States during that time held bachelor's degrees, compared to 36.2% of Whites, 22.5% of African Americans, and 53.9% of Asians (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Institutions of higher educations and researchers must identify remedies to support Latina/os and all students of colors in being successful in college, because people of color in the United States need enhancements in their social status and financial well-being to support themselves and their families for future generations (Murphy & Murphy, 2018).

Franklin (2019) examined forms of coping tactics for racial microaggression fatigue of 399 African American and Latina/o college students. Racial/ethnic student organizational involvement was identified as a resource that could aid students of color with coping, because of the social support they obtain through participation with racial/ethnic organizations (Franklin, 2019). Llamas et al. (2018) identified intragroup marginalization, lack of peer support, and psychological distress caused by problematic campus climates, discrimination, and the nonexistence of scholastic role models as factors that contribute to Latina/o not finding success in higher education. Intragroup marginalization is defined as “the perceived interpersonal distancing by members of

one's ethnic/racial group when the individual deviates from cultural norms.” (Llamas et al., 2018, pp.133-134) The authors (Llamas et al., 2018) recommended a revamp of campus orientation sessions whereby counseling centers are highlighted and specialized orientation for students of color being developed to address unique circumstances that help students of color feel as if they belong and can be successful in their new environment.

Murphy and Murphy (2018) acknowledged high school preparation, enrollment in summer college bridge programs, admission in cohort groups, and participating in cultural support groups could aid in Latina/o student success. Baker (2013) completed research on social support and success in higher education for students of color. Results of Baker's (2013) research supported findings that care was most effective in promoting academic success of Latino college students especially if it was received from Latino faculty. Gonzalez and Morrison (2015) performed research on Latina/o persistence in higher education. They suggested that Latina/o students are more likely to achieve success in higher education if they have chances to partake in events associated with their particular cultural backgrounds.

Loveland (2018) interviewed Chris Neito, who served as Senior Vice President for Program Development and Expansion at the National Hispanic Institute, as part of research on creating a sense of community and belonging for Latina/o students. Neito acknowledged that institutions of higher education must be associated with organizations comprised of college-ready Latina/o students and work diligently to implement culturally based outreach ventures for Latina/o students (Loveland, 2018). Cerezo, Lyda, Enriquez, Beristianos, and Connor (2015) concluded that some on-campus student organizations

could aid in what Neito suggested, such as Greek organizations and Latina/o-centered organizations. Cerezo et al. (2015) mentioned that Latina/o-centered groups and fraternities served as support systems and provided social networks that facilitated sense of belonging and successful academic progress. A direct quote from a student interviewed by Cerezo et al. (2015) sums up how their organizational involvement was a positive influence on their academic success:

If we're thinking about college community, then my [fraternity] brothers [are] where I feel it. They help us. Like right now, I'm struggling with the whole academics and stuff, they're helping me. We have study hours to try to get each other to advance because that's what we stand for, and we can't be seen doing something opposite. (p. 252)

Institutions of higher education can use these recommendations by researchers aforementioned to support Latina/o students on their campus in feeling that they belong at their institutions while supplying the students with the resources needed to succeed inside and outside of the classroom.

Ethnic Student Organizations

Ethnic student organization (ESO) “refers to a student organization established for the explicit purpose of promoting the cultural heritage, interests, and unity of a single ethnic group” (Negy & Lunt, 2008, p. 179). Ethnic student organizations can make an impact on college campuses because they provide a space for cultural transition and affiliation for their members to be surrounded by ethnic attentiveness, opportunities for ethnic demonstrations and activism, and chances for ethnic recognition (Museus, 2008). Organizations, such as these, have been recognized for providing opportunities for

students to engage and uniquely transition to their institution that they would not experience with their peers that belong to the majority demographic. These groups have a recognition factor, with flexible levels of power and importance, at institutions of higher education. Also, these organizations allow for community building and ethnic connections between students of color (Doan, 2011; Guiffrida, 2003; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Museus, 2008; Negy & Lunt, 2008).

Park (2014) examined the ethnic make-up of student clubs, along with the connection between student club membership and cross-cultural companionship. Also, Park assessed whether or not student clubs impede or enable intercultural relations and bonds. The researcher retrieved data from the National Longitudinal Study of Freshmen to track a unit of 3,008 collegians from 28 selective universities throughout four academic years from the Fall 1999 semester to the Spring 2003 semester. During the collegians' junior year, the researcher questioned participants about the majority ethnicity of students in two student clubs, of which they were members. During their senior year, they were told to contemplate about the four students with which they had strongest bonds during their college years and each student's race. Outcomes of the study established that students of color had more interracial friendships with their school mates than White students, and reported that, in general, students of all races dedicated more time to peers of their ethnicity in the organizations of which they were members. The author suggested that future research should focus on the role ethnic student organizations play in students' encounters with intergroup and intragroup connections.

Similarly, Baker (2008) reviewed the influence of memberships in six different types of student groups, along with membership in cross-cultural student groups, to

determine the impact on the scholastic performance of students of color enrolled at 27 institutions. The investigator collected student data from the NLSF and tracked 1,907 collegians from their first year until commencement using regression analyses for each ethnicity and gender to forecast their grade point averages based on their student club memberships. Results indicated that the ethnic make-up of student clubs did not statistically significantly lower the scholastic performance of Black and Latino collegians. Conversely, the scholastic achievement of Latina students was negatively affected by membership in the same ethnic clubs and recreational sports clubs. In contrast, those groups did not negatively influence Black and Latino collegians' academics. Greek Life clubs had adverse influences on all groups, except for Latinas. The data also indicated that political clubs improved the scholastic performance of all students except Black females. Baker (2008) concluded that civic clubs are primarily the most favorable type of club for scholastic achievement for minority collegians. The results suggested that art-centered clubs, such as music and theater groups, enhanced the scholastic achievement of Black collegians, but not Latino collegians.

During the same year of the study aforementioned, Negy and Lunt (2008) assessed how ethnic student organizations were recognized by students. Research questions posed by the researchers were (a) To what extent do college students believe that ESOs are beneficial or necessary to campus life for students, (b) Do college students perceive ESOs to be fair or acceptable to students in general, (c) Do college students believe ESOs contribute to racial or ethnic separatism on campus, and (d) To what degree do students have an interest in becoming members of ESOs. Outcomes of the study were that students of all races and cultures did not confirm the existence of a strong

representation of ethnic student organizations at their institution. The participants of the investigation only offered criticism towards the student organizations that were identified as supporting the majority student population (i.e., White students), as the other ethnic student organizations were not disfavored. Students of Hispanic and African American descent regarded their ESO as being considerably more valuable and indispensable, more adequate, and influenced a lesser amount of racism and division as opposed to the other ESOs in which they were not involved. Negy and Lunt (2008) revealed that even though students trust that ethnic student organizations serve a great purpose, some of their opinions regarding the end product of ethnic student organizations remained indecisive. This study was unique compared to the other investigations mentioned prior because the students offered such assorted viewpoints on ethnic student organizations.

Petchauer (2010) conducted research regarding student's use of cultural instead of ethnic commonality, that being Hip-Hop, to learn about how Hip-Hop settings and customs were incorporated into students' collegiate experiences. The author surveyed six students who were enrolled in college in the southwestern region of the United States and whose collegiate experience was shaped by Hip-Hop. The students reported that student organizations that hosted events involving Hip-Hop were an essential part of their undergraduate experiences. These experiences allowed them to connect with other students and non-students with Hip-Hop as a common interest. Petchauer suggested Hip-Hop organizations be classified as cultural organizations on campuses because they are much more than music or recreation groups. Specifically, Hip-Hop organizations can be important sites of identity formation, expression, and social support for students.

Ethnocentrism, a concept first written about in scholarly research by Sumner (1906), could be a possible reason for the inconsistency among groups of students. Bizumic and Duckitt (2012) defined ethnocentrism as being “a type of ethnic or cultural egocentrism, containing a viewpoint in the dominance of an individual’s sole group, comprising of its ideals and customs, and frequently exhibits disdain, animosity, and opposition concerning any other groups” (p. 887). Because of ethnocentrism, it is possible some students believe their ethnic student organizations are better suited or more significant than alternative typical student organizations. Research is limited on ESOs, and scholars who have conducted investigations on ESOs have revealed that a majority of students are not capable of linking the vital role these organizations play to individual members and the entire institution.

Petchauer’s (2010) research advocating that Hip-Hop student organizations be recognized as culturally based organizations established a foundation for this study to be conducted to ascertain the impact such organizations make in college students’ lives. Being that Hip-Hop continues to be a cultural juggernaut today, especially to young adults, it is vital to perform an inquiry to analyze how Hip-Hop organizations serving as culturally based organizations may foster students’ sense of belonging to their institution (Petchauer, 2012). Institutions of higher education that want students of color to flourish should provide support to ensure that students will be successful (McClain & Perry, 2017; Quaye et al., 2015). This is where all the extracurricular resources, one being ethnic student organizations, can lend a hand. However, governance of such organizations requires a commitment of human, economic, and physical resources, such as staff, finances, and facilities that necessitate careful oversight. For institutions of

higher education, assessments of these resource's efficiency are vital and should be continuously required to confirm that they are beneficial to the study body and institution.

Engaging Students of Color Through Cultural Organizations

Since the 19th century, one of the most discussed topics at the forefront of higher education in America has been how inclusive and supportive of students of color institutions of higher education have been (Moxley, Najor-Durack, & Dumbrigue, 2016). Many colleges boast of having a diverse student body, along with faculty and staff; however, that is not always true. While individual institutions of higher education in the 19th century made internal changes to open their doors to minority students to attend their colleges, it was over halfway into the 20th century before education in America began integrating schools. Institutions of higher education experienced the growth of students of color as they watched the numbers slowly creep up over the years; however, advancements in minority student growth has been devastatingly slow because of the absence of purposeful enrollment practices on the racial environment on the university campuses. The evidence suggesting a connection between a larger ethnic minority population and a decrease in racist behaviors encourages campus leaders to foster diverse communities on college campuses.

Over the last three decades, it became apparent that students of color required different resources to strengthen their chances of being successful as compared to their White peers that were the majority at Historically White Institutions (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). Students of color, unfortunately, had to advocate for themselves to overcome internal institutional obstacles that hindered them from feeling as if they belonged at the institution (Balcacer, 2018; Garcia, 2017). This situation was created

because administrators at HWIs were not invested enough to spearhead attempts to provide the resources needed to help students of color. (Johnson, 2014; McElderry & Rivera, 2017). According to Sutton and Kimbrough (2001), during the 1960s and 1970s, college administrators begin to work to provide the resources necessary for students of color because of the rise in discontent for the lack of culturally diverse courses and extracurricular opportunities on campus.

Colleges and universities that seek to actively enroll and support students from diverse backgrounds for the sake of a better education are multicultural in nature. Inclusive institutions ignite creativity, expression, and achievement because all individuals feel valued (Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991). One way of establishing a positive support system for students of color is for ethnic student organizations to be formed at institutions of higher education. Due to the myriad of cultural differences from the majority population on campuses, students of color, in particular, are successful after affiliating with cultural/ethnic clubs. (Guiffrida, 2003; Hernandez & Lopez, 2004; Museus, 2008; Sedlacek, 1999; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001; Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995).

Engaging Latina/o Students Through Cultural Organizations

Several researchers (Calderon Galdeano, Flores, & Moder, 2012; Gonzalez and Morrison, 2015; Harper & Harris, 2010; Perez II, 2017) have stated that information on the social encounters of Latina/o college students is sparse, although Latina/o people are the quickest rising ethnic group in the United States, with one of the bottommost rankings of success in higher education (Santiago & Galdeano, 2015). The current employment market in the United States necessitates that individuals obtain more than a high school

diploma and even a bachelor's degree. With a rapidly increasing Latina/o population, improving the scholastic achievement of Latina/o people is crucial (Santiago & Galdeano, 2015). Estrada, Mejia, and Hufana (2016) stated, "social involvement on campus cultivates personal confidence and a network of peers to be able to navigate the arduous successfully, and for some lengthy, academic pipeline" (p.315). Estrada et al. (2016) conducted an investigation on the shared experiences of six Latino male students and their knowledge of brotherhood via their involvement in student organizations. The six participants were involved in either Greek-lettered fraternities or male-centered Latino organizations. The results of the investigation identified five themes of the participant's experiences via brotherhood: (a) desire to do good, (b) relating that stimulates, (c) social networking and support, (d) extended family at school, and (e) personal growth. According to Estrada et al. (2017), participant produced outcomes were: academic excellence, cultural pride, and personal and social responsibility, brotherhood is an ideological space that promotes activities such as checking-in with one another, participating in topic discussions, fund-raising, mentoring, and spending time with fellow members and their families. Those social experiences engender feelings of connectedness with each other, a sense of belonging at the school, and layout conditions that help them reinforce, even redefine, their multiple identities. (p. 330)

Salient key points from the investigation were facets of male social connection, *machismo* (masculinity) and *familismo* (family orientation), along with searching out assistance. The researchers suggested that more studies be completed on brotherhood-based organizations, Latina/o-based organizations, and impactful social experiences of Latina/o students. Scholarly research on the role Latina/o Greek organizational

involvement plays in nurturing achievement in transitioning to institutions of higher education is scarce (Atkinson, Dean, and Espino, 2010; Garcia, 2005; Kimbrough, 2003; McCall, 2007; Moreno & Banuelos 2013). Despite the lack of research on Latina/o Greek organizations, some researchers have endorsed positive outcomes of student participation outside of the classroom (Astin, 1984; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Montelongo, 2003; Montelongo, 2017; Shaulskiy, 2016).

In a similar analysis, Moreno and Banuelos (2013) evaluated the impact of Latina/o fraternities and sororities on the academic and social encounters of Latina/o collegiate students. For their study, Moreno and Banuelos (2013) selected twenty Latina/o participants who were enrolled in two institutions of higher education in California. Three key themes emerged from the analysis: (a) peer support and encouragement, (b) sense of belonging, and (c) campus community engagement. The outcomes of the investigation were that Latina/o students who held membership in Latina/o Greek organizations obtained support from their peers and inspiration to succeed, had a sense of belonging at their institution, and developed to be galvanized and invigorated to undertake leadership positions at their institution. These factors, in the end, stimulated Latina/o student retention and achievement in higher education.

Garcia (2019) investigated how membership in the Latina/o Greek organization subculture enhanced Latina/o college students and assisted with fostering a sense of belonging at Historically White Institutions. The scholar performed a case study on 14 members of Latina/o Greek organizations at two institutions in the Midwest United States. The participants identified that microsystems, such as Greek organizational meetings, workshops, and student assistance departments, all played essential roles in

building a sense of belonging for them. The consensus of participants was, “that certain parts of campus felt unreceptive to their racial identity and culture thus reflected that power, privilege, and oppression were institutionalized, which affected their sense of belonging outside of their microsystem of support” (p. 10). An important finding of the investigation was that participants mentioned that they would not have experienced a sense of belonging at their institutions had it not been for their membership in a Greek organization or some other form of a microsystem within the larger institution. Garcia (2019) proposed that institutions of higher education make sure that ethnic-based organizations exist on their campuses and that students are urged to look into the opportunity of involvement in these organizations. Students should not have to form spaces of support at institutions to foster belonging and openness to diversity on campuses; institutions must build an inclusive and equitable community in which their entire student body feels accepted and supported.

Engaging Students of Color Through Hip-Hop Spaces

Hip-Hop culture, from its inception in the 1970s, has traveled near and far around the globe. College campuses are spaces affected by Hip-Hop culture (Petchauer, 2011). According to Petchauer (2011), “students bringing Hip-Hop to campus parallels to how they have brought other aspects of their identity on campus with them, such as their ethnicity, religion, spirituality, politics, sexuality, community service, or professional interest” (p.5). Some spaces have been established at various college campuses, and these spaces include Hip-Hop centered organizations, Hip-Hop dance clubs or teams, Hip-Hop radio programs or stations, and Hip-Hop courses. Some college campuses, city-wide, national, and international, Hip-Hop organizations include, but are not limited to, the

Universal Zulu Nation, Hip-Hop Congress, Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, Temple of Hiphop Kulture, and Hip-Hop Alliance (Petchauer, 2011). Hip-Hop organizations and spaces host events, such as rap battles, DJ mixing contests, dance competitions, mentorship programs, open mic night talent showcases, Hip-Hop conferences, guest speaker sessions, and parties.

There is a limited amount of research on the potential impact Hip-Hop may have on collegiate student engagement and sense of belonging outside of analysis performed by Petchauer, 2010, 2011; Sulé, 2015, 2016 for a few reasons. The first reason is that many in the scholarly field have not viewed Hip-Hop in a positive light, along with the fact that the music genre is young compared to other musical genres (Tinson & McBride, 2013). The second reason is that other musical genres have not had the sustained impact on society over multiple decades that impacts cultural things such as the way we people dress, slang spoken, events they attend, what they watch on television, and items people purchase daily like food, drinks, liquor, electronics, vehicles, and so on that Hip-Hop has (Del Pino, 2014; Fried, 1996). The third reason is that the research concentration has been focused on the use of Hip-Hop inside the classroom to help students learn rather than outside of the classroom to help students' transition to, cope with, and engage with the institution. (Adjapong, 2017; Banks, 2015; Hall, 2007; Hall, 2017; Hill, 2009).

Students of color must have supportive social and scholastic programs, particularly at HWIs where Hip-Hop clubs should be formed to support students in similar ways that Greek organizations, honors societies, and other common interest student organizations have (Allen, 1992; Doan, 2011; Guiffrida, 2003; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Museus, 2008; Patton, Flowers, & Bridges, 2011; Simmons, 2017). Social Greek

organizations hold their members to high standards, such as grade point average, leadership training, mandatory community service, and philanthropic projects, hosting activities and events for the minority communities at the university, and being a positive role model for other students of color (Harper, 2007; Harper & Harris, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hughey, 2007; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996). The confidence and skills students of color gain from membership in student organizations allow them to develop personal and academic strategies and motivate them to be successful in school and in their personal and professional lives in adulthood. Hip-Hop student organizations can also provide opportunities for cross-cultural interactions because of the diverse membership in Hip-Hop culture. These cross-culture interactions are extremely important at HWIs, to allow students of color to feel accepted and share similar connections with students of all cultural backgrounds. (Petchauer, 2010; Sulé, 2015, 2016).

An Analysis of Hip-Hop Pedagogies

This section will cover the Hip-Hop centered pedagogies of Hip-Hop education (HHED) or Hip-Hop pedagogy (HHPED), Hip-Hop Based Education (HHBE), and Critical Hip-Hop Pedagogy (CHHP). Hip-Hop pedagogies do not center on the need for students of color to adapt to the education system, but rather the education system adapting to the students. Students of color are not the only participants of Hip –Hip culture because the Hip-Hop community is diverse, embracing students from all cultures. These pedagogies advocate for students to be given the opportunity to develop strategies to gain the education for which they are paying. Some of the Hip-Hop pedagogies call for lessons that are taught in the classroom to be more culturally sustaining and engaging. In

contrast, others focus more on the educational environment and intentions of the institutions s being more supportive in assisting members of the Hip-Hop community (i.e., students of color) in creating connections outside the classroom. Previous researchers mentioned the importance of institutions of higher education having an established space or giving students the ability to create spaces to connect with participants of Hip-Hop culture.

Even though these pedagogies do not have identical tenets, they all focus on supporting students that are living examples of Hip-Hop culture. Some of the research in this section was focused primarily on Hip-Hop pedagogies by authors who believe they should be applied in classrooms from beginner levels of education with young children and continue through the college and university levels with young adults. Other articles in this section were focused on the ways Hip-Hop can be utilized outside of the classroom in regard to student engagement to garner a sense of belonging for members of the Hip-Hop community. The last part of this section includes information about the unique and modern manner in which Hip-Hop scholars have presented their dissertations, while also covering the adversity they faced in completing their research because of some academics not valuing them or their research interest. Hip-Hop pedagogies provide institutions of higher education with meaningful strategies useful and unique spaces that can be created to support current and future generations of college students who are participants in and products of Hip-Hop culture.

These pedagogies are all formed on the foundation of Critical Race Theory (CRT), based on the firm belief that the United States' traditional education system has marginalized not only students of color, but devalued unique components of their culture,

Hip-Hop is one of many. These Hip-Hop based methods are calling for a “remixing” of the traditional education system that does not speak to the diverse student base that now exists. As Hip-Hop has matured, the global society is seeing elements of Hip-Hop culture becoming increasingly present in a variety of ways and venues. Also, more significant numbers of students who are products of Hip-Hop culture are coming to college, and the younger and future generations of educators will be aware of the societal influence of Hip-Hop culture. Some individuals may have been immersed in Hip-Hop culture, but most people will not, but they will have been influenced by Hip-Hop culture in some way. Faculty and staff may need to be more receptive to and understanding of the various manners in which elements of Hip-Hop can aid young people in being successful. In addition, faculty and staff can be champions for Hip-Hop culture being practiced within the academy than we have seen by their predecessors.

Love (2014) concentrated on explaining why Hip-Hop Based Education (HHBE) should be applied to early education settings along with the training for pre-teacher programs. Love begins with acknowledging CRT as being a predecessor for HHBE, as she stated that it “exposed the injustices of the nice field of education towards students of color”. Love expressed that HHBE has not been taken seriously in early childhood and elementary education. One criticism she expressed is the belief that some Hip-Hop song lyrics are too mature and sexually explicit for small children. That notion, Love argued, makes it seem as if Hip-Hop culture is only rap music, which it is not. According to Love, HHBE does not focus on public education for elementary-aged students, but on how Hip-Hop culture musically, artistically, linguistically, and culturally influences them. Love expressed that she wanted Hip-Hop to be utilized for more than just assisting

students with memorizing mathematic formulas, important data, and rules for completing assignments inside the classroom. According to Irby, Hall, and Hill (2013):

We are experiencing a generational shift in the U.S. teaching force. Because of this shift, along with the increased presence of Hip-Hop culture within American culture, many educators no longer view Hip-Hop culture with the same air of skepticism common in the early stages of HHBE. Our findings indicate that many educators recognize the intellectual merits of Hip-Hop culture. (p. 15)

What followed was Love (2014) addressing how society has seen a rise in the number of children focused activity books, reading books, and television shows, such as Hip-Hop Harry, Yo Gabba, and the Class of 3000 over the past two decades. Love argued that these different forms of media are helping young children to learn using various elements of Hip-Hop culture and questioned why they could not be used in elementary and early childhood schools. To remedy this situation, Love suggested that teacher-educator programs should add HHBE as a culturally sustaining pedagogy due to young urban children's identities are being formed not only by Hip-Hop culture but by a fusion of urban America and Hip-Hop culture. Love used Ladson-Billings' (1995) research to give the three building blocks of the educator framework beliefs: (a) each scholar comes to school with cultural, dialectal, and communal experiences; (b) students of color having always been viewed as inferior due to their lifestyle not being the central American lifestyle, and (c) helping students be successful by putting their culture at the head of the curriculum and teaching. To conclude, Love asserted that for HHBE to make a strong and lasting effect in education, it must first start with America's youngest learners. Love recommended that before new or future educators are certified to teach

programs should be established for them to comprehend, accept, and champion HHBE, to ensure they can meaningfully and purposefully support urban youth by using culturally relevant strategies to create engaging curriculum and environments.

To add to the limited research on ways Hip-Hop can be used to engage young scholars, Banks (2015) asserted that Hip-Hop could be used as a pedagogy that offers valuable opportunities to connect to current society's young scholars, while concurrently demonstrating student-centered methods regarding leadership and scholar/community participation. Banks credited critical pedagogy and Paulo Freire's (1970) concept of praxis for laying the groundwork for Hip-Hop education (HHED) or Hip-Hop pedagogy (HHPED) to follow. After listening to the requests of some of his students at New York University who were interested in creating work that was culturally, communally, and diplomatically enriching to them, Banks formed a club called the Hip-Hop Theatre Initiative (HHTI). Using Gardner's (2013) multiple intelligences theory, Banks explained how Hip-Hop culture's problem solving and "making something from nothing" (p. 246) traits parallel Gardner's description of "repertoire of skills for solving different kinds of problems," (p. 246) which Banks believes each individual possesses.

Next, Banks (2015) explained how HHED connects to Gardner's theory of "genetic heritage" where an individual gains knowledge and develops expertise through academic and life experiences based on their culture and environment. These experiences reflect how youths involved in the Hip-Hop community share multiple intelligences of linguistics, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetics, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Banks expressed Hip-Hop's cultural intelligence as being a democracy-building practice, having a core of competition of skills, being

diverse, developing entrepreneurial skills, and drawing from the past while being innovative. For HHPED to be successful in the learning environment, according to Banks, it must be allowed to restructure the environment to reflect the student's cultural intelligence and values. Also, Banks stated that the learning environment should be one where the students have a voice to create, not just to sit back and be consumers of information. There is a difference between HHBE and HHPED because HHBE deals more with the content of the course rather than the educational settings and roles of the teacher and students, which are ideas in HHPED.

Banks (2015) recommended that Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory (Gardner, 2013) is useful when developing a Hip-Hop pedagogy for today's youth due to teacher's ability to use MI theory and Hip-Hop pedagogies to engage students and express the interdisciplinary and intertextuality of Hip-Hop youth. According to Banks (2015), individuals can utilize MI to foster the development of Hip-Hop culture's creative production and activism. The author suggested that Hip-Hop community members and non-Hip-Hop community members can use HHPED to engage young learners beyond content. Additionally, Banks noted that attention should also be focused on activating cultural intelligence not just practice skills to fully engage student's inherent creativity and brilliance.

Akom (2009) wrote an article on a similar but different theory called CHHP. The focus of this theory is to confront deep-seated beliefs to societal biases by forming opportunities in teacher education curriculum for aspiring educators to reconsider their understanding of Hip-Hop's connection with various traits by which people are marginalized. Akom mentioned that the nucleus of CHHP pull from youth participatory

action research, Freirian pedagogy, and critical race theory to combat bigotry and other types of social difference to groom adolescents to be future educators within and external of the inner city and suburban school systems. The tenets of CHHP, according to Akom (2009), are:

(a) It is participatory and youth-driven. (b) It is cooperative, engaging students in a joint research process in which each contributes equitably. (c) It foregrounds race, racism, gender, and other axis of social difference in the design, data collection, and analysis. (d) It helps prospective teachers focus on the racialized, gendered, and other intersections of social difference, experiences within and by communities of color. (e) It challenges the traditional paradigms, methods, and texts to engage in a discourse on race that is informed by the actual conditions and experiences of people of color. (f) It is committed to co-learning, co-facilitating, and multi-directionality. (g) It is trans-disciplinary, drawing on Black/Africana Studies, Raza Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Women's Studies, to name a few. (h) It involves local capacity building. (i) It is an empowering process through which all participants can increase control of their lives. (j) It seeks a balance among critical thinking, reflection, analysis, and action. (k) It emphasizes a union of mind, body, and spirit rather than a separation of these elements. (p.56)

In addition, Akom (2009) stated that Hip-Hop culture has generally been isolated by institutions of higher education that prepare future educators for inner-city and suburban areas. This lack of concern about Hip-Hop culture is an example of how misguided our country still is more than six decades after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law. Akom stated he was flabbergasted at the under-utilization and lack

of respect for Hip-Hop by higher education, despite the history Hip-Hop culture has for confronting social injustice regarding overcoming being poor, police violence, broken social systems, imprisonment, ethnic prejudice, as well as positive topics such as affection, happiness, and optimism. The author used the course he taught in the African Studies program at a Bay Area University to expose 130 diverse students to CHHP by creating an “Inside the Hip-Hop Studio” modeled after the Inside the Actors Studio television show. Students, activists, faculty, staff, and guests viewed as experts of Hip-Hop culture conducted open dialogues on a variety of topics. According to the Akom, this endeavor was leading-edge because of the exposure the students received as a result of discussing a variety of issues with experts, artists, and educators. Besides, “Inside the Hip-Hop Studio” allowed students to gain knowledge about Hip-Hop culture, theater, media, and the show created a space to have an exciting and debatable dialogue to work through their differences and form a solid bond while involved in “Inside the Hip-Hop Studio”. In conclusion, Akom proclaims that CHHP differs from HHED because CHHP “includes strategies that can be used to combat various systems of oppression and dispute traditional concepts and philosophies used to describe understandings of students of color” (p. 63). Also, CHHP strategies can be used to bring knowledge of students of color to the entire campus community and highlight social justice. Using CHHP is important and vital because educators have the ability to combat the protagonist that institutions of higher education assume in repeating social inequality (Akom, 2009).

Building on engaging scholars via Hip-Hop culture, Hall and Martin (2013) evaluated the impact of Hip-Hop’s influence on African American scholars’ collegiate engagement and perseverance to persist school. The authors tested if Hip-Hop elements

could be learning instruments and appeal to African American collegians since prior research indicated that White and Asian students had higher college completion rates than African American students. The authors evaluated three courses comprised of 120 collegians that implemented elements of Hip-Hop at a Historically Black College and University. Hall and Martin conducted 2-hour face-to-face interviews with faculty and collegians and used a questionnaire focused on student perceptions of the utilization of Hip-Hop pedagogy and how it inspired them. The data reflected that Hip-Hop being used in the classrooms relaxed collegians and encouraged them to participate more freely and more socially with their classmates. Hall and Martin (2013) suggested that Hip-Hop pedagogy influences African American collegiate engagement if it is culturally pertinent, interdisciplinary constructed, and academically demanding. Also, Hall and Martin (2013) proposed establishing minority-focused departments and diversity offices for HWIs to allow colleges to recruit and retain students of color. The authors also advocated for having more than just a celebration of cultures on particular days or during a specific month to makes collegians of color feel valued every day.

Sulé (2016) took Hip-Hop engagement with collegians to deeper level by examining students' involvement in Hip-Hop culture and it may help students fit into the college campus community and aid with diversity relations in the college environment. The author recruited participants by mass emailing students in Hip-Hop student organizations at two HWIs in the Midwest. Fifteen students volunteered for the study and participated in 90- to 120-minute interviews. The researcher discovered that Hip-Hop helped students heal emotionally. In addition to the affective aspect, Hip-Hop helped

students engage in their college communities, and it exposed them to realize the importance of getting to know other students.

The data indicated that Hip-Hop was more than a hobby for the participants because it served as a self-identification mechanism (Hall & Martin, 2013). Data also signaled that Hip-Hop was a tool for protesting ethnic and class oppression. The students indicated Hip-Hop helped them deal with anxiety and permitted them to associate with others easily. Sulé (2016) recommended that universities give respect to Hip-Hop's therapeutic capabilities and its ability to assist with helping students transition into collegiate communities. The author recommended that more spaces be formed on college campuses besides student organizations for those members of the Hip-Hop community. Sulé ended by stating that the findings of the research supported that Hip-Hop can “optimize a unique and influential intercultural counter space that has implications for student learning and development” (p. 195).

Petchauer (2012) decided to add to the body of work regarding the engagement of collegians via Hip-Hop by writing the book titled *Hip-Hop Culture in College Students' Lives: Elements, Embodiment, and Higher Edutainment*. Petchauer began his book by giving readers an overview of the controversy and history around Hip-Hop, navigating from urban neighborhood to college campuses. Hip-Hop organizations on college campuses, local, nationwide, and global stages such as Hip-Hop Congress, Universal Zulu Nation, Temple of Hip-Hop Kulture, Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, and others were named as being breeding grounds for many college students to interact with others that champion Hip-Hop culture (Petchauer, 2012). The author then went on to discuss how previously conducted research has identified student organizations' positive impact

regarding student development and engagement on many college campuses, particularly with students of color. However, Petchauer is clear to state that Hip-Hop has not been viewed as a community up until the point when his book was written, which the author argues is how some students see other groups of students that are also participants in the Hip-Hop community. Petchauer used the Worldview Theory introduced by Michael Kearney in 1984 to examine how Hip-Hop is present in students' lives and how it is pertinent to education. For his study, Petchauer chose to investigate the environments in which Hip-Hop scholars live and develop. The study was conducted at three colleges and universities in different regions of America, were selected by Petchauer.

Petchauer (2012) developed a model to understand the four ways Hip-Hop collegians identify and participate in Hip-Hop, they are as follows: (a) aesthetic methods that students possess are linked to Hip-Hop identity frameworks; (b) cases where identity frameworks have precise routines that originate from them; (c) situations where frameworks, routines, and aesthetics all unite; and (d) behaviors and customs that are shaped from Hip-Hop aesthetics but are not committed to a certain Hip-Hop identity. The author recommended that professors and college administrators explore ways that Hip-Hop culture, along with other cultures and interests, contain habits, practices, and dispositions that can be supportive of education (p. 113). Petchauer suggested that professors and university staff should help students understand Hip-Hop or be able to link it to education in a positive way., A deep understanding of Hip-Hop culture will not occur by way of distanced evaluations or disregarding it entirely. The insight from the students interviewed supplies higher education faculty and staff with the hints they can

utilize to discover underground Hip-Hop environments that may be present either on their campuses or in the surrounding community.

Recently, two young African American scholars changed some opinions of Hip-Hop's value to the higher education and research field. A. D. Carson's (2017) and Stevie Johnson's (2019) dissertations remixed the format in which scholarly research can be created and presented. Carson's dissertation and 34-track album were both entitled *Owning My Masters: The Rhetoric's of Rhymes and Revolutions* as his dissertation was based on his personal experiences as a form of protest against the injustices not only in the world but at his university. Carson's work was influenced by his memory of the racist, non-inclusive, and institutional injustices encountered while he was a student. Johnson (2019) elected to blend higher academia with Hip-Hop culture to produce his dissertation entitled, *Curriculum of the Mind*; along with a 25-track album to successfully defend his dissertation. Throughout the dissertation and record, Johnson and his associates from The Space Program, an African American Hip-Hop faction that attended various institutions of higher education throughout the state of Oklahoma, intensely explain the difficulties and anti-black experiences that they and other African American males experienced while enrolled at Historically White Institutions. Both Carson and Johnson have gone on record of expressing the differences of opinions and adversities that they had to overcome with officials at their institutions to be able to complete their work and successfully defend their dissertations. So, while yes, progress has been made in having the research by people of color being valued in higher education, these are but two examples of many where personal experiences have reflected the long road ahead for people of color's value and contributions genuinely being sought after to advance the

field and world without being undervalued and solely exploited for an institution's positive publicity should outside parties deem their research momentous. Johnson (2019) touched on this situation in his dissertation by stating:

The album portion of an album dissertation can stand on its own merits; it need not require a written component, and I hope that, in the future, Hip-Hop scholars will not have to provide both. Indeed, I hope that the work of dissertation albums or projects will reflect the same significance as journal articles, book chapters, and edited books. (p. 203)

In conclusion, prior researchers have revealed that the traditional education system in the United States utilizes concealed and authoritative curricula that endorse the control of the leading class of society (Apple, 1990), and adopt pedagogies that undervalue the input and experiences of inner city and suburban students of color (Freire, 1970; McLauren, 2002). Some faculty and staff in the higher education field may not recognize that Hip-Hop collegians are attending their institutions and are on their current course rosters. They may not be knowledgeable enough regarding Hip-Hop culture to successfully connect with individuals that are active participants of the Hip-Hop community. Although men and women currently exist that are immersed in Hip-Hop culture, they do not have to identify within the Hip-Hop community as either an artist or fan of Hip-Hop because they are the culture of Hip-Hop.

Until this point, Hip-Hop scholars have been attempting to gather data that supports Hip-Hop pedagogy's impact inside the classroom to engage students differently. Despite positive results in those few evaluations, the academy has still been slow to financially and systematically embrace Hip-Hop pedagogies. To see meaningful progress

in higher education utilizing Hip-Hop culture, it will take more than a few college professors or administrators campaigning for how Hip-Hop and Hip-Hop pedagogies are unique or different topics to present a paper on at a conference or to write a dissertation on. Current and future educators on the K-12 and collegiate levels must fully buy into incorporating Hip-Hop culture into the academic settings both inside and outside of the classroom. This is especially true for institutions that recruit a large percentage of their student body or aspire to pull their student body from diverse urban areas where Hip-Hop culture is most prevalent, as opposed to rural areas. Some Hip-Hop researchers (Petchauer, 2010, 2012; Shanks, 2017; Sulé, 2015) have strongly recommended that society and higher education explore Hip-Hop culture to ascertain methods to better support Hip-Hop collegians and upgrade from an out-of-date education system. A reviewer of Johnson's (2019) work, Ashley Korpela, an administrator at the University of Oklahoma, discussed changing the antiquated education system in her quote from his dissertation, "As white educators, we must ask ourselves 'how do we perpetuate this system? What message are we giving when we ask them to choose between trauma, that of giving up yourself for the institution or living a life in a system that disregards you and actively harms you?' For me, this album reinforces that we must broaden what it means to be an academic" (p. 204).

Summary

There is a gap in the literature regarding the role Hip-Hop culture plays with fostering college students' sense of belonging and level of engagement by way of organizational involvement and experiences within Hip-Hop spaces at or around college campus. Previously research recommended that a sense of belonging is critical, and

students that feel as if the culture of the institution does not support them have a higher chance of dropping out (Balcacer, 2018; Shaulskiy, 2016). Several researchers have implied that positive social relationships with peers and collective interest organizations can offer a more inspiring and comforting campus environment, resulting in students' success, especially for students of color attending HWIs (Garcia, 2017; Napoli, 2019; Wright, 2016). Furthermore, failure to establish social relationships at institutions may result in low academic performance, feeling unwelcomed, and a higher amount of college dropouts for students of color at HWIs (Boyd, 2017; Theledi, 2017).

This particular study assists in filling the gap by providing lived and shared experiences regarding sense of belonging from college students that are active participants in Hip-Hop spaces at various institutions of higher education throughout the country, not just in a particular state or region. An additional goal of this study was to, in some way, garner more attention from higher education administrators to view Hip-Hop culture and organizational involvement as one of several tools that can be utilized to engage and retain more significant percentages of students of color.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This study materialized as a result of my curiosity to ascertain Hip-Hop's impact on higher education along with exploring innovative methods to help students of colors be successful in higher education. Since the 1980's as a follower of Hip-Hop culture, I have viewed many young people that are traditionally college-age students as being participants in and followers of Hip-Hop culture. While Hip-Hop has consistently grown in popularity throughout the world since its inception, it has not experienced that same respect and speed of popularity within academia. Other Hip-Hop scholars have researched utilizing Hip-Hop in the classroom on both the K-12 and collegiate levels, as well as using Hip-Hop to protest their negative experiences in college. Seeking to find new or "fresh" approaches to connect with students of color to engage them better on campus as a student affairs professional who is also a Hip-Hop aficionado, I investigated Hip-Hop organizations and spaces at higher education institutions as possible consortiums that build a sense of belonging at their institutions. To conduct this phenomenological study, Astin's I-E-O model (1993) and Strayhorn's sense of belonging model (2012) was utilized to assess student's sense of belonging to their institution due to their involvement in Hip-Hop student organizations. In addition to my research methodology, this chapter outlines: (a) research design, (b) data collection, (c) participant selection, (d) data analysis, and (e) trustworthiness and authenticity.

Research Questions

As written earlier, the research questions for this qualitative study were:

1. What aspects of Hip-Hop student organizational involvement might foster a sense of belonging for students of color at a Historically White Institution (HWI)?
2. How do students of color at a Historically White Institution (HWI) describe the influence of Hip-Hop culture on their scholastic experience?

Research Design

Since I conducted interviews with students who participated in Hip-Hop organizations and spaces at their institution to answer the research questions, a phenomenological study was performed grounded on Astin's I-E-O model (1993) and Strayhorn's sense of belonging model (2012) as explained earlier in the first chapter.

Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, and Morales (2007) described phenomenological studies as being constructed to concentrate on recounting the gist of a lived experience or phenomenon. The crux of the lived experience is defined as a product of what the distinct experience is, and the way people experience the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The investigator's personal opinions are moved to the background, while the information is distinguished as fresh material (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological method is utilized when a minute amount of information is available about a phenomenon, and the reason for the investigation is to ascertain the significance of a phenomenon from the viewpoint of those that participate in it (Giorgi, 1997).

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). The phenomenological method was utilized for this study to ascertain a more significant comprehension, straight from the study contributors, concerning the phenomena of Hip-Hop culture and Hip-Hop organizational involvement's impact on college students experiences inside and outside of the classroom. Numerous methods exist that can be utilized regarding

phenomenological research, one approach is interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). Interpretive phenomenological analysis insists that when a person experiences something in their life, the person contemplates the meaning of what occurred, and the research seeks to connect with the person's thoughts (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Interpretive phenomenological analysis was the preferred method for this research because of its "concern with exploring experience in its own terms;" IPA permits academic scholars to explore how people make sense of important life experiences (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1). Smith et al. (2009) labeled IPA as idiographic, because of its "commitment to the detailed examination of the particular case" (p. 3). In the end, IPA was utilized for this study to acquire a comprehensive explanation of if students of color attending HWIs who are members of Hip-Hop student organizations have a sense of belonging to their institution, as well as to ascertain if Hip-Hop culture impacts their scholastic experiences.

The participant's experiences were deciphered centered on the significance discovered amongst the participants. For the aforementioned reasons, this study met the standards of qualitative social research because it aspires to "investigate human phenomena" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 3) and divulges testimonies as stated by students of color who are participants in Hip-Hop spaces attending HWIs. Moreover, this study aimed to better understand their lived experiences and not to quantify the participants' experiences. Phenomenology is unique in that it is not focused on the reason for, or answer for, an occurrence or ordeal; instead, it provides the accounts of the contributors with genuineness (Carver, 2019). Due to the information described above, the phenomenological method was deemed appropriate for this analysis.

Participant and Site Selection

Institution selection. Since the Hip Hop Congress organization only has collegiate chapters at select institutions throughout the United States and the organization will be the foundation of my interview pool, the institutions chosen for this study were narrowed down significantly. Furthermore, with this study focusing on students of color that hold membership in Hip Hop Congress or other Hip-Hop organizations, the member diversity of these organizations was paramount for the study sites.

The institutions for this study were private and public four-year HWIs. Historically White Institutions were selected as not to stereotype that HBCUs are the only higher education institutions where Hip-Hop college students are enrolled. Historically White Institutions typically have student enrollments with a majority of Whites, with smaller amounts of different ethnicities, such as African American, Latina/o, Asian Americans, along with others. To give some historical context, HWIs are labeled and distinguished from other collegiate institutions that enrolled students that were racially, ethnically, or culturally diverse during times of segregation in America (Brown & Dancy, 2010). It is possible that several of these colleges and universities may have been labeled HWIs in acknowledgment of “the binarism and exclusion supported by the U.S. before 1964” (Brown & Dancy, 2010, p. 524). The colleges and universities listed on the national website for the Hip Hop Congress as having active collegiate chapters were the first sites targeted. Hip Hop Congress has active collegiate chapters at institutions throughout the US. Regions listed on their national website containing collegiate chapters include the West Coast, Northwest, Midwest, and South. The college sites were private

and public 4-year institutions of higher education with enrollments ranging from 4,000 to 45,000 students.

Participant selection. Notably, for phenomenological research, Creswell (2012) suggested a selection amount of fewer than 10 participants. Although suggestions on the participant selection amount differ, there is a standard agreement throughout phenomenological research that having 1 to 10 participants in a sample size is appropriate (Groenewald, 2004; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). For this study, purposeful and snowball samples was used to find possible study participants. Purposeful sampling encompasses finding and choosing individuals or sets of individuals who are particularly well-informed about or knowledgeable with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Snowball sampling, also referred to as chain sampling or chain referral sampling, is a sampling technique utilized by investigators to produce a collection of participants for a research study as a result of recommendations given by individuals who share a trait of research attraction with the target population (Crouse & Lowe, 2018).

Participants for this study were students of color who either held membership in a Hip-Hop student organization or participated in Hip-Hop spaces at their institution. Hip Hop Congress was selected as a space to examine for this study because of their reach and recognition as a Hip-Hop organization. Hip Hop Congress has four international chapters and 24 chapters nationally across the United States in communities, colleges, and high schools, making them a worthwhile exploration (Hip Hop Congress, 2019a). This study sought to interview a minimum of eight participants from Hip-Hop student

organizations, whether they were members of Hip Hop Congress or another Hip-Hop student organization or space at an HWI.

I reached out to the national president of Hip Hop Congress to request assistance with identifying the advisor and chapter officer contacts of active collegiate chapters at the colleges throughout the country. Once contact information was obtained, I contacted the leadership of the individual collegiate chapters of Hip Hop Congress to inform them of the study and sent them an informational flyer and email to share with their membership (Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C). In addition, I attempted to obtain and compile an email list of students of color who are members of the Hip Hop Congress collegiate chapters to send them informational emails about the study in hopes that some members may respond stating their interest to participate in the study. Those who agreed to participate in the study were provided a consent form to review and sign to be eligible to contribute to the study. I also contacted other potential Hip-Hop student organizations and sites after recommendations were made by headquarters staff or student participants from Hip Hop Congress.

The potential participants were emailed at least two times once they were recommended by the Hip Hop Congress leadership to inform them of and recruit them to participate in the study (Appendix A, Appendix B). Additionally, a flyer was produced to market the research and was emailed to the potential participants (Appendix C). Further, I requested that Hip Hop Congresses national officers forward the flyer to their various collegiate chapter advisors and presidents to distribute to their membership and to post on their social media accounts. Incentives were offered for individuals who completed the interview for this study. There was a raffle that took place once the researcher concluded

all of the virtual interviews with the nine participants. Participants had the option to participate in the raffle. If any participant would have chosen not to participate in the raffle, their name would not have been entered in the drawing.

For the drawing, I used the online randomizer, wheelofnames.com, to select the three winners for the eGift cards. The first name chosen won a \$25 Amazon eGift card, the second name selected won a \$25 Live Nation eGift card, and the third chosen won a \$50 Ticket Master eGift card. All participants were sent a blind copy email to inform them of the winners of the raffle. To protect the identities of all of the participants, the email referred to the three winners by the three pseudonyms that they selected when they consented to participate in the study. Separate individual emails were sent to each of the three winners congratulating them and explaining how and when they would receive their eGift card. All three eGift cards were emailed directly to each raffle winner, as stated in the consent form they signed to participate in the study.

Data Collection

Verbal qualitative data was obtained through individual semi-structured interviews video recorded using Zoom and via an audio recorder to capture the lived experiences of student participants. To ensure I collected rich data, I: (a) confirmed and had third parties review the interview questions; (b) found, selected, and asked at least 8 participants enrolled at HWIs who were members of Hip-Hop organizations and spaces to participate in the semi-structured, virtual interviews process; (c) supplied each participant with information about the study and supplied them with the informed consent form; (d) scheduled, conducted, and recorded (with permission) each of the interviews; (e) transcribed each interview within 72 hours of the interview; (f) sent each participant a

copy of their transcribed interviews for member checking as a means to ensure correctness; (g) scheduled a debriefing for myself by another experienced researcher within 24 hours of completing each interview to reflect upon the data and my encounters; and (h) input the transcripts into a qualitative data analysis software program to analyze.

Interviews. Participants were asked to answer a demographic questionnaire (e.g.; age, gender, ethnicity, academic level, location of the institution, name of their Hip-Hop organization or space, and a pseudonym to protect each participant's identity). This information aided me in getting to know the participants in advance. Using phenomenological and qualitative interview questionnaires found in prior studies (Garcia, 2017; Samuel, 2019; Stokes, 2017), I provided each participant with definitions of sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012) and then proceeded with asking each participant a set of interview questions. Both Garcia's (2017) and Samuel's (2019) student interview questionnaires provided terminology to utilize when questioning the interviewee about their experiences before joining and after joining a student organization, along with framing questions as relates to their sense of belonging within the student organization and to their institution. Stokes' (2017) was clear to define what sense of belonging was described as by knowledgeable researchers in their studies, which served as a guide for the interviewees to utilize to answer the questions confidently and without confusion. The questions used in this study were developed after reflecting on the ideas, subject matter, and suggestions expressed in prior research (Hall & Martin, 2013; Ismer, 2009; Petchauer, 2010, 2011; Shanks, 2017; Sulé 2015, 2016) discussed in the literature review. The research examined in the literature review contained questionnaires on the topics of sense of belonging, mental health, the transition to college, engagement,

academic success, cross-cultural interaction, and campus environment. The semi-structured interview questions used for this study can be found in Appendix G.

The interview questions signify several types of classification, including basic descriptive, experience/example, and comparison/contrast (Janesick, 2004). Each of these questions were assessed by my dissertation chair, other faculty at my institution, and officers from the Hip Hop Congress headquarters before conducting the interviews. Performing and recording all interviews utilizing the web and videoconferencing platform, Zoom, allowed me to record the dialogues to assist in accurately collecting data. To obtain precious data from the interviews, a detailed analysis of the data collected was performed. The initial phase entailed me as the investigator writing reflections of information shared between each participant and me. After the written observations were completed, I transcribed the recordings and sent them to participants to evaluate. If participants had suggestions or amendments to the transcriptions, I made those changes. To ensure accuracy during the interview process, I only interviewed one study participant at a time during the data collection process.

Data Analysis

Following the data being obtained and transcribed, I started the data analysis and the coding process of the interview transcripts. Next, with the assistance of a web-based software application called Dedoose (Dedoose Version 8.0.35, 2020) I utilized Moustakas's (1994) revised Van Kaam seven-step technique to examine the data attained from participants. The procedures of modified the Van Kaam technique, as outlined by Moustakas (1994), consists of the following steps:

a) listing and preliminary grouping of participant responses, b) reduction and elimination of the responses to form invariant constituents (key responses of participants related to the research topic), c) clustering and thematizing of the invariant constituents, d) finalization of the relevant invariant constituents and themes, e) creation of individual textural and structural descriptions, and f) the production of the final composite descriptions that serve as the conclusions of the analysis in representing the perceptions and experiences of the group as a whole. (pp. 120-121)

Steps (a) through (d) from the modified Van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994) were used to uncover the invariant constituents and thematic categories from the interviews. Moustakas (1994) believed that invariant constituents or elements from the data denote the lived experiences and insights from the study participants associated with the topic being examined. Therefore, coding was the first step in recognizing important information shared by the study participants. Next, those statements were assessed, so elements of meaning or themes could be determined, and similar topics could be combined or discarded. After that, the themes were grouped and utilized to compose the nature of the participant's experiences.

Every study participant interview was transcribed using an online transcription service called Rev.com (Rev, 2020) for simpler coding practices and to prevent the recognition of the participants. Phenomenological analysis necessitates the procedures of listing, and preliminary grouping of pertinent experiences, which is also denoted as horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). The accumulated interview information from each interviewee was analyzed to obtain a thorough understanding, along with writing

comments in the transcript margin to point out possible significant replies to the research questions. Any significant accounts from the interviewees was highlighted and saved. After any significant experiences were identified, any non-relevant statements were deleted to only leave rich information for the aims of the study (Moustakas, 1994). This form of phenomenological data analysis allowed for the interviewees' exact words to be utilized, which allowed clear themes to surface. Any related experiences were grouped using a materialized subject-oriented term. These subject-oriented or thematic terms formulated the central themes of the interviewees' expressed experiences. This study relied on this type of phenomenological assessment to understand the themes that stood out from the accumulated information. The themes furnished a framework for the research and constructed a structure for the study participants' expressed experiences.

Astin's (1993) IEO Model was utilized during the assessment of the themes when looking at the input and environment variables in the interviewee's statements. Astin suggested that while some variables may influence student academic performance, other variables provide insight into persistence, retention, and other research interests. The variables that were analyzed as inputs for interviewees were any elements of Hip-Hop culture, ethnicity, information about their background, and upbringing that were mentioned. The environment assessed for this study were any information shared by the interviewee regarding their peer environment on campus, their peer involvement in the Hip-Hop student organization or space in which they are involved, and their interactions with faculty and staff. Potential outcomes that were analyzed were any information shared by the interviewee on their academic performance at the institution along with ways the student interacted with and what they thought of their peers and institution after

joining the Hip-Hop organization or space. Lastly, Strayhorn's (2012) sense of belonging tenants were used to assess formalized themes from the responses accumulated from the six specific interview questions on the interviewee's sense of belonging to their institution surrounding their involvement in Hip-Hop organizations and spaces. In the fourth chapter, the themes are described via the utilization of a significant in-depth examination of accounts from the study participants. In the end, the methods of analysis covered in this section revealed the core of the experiences of the study participants from their mouths, which established the answers to the research questions posed.

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

This section was crucial because it appraised the worth of the study and the needs for the information it produced. This section evaluated the credibility of the information the study produced, the verification of the information produced, along with the debriefing and member checking of the information generated from the study.

Particularly in an investigation when the researcher is a participant and follower of the culture being examined, researcher bias must be eliminated as not to hurt the research being performed. By employing the four components of a trustworthy qualitative study accentuated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), researcher bias was ensured to be eradicated.

The four elements of trustworthiness as stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) are: (a) having credibility; truth value is attained by establishing confidence in the accuracy of the findings; (b) having transferability; applicability is attained by showing that the findings have relevance in other contexts; (c) having dependability; consistency is attained by showing that the findings if replicated with the same subjects could be repeated; and (d) having confirmability; neutrality is attained when the findings of a

study are shaped by the respondents and not by the biases, motivations, or interest of the research.

Threats to external credibility. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006) asserted that “external credibility refers to the degree that the findings of a study can be generalized across different populations of persons, settings, contexts, and times. That is, external credibility pertains to the confirmability and transferability of findings and conclusions” (p. 235). College students involved in unique student organizations or common interest spaces are a population that has traits that researchers can generalize. The member-checking process of having study participants review the transcript allowed me to make sure that no assumptions were made about the information they provided.

Threats to internal credibility. My concern as a researcher regarding my actions were answering the question regarding if I truly acquired exactly what the study participant's perceptions and realities were of Hip-Hop organizational involvement and Hip-Hop spaces influence on whether or not they garnered a sense of belonging to their institution. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006) described internal validity as "as the truth value, applicability, consistency, neutrality, dependability, and/or credibility of interpretations and conclusions within the underlying setting or group" (p. 234). Researcher bias was the only threat that I was concerned with during the interview because of my fondness of Hip-Hop culture. According to Johnson (1997), “researcher bias tends to result from selective observation and select recording of information, and from allowing one’s personal views and perspectives to affect how data are interpreted and how the research is conducted” (p. 284).

To avoid researcher bias, I did not make facial expressions while study participants were speaking, along with being still regarding my non-verbal actions. Also, I made sure not to ask leading follow-up questions or questions that may seem as though I was making assumptions about study participants regarding how they may respond to questions. The next section further explains how I ensured the trustworthiness of this study.

Verification. The study participants were able to evaluate an electronic copy of the typed interview transcription to verify that the information was precise and appropriate within 72 hours of completing the interview. Study participants had the opportunity to make changes to the transcript if they believe that information was incorrect or if they changed their minds regarding the information they previously disclosed. The study participants had five business days to respond with any amendments to the transcription before the I moved forward with the transcript for the study. Researchers need to follow procedures to guarantee that they produce accurate research. To verify that my research is trustworthy and authentic, I utilized a number of verification techniques, such as debriefing and member checking, as proposed by Johnson and Christensen (2017).

Debriefing and Member Checking. There was be a third-party person, a professor at a nearby Tier 1 research institution in southeast Texas who previously produced several qualitative studies published that debriefed me the day after each interview was conducted. Debriefing will allow for reflection on how the interview impacted me, along with my research. Gardner (2013) explained debriefing as a process that offers chances to examine and understand what occurred throughout an incident or

encounter, conversing about satisfactory things and pinpoint what improvements could be made. The questions asked during the debriefing were pulled from the Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2008) article on conducting debriefing interviews.

Member checking with study participants also allowed me to make sure the descriptive validity of the interviews was factually accurate, as recorded, as noted by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006). To safeguard the identities of participants attending the various institutions, pseudonyms were used for the student's names and the names of their institutions. Also, to further protect the participants in this study, I requested authorization to perform the investigation from the Institutional Review Board at Sam Houston State University. Furthermore, all participants had to be 18 years old or older to be permitted to partake in the study.

Summary

This chapter opened with an overview of my research interests and why the phenomenological method was an appropriate research methodology for this study. Also, the data collection processes were explained, which focused on the site selection, student selection, and the procedures that were utilized to log and organize the data. Lastly, the methods used to evaluate the data were given emphasizing approaches for confirming the findings without bias by the researcher. In the next chapter, a thorough examination into the lived experiences and feelings of the study participants was conducted to construct the discussion of the data along with suggestions for future research in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to examine whether students of color enrolled in HWIs and involved in Hip-Hop student organizations or spaces attained a sense of belonging to their institution. Another purpose of this study was to ascertain whether the students' sense of belonging contributed to their persistence. Interviews were conducted with nine students of color who were members of Hip-Hop student organizations and were enrolled at a HWI during the 2020-2021 academic year. In-depth interviews were conducted with each of the participants and then examined utilizing Moustakas's (1994) revised Van Kaam seven-step technique to evaluate and code the interviews. Thorough evaluation and coding ultimately led to the development of identified themes that addressed the research questions in this study. The participants' experiences and commentary provided insight to the following research questions in this study: (a) What aspects of Hip-Hop student organizational involvement might foster a sense of belonging for students of color at a Historically White Institution (HWI)? (b) How do students of color at a Historically White Institution (HWI) describe the influence of Hip-Hop culture on their scholastic experience?

Participant Profiles and Demographic Information

This section is constructed to give a synopsis of participants in this study. Nine students consented to contribute to the study and disclose their lived experiences with the researcher. The fact that there are nine participants in this study meets Boyd's (2001) recommendation that research saturation can normally be achieved with two to 10 participants. I purposefully formed the participant group based on specific criterion,

interview do-ability, and to comprehensively pursue saturation of developing themes. Proper saturation happens when “no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category, the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions, and the relationships among categories are well established and validated” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 212).

Each participant provided general information such as age, academic classification, ethnicity, and educational background. Each participant was interviewed virtually using Zoom. Through the utilization of Zoom, the researcher could interview participants from multiple states, adhere to Sam Houston State University COVID 19 guidelines, and avoid any unnecessary exposure during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, Zoom recording capabilities allowed the researcher to record each of the interviews and use the recordings to transcribe the interviews verbatim. The transcription of interviews was completed in 24 hours using the Rev.com transcription service. Participants were emailed the transcriptions within 72 hours of the interview to review, revise, and validate their statements. The researcher took thorough field notes throughout the interviews as well as between interviews. The interviews were scheduled on various dates and times to be conducive for both the researcher and participants. All interviews were conducted between July 2020 and August 2020.

The following section is an overview of the participants interviewed. Each participant self-selected a pseudonym to use throughout the study. The researcher developed pseudonyms to safeguard the institutions' identities and student organizations affiliated with the participants interviewed. While typing the background of each participant, the researcher adhered to qualitative research guidelines to describe each

participant's character authentically to capture the true meaning of their experiences. The subsequent sections of this chapter contain verbatim statements of the participants, and therefore, may contain grammatical and sentence structure mistakes.

Participant Profiles

Bianca: Bianca (pseudonym) is a 20-year-old Indian female classified as a junior from the rural Midwest. Bianca described her hometown as a tiny town with a high White population. Her hometown had a very low population of Indian people, according to Bianca. Bianca chose Bel-Air University because she wanted to go somewhere where she believed she could meet other people from diverse backgrounds and cultures on the East Coast. Going to college was very important for Bianca and her family. Her mother attended college in India, and her father attended college in the United States. While going to college was assumed to Bianca and her family, she noted that it was funny that most people from her high school do not go to college and just started careers after high school. Bianca mentioned that she had always been interested in medicine, research, and science. Because of her interests, she knew that college was probably the only way to achieve her goal. Bianca was a dancer in the Source Dance Group, a fusion Hip-Hop and K-Pop dance organization at Bel-Air University.

Bubbles: Bubbles (pseudonym) is a 21-year-old Chinese American male classified as a senior from a large urban city in the Southeast. Bubbles attended a boarding school on the Northeast coast growing up. He applied to several private and Ivy League colleges and ended up accepting a full scholarship to Mission University, which is an Ivy League college. Hip-Hop break-dancing is something Bubbles mentioned being involved in since the age of 13, so the Hip-Hop dance scene at his college was not the

sole deciding factor but something he looked into before enrolling at Mission University. Bubbles stated that college had been in his and his parent's plans since he was four or five years old. According to Bubbles, his mother had started saving up for his college expenses when he was a baby, and his family put a lot of pressure on him to perform well in school. He attended one of the top five boarding high schools in the nation, where a third of its graduates attended the top 20 universities in the United States. Bubbles was a dancer in the Mission Breakers organization at Mission University.

DK Daze: DK Daze (pseudonym) is a 21-year-old bi-racial African American and White female student classified as a sophomore from a large urban city in the Southwest. According to DK Daze, her family was against her attending college. They suggested she get a job and start working to make money after high school. To her family, a college diploma could only make a person book smart, not street smart. DK Daze, mentioned believing college was a little bit of as she described, “a scam,” but also thought it was an important opportunity to take. DK Daze stated that she initially had no support from her family when she started college, but they do support her now despite thinking of college as a waste of time. DK Daze stated that she came from a low-income family and college was a way for her to get a career to not be poor for the rest of her life. She aspires to be a videographer, and she wants to get into the music industry. DK Daze was an activist in Hip-Hop Congress at Cooley College.

Drizzy: Drizzy (pseudonym) is a 20-year-old self-identified Black/Afro-Latino male student classified as a junior from a large urban city in the Southwest. Drizzy grew up in an inner-city area, and due to the charter school he attended, he was always encouraged to go to college by his teachers and school counselors. Drizzy stated that he

wanted to attend an HBCU at first but, in the end, elected to attend an HWI because he believed that they had better resources and have more funding than Historically Black Colleges Universities. To try something new, as he put it, Drizzy believed attending Cooley College would get him out of his comfort zone and surround him with a more diverse college experience. Going to college was extremely important for Drizzy and his family because his mother could not complete high school. Drizzy felt that without an education, he might miss out on various opportunities in life. Drizzy was an activist in Hip-Hop Congress at Cooley College.

Harley: Harley (pseudonym) is a 21-year-old Mexican male student classified as a senior from a large urban city in the Southwest. While growing up, Harley played baseball and chose Cooley College because he hoped to walk on their baseball team. It was vital for Harley and his family that he attends college because he is a first-generation college student. His parents worked very hard to allow him and his siblings to go to college, so Harley wanted to live up to his parents' expectations. Harley was President of the Hip Hop Congress at Cooley College. He was an activist, producer, and DJ.

Jessica: Jessica (pseudonym) is a 21-year-old Hispanic female student classified as a senior from a rural city in the Southwest. Jessica chose to attend Cooley College because it was a reasonable distance from her hometown, but not too far for her parents to visit. Jessica voiced how it was important that she attend college, even though her family did not pressure her to get a college degree. Jessica wanted to obtain a college degree because no one in her immediate family had ever attended college, and only a small few of her extended family went to college. Jessica was an activist in Hip-Hop Congress at Cooley College.

K Dot: K Dot (pseudonym) is a 23-year-old Hispanic male student classified as a senior from a large urban city on the West Coast. K Dot chose to attend the private institution, Shakur University, because a high school program in which he participated helped members get into private colleges throughout the U.S. K Dot said going to college was more of a necessity to his mother. His mother instilled the importance of education in her children, and K Dot could not recall when he or his sister thought about not obtaining a college degree. K Dot was an emcee in the Shakur Cyphers Hip-Hop emcee organization.

Tobio: Tobio (pseudonym) is a 19-year-old Taiwanese American female classified as a junior from a large urban city on the West Coast. Tobio attended the same school from kindergarten through twelfth grade, so she was around the same people at school throughout her childhood. Tobio wanted to attend an Ivy League college away from the West Coast to distance herself from her hometown and out of her comfort zone. Obtaining a college degree was a top priority for Tobio and her family. Her parents immigrated from Taiwan to the U.S. for the sole purpose of giving their children a better education and life, so there was never a question on whether Tobio would attend college. Tobio was a Hip-Hop dancer in the Fair Eastside Lit Dance Crew at Fair Eastside College.

Tony Kim: Tony Kim (pseudonym) is a 22-year-old Korean American male classified as a Senior from a large urban city on the East Coast. Both of his parents were college graduates, and Tony stated he experienced a lot of peer pressure to go to college because the majority of his high school classmates were attending top colleges throughout the U.S. Tony was raised around and frequently associated with other young

people from families that valued education and obtaining college degrees. Tony discussed the great opportunities having a college degree would bring, so he never thought against going to college. Tony grew up a fan of Hip-Hop and participated in its dance culture, which led to Tony Kim starting his Hip-Hop dance organization Hype Like Us (HLU) at Hillman University.

Demographic Information

The section was constructed to give a synopsis of the study participants. Using the first two interview questions, I asked the participants to discuss where they were from and how important it was for their families and them to earn a college degree. Each of the participants reiterated several similar experiences during the interviews. I read two different definitions of sense of belonging from different researchers, then asked participants if they had a sense of belonging before arriving at their institution or after. Of the nine participants, eight stated they did not feel a sense of belonging to their institution when they first arrived. Two participants mentioned gaining a sense of belonging during orientation or by way of living-learning communities, which are both intended to acclimate students with their institution before classes starting or in the earliest stage of their collegiate experience. In their unique way, each participant mentioned immediately noticing the scarcity of diversity at their institutions and realizing that transitioning to college and finding their home away from home was not an easy task. Each participant said that their sense of belonging was enhanced after joining their Hip-Hop student organization because they were finally a member of a tight-knit conglomerate of their fellow peers and supportive advisors.

Participants were also asked whether they had a sense of belonging before they arrived or after arriving at their institution. Responses to these questions offered background data concerning the participants and a framework for their voyage to institutions. Participants provided their pseudonyms to be used in the study. Table 1 exhibits the demographic data of the study participants that held membership in Hip-Hop organizations enrolled at Historically White Institutions.

Table 1

Study Participant Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity	Academic Year	Institution Pseudonym	Institution Type	Hip-Hop Organization Type
Bianca	Female	Indian	Junior	Bel-Air University	Private	Dance
Bubbles	Male	Asian	Senior	Mission University	Private	Dance
DK Daze	Female	Black	Sophomore	Cooley College	Public	Activist
Drizzy	Male	Black	Junior	Cooley College	Public	Activist
Harley	Male	Hispanic	Senior	Cooley College	Public	Activist
Jessica	Female	Hispanic	Senior	Cooley College	Public	Activist
K Dot	Male	Hispanic	Senior	Shakur University	Private	Emcee/Rap
Tobio	Female	Asian	Junior	Fair Eastside College	Private	Dance
Tony Kim	Male	Asian	Senior	Hillman University	Private	Dance

The participant sample included nine students from diverse backgrounds. Five of the participants were enrolled at private institutions, and the remaining four participants attended public institutions. Two private school study participants were enrolled at institutions classified as Ivy League schools located on the East Coast, while the other three private school study participants attended small private schools in the South and Northeast Coast. The remaining four study participants were enrolled at the same public institution in the Southwest region of the U.S. and were all members of the same organization.

Combating Researcher Bias

I started the data analysis procedure by journaling my thoughts and prospective outcomes as stated by Moustakas's (1994) explanation of the *Epoche*, in which the researcher "sets aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time" (p. 85). It was vital that I intentionally put away my personal feelings and views to maintain the study's integrity. Incorporating a reflective journal helped the researcher diminish the impact of their bias while evaluating the data collected from the research interviews (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, 2017; Jasper, 2005; Ortlipp, 2008). Aside from journaling ideas, essential statements from the interviews, and concepts for future research on the research topic, I documented their viewpoints about catalysts for building a sense of belonging. I also logged their Hip-Hop organizational involvement experiences mentioned in the interviews, in conjunction with my comments about the participant's testimonies. The reflexivity aided in recognizing spots that biases could have altered my data evaluation practices by utilizing the journal.

I also underwent debriefing interviews with two other researchers with experience conducting qualitative phenomenological interviews and utilizing a reflective journal. Within 24 hours of completing interviews with the study participants, I scheduled the debriefing interviews to discuss the interviews while their memory of the interview was fresh in their mind. Debriefing aided the researcher in signaling rich data in the form of statements made by the study participants during the interviews, explaining the need or use for follow up questions being asked, thoughts on what ways could the interview have been better, questions on any ideas for future research being discovered during the interview, what challenged the researcher's assumptions, and if the researcher thought they were a different person after conducting the interview. Debriefing permitted me to assess my mindset during and after conducting the interviews, which aided me when evaluating the interview transcripts to determine themes from the data. Being someone who considers themselves to be a product of Hip-Hop culture, I possess passionate views about why the research was an important contribution to the field and did not want to do anything that would devalue the study's credibility.

Ultimately, journaling and debriefing allowed me to discard preexisting opinions on how the study participants would respond to the questions and, ultimately, this study's findings. Using established and recommended techniques that combat researcher bias turned out to be effective in disabling any perceived bias. I was steadfast in adhering to procedures and refrained from posing leading questions throughout the interviews. I appreciated discovering the lived experiences of the various participants that contributed to the study. Various study participants voiced parallel and diverse occurrences that impacted their sense of belonging and ability to persist at their institutions, which the

researcher had not contemplated beforehand. For instance, participant, DK Daze, expressed how Hip-Hop is therapeutic for them, stating:

It's as simple as breathing air. I have to have it. I have to listen to rap. It doesn't have to be something that brings us back from the brink of darkness or whatever. Sometimes you don't notice it, right? You don't notice that it's there, but you will most definitely notice when it's not there.

I was taken aback by that statement because of its passion and the way it was articulated. It is but one example of how the study participants educated me on Hip-Hop's impact on its followers' lives. Overall, my experiences as a Hip-Hop product influenced their interest in performing this research, but the study participants' experiences made me want to make sure their experiences were accurately portrayed by not producing biased and flawed research in the end.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol (Appendix G) is comprised of a detailed introduction regarding the purpose of the study, measures to protect participant identity, risks and rights of participants, security of the interview data, and the date when interview data would be destroyed. I planned to read the introduction word for word to every participant as part of the interview; however, I verbally ad-libbed the introduction to get the preliminary interview procedure started in a suitable and relaxed fashion. All participants were sent the interview protocol prior as part of their recruitment, which aided in limiting the amount of questions participants asked before being interviewed. All interview questions were asked precisely as scripted, but I did ask follow-up questions when necessary (e.g., why do you say that? and can you elaborate more on that?). Follow-up

questions were asked to obtain richer information and more precise insight into their experiences.

Lancaster, Dodd, and Williamson (2004) described pilot studies as one of the vital phases in a study which can detect possible trouble areas and flaws in the research methods and procedure before conducting the actual study. The interview protocol and study overview were sent to multiple Hip Hop Congress national and regional officers for review. Given that these Hip Hop Congress officers have previously reviewed scholarly research, have experience providing oversight to their college chapters and advisors, and collaborate with higher education institutions frequently, the researcher viewed them as suitable individuals to assess this study's interview protocol. The Hip Hop Congress national and regional officers did not have any issues with the questions and did not express having any concerns regarding the study in general.

I intended to share the interview protocol with students of color in Hip Hop Congress for review. However, COVID-related conditions proved to be problematic in arranging assessments during the summer months. In addition, my dissertation chair and other faculty at my institution provided a review of the interview protocol for wording, interview item responsiveness, and clarity. The process of assessing and possibly revising the interview questions validated the semi-structured, qualitative interview approaches selected for gathering data. Thus, this study's interview protocol reflects ideas, subject matter, findings, and interview strategies from previous phenomenological and qualitative studies (Garcia, 2017; Hall & Martin, 2013; Janesick, 2004; Samuel, 2019; Shanks, 2017).

Findings for Research Question One

The first research question inquired, "what aspects of Hip-Hop student organizational involvement might foster a sense of belonging for students of color at an HWI?" This question was intended to ascertain whether any factors or experiences of holding membership in Hip-Hop based student organizations at HWIs fostered a sense of belonging for students of color. To collect data on this research question, interview questions were developed to solicit participants responses: (a) how was your sense of belonging to their institution before and after Hip-Hop organizational involvement, (b) to disclose why they joined a Hip-Hop organization, (c) their belief the institution embraces and supports their Hip-Hop organization, (d) explain if their collegiate experience would be different had they not joined the Hip-Hop organization, (e) discuss their sense of belonging in the Hip-Hop organization, and (f) if their involvement in the Hip-Hop organization impacts their sense of belonging at their institution.

Remarkably, many of the study participant's replies were comparable to each other. The themes that materialized from the interviews were: (a) having an inadequate connectedness to institutions because of their ethnicity, (b) the Hip-Hop organization assisting participants be unified through commonalities, (c) the Hip-Hop organization aiding participants having their purpose defined by self-awareness, and (d) Hip-Hop serving as a therapeutic remedy for participants. Table 2 presents the themes and relevant codes that relate to the first research question. The codes were created by using Dedoose (Dedoose Version 8.0.35, 2020), and categories were coined *a posteriori* and formed and grouped by the researcher by analysis of the interview transcripts.

Table 2

Emergent Themes and Relevant Codes for Research Question One

Themes	Relevant Codes
Inadequate Connectedness	Small number of minorities Institutional lack of cultural appreciation and recognition Feeling used rather than genuinely a part of the institution
Unified Through Commonalities	Authentic acceptance and ambiance Surrounded by fellow Hip-Hop culture products and participants Activism programming
Purpose Defined by Self-Awareness	Supportive advisors Leadership opportunities Engagement opportunities Career and financial support Strengthened self-esteem Dropout or transferred without Hip-Hop organization Hip-Hop organization gave purpose and inspiration
Therapeutic Remedy	Making Hip-Hop music kept students sane when stressed Hip-Hop dance as therapy Hip-Hop culture needed in everyday life

Inadequate connectedness. Prior researchers identified that students of color attending HWIs who do not feel as if they belong and experience various roadblocks on the road to degree attainment are significant factors of students dropping out (Berman, Chaffee, & Sarmiento, 2018; Sherman & Slate, 2020; Strayhorn, 2008). Several participants in this study mentioned various instances of feeling uncomfortable and disconnected by the small number of students of color at their institution. A few students mentioned feeling as if they or their organization was being used as a diversity showpiece instead of genuinely feeling as if they were respected and appreciated. Jessica said the

following about not feeling as if she belonged at one point in time as a new student to her institution: “ Well...since I am Hispanic and I walk around campus and I don't really see too many people, I guess, like me. I see a majority of white people. It kind of makes you feel like a sore thumb. It kind of makes me feel weird.” Jessica did state that later that year, she was able to make friends from diverse backgrounds, which helped her not feel alone. Drizzy commented on how the institution’s lack of recognition of significant celebrations of students of color hurt his faith in the institution truly being inclusive and supportive of all students:

Something that really bothered me... a protest that I organized for George Floyd. started being awakened to the lack of support for the black community there. I started seeing the lack of support and the reason why I would say that is because there're things like Juneteenth. Juneteenth is something if I recall history, it's the day that slaves were freed in Texas. I'm looking at it like, "We don't celebrate this?" We don't celebrate this at our school. We don't have a day off; it's not celebrated as a national holiday or anything like that. Our school doesn't do anything for Black History Month. We do not have celebrations or events for Black History Month, unless it's the black students organizing them on their own outside of the school. But as far as the school, I don't feel like they really do much for us. I would say that there's a united black community there or growing united black community there, but it's not because of the school.

Drizzy later explained the following about feeling used by his institution when he was asked if his institution understands and values Hip-Hop Congress:

Sometimes I feel like they use us as puppets. I felt like they use our organization as puppets when it comes to like diverse... it's basically business with them, they just want to get more people into their school. They are going just use the Hip-Hop students sometimes to attract diversity, then once they got us it's like, we build this sense of community we built this sense of friends. So now they know that they got us, for sure, for sure. I feel like, no, they don't understand much.

Drizzy also disclosed three traumatic acts of racism he experienced that indicated that not all students and staff at Cooley College viewed him in a respectable and accepting manner:

My freshman year, going to a party with my friends. It's clear that it's a white frat party. It was me and my cousin and a couple of our friends, and I get into the party. They're not letting every single black person in to the party. They were being very racist. They ended up calling my cousin, the "N word" at the party and I did not hear it. Still, to this day it still hurts me the fact that I didn't hear it, or I couldn't do anything about it at the time because I was inside, and all of this was going on outside. I text them and I'm like, where y'all at? and they was like, Bro, we left because they called your cousin an N word with a 'hardy har. Then we took it upon ourselves to basically notify the campus representatives of the diversity and inclusion. Basically, they gave out a warning, they did not do anything. They didn't do any kind of investigation or nothing. They just acknowledged the fact that we told them. That's all they did.

Instances, such as this one, reflect how sense of belonging for students of color at HWIs get sullied because of the lack of concern to verify oppressive, racist incidents and follow due process.

Unified through commonalities. For many of the study participants, their Hip-Hop organization was a real home away from home for them that provided shelter against systematic racism. Also, their Hip-Hop organization aided them in combating a lack of guidance, and providing mentorship, along with enabling them to associate with and be accepted by other student followers of Hip-Hop culture regardless of their ethnicity or upbringing. Tobio, Bubbles, and Drizzy shared how they found a family atmosphere in their Hip-Hop organizations. Tobio divulged the following:

The first time I felt a sense of belonging was when I joined the Hip-Hop dance group I was in because the group had family groups in it. I was chosen to be in a family group that fit really well with me and I finally felt that I had people I could get along well with...I needed to be in communities where their priority is to make everyone in the team feel like they belong. After my first year was when I realized that the dancing was fun but it was more about the friendships that I made in the dance group that felt like I actually belonged at Fair Eastside.

Bubbles mentioned the tight-knit community he found in his break-dancing crew at Mission University:

I found a lot of solace in the break-dancing group team, I ended up living with them during my junior and senior year. So, we were very, very close. And there

were two seniors who would guide me along. But in a way, it was so small that it was less like a group and more like individual friendships sometimes.

Drizzy commented the following about the family environment in Hip-Hop Congress at Cooley College:

The fact that you felt a sense of community there. You could feel that everybody that was there felt like a family. When you were in there, everybody's welcome. You felt like family when you came in there. You felt like family, you felt like you belonged, nobody was excluded in anything. Everybody felt, I could say my experience and the experience for people that I was there and in the organization with, that we all just felt like we're a family.

K Dot, a student rapper attending Shakur University was one of few study participants that mentioned possibly dropping out of school, if he had not joined the Hip-Hop organization that surrounded them with peers that shared the common interest of Hip-Hop:

It wasn't until I joined the Shakur Cyphers club, and I started meeting people who kind of had similar backgrounds, and then I started meeting a lot of friends, some of them being older, in the master's program, but they enjoyed the music that we all listened to, and that's who I was really hanging out with more. It was because of them that I felt like I could put up with the school. If it weren't for that, then I told them that if it weren't for them being so cool and down to earth and knowing where I come from, I probably would have just dropped out the second year.

Opportunities to make a difference on campus and in the surrounding community through activism and programming was another topic that some of the study participants stated during their interviews. Harley revealed a few of the events that Hip-Hop Congress at Cooley College hosted that positively impacted their following on campus:

We've put on a lot of shows for upcoming artists at Cooley College. We've put on a lot of political events. We've had well-known state politicians come to campus twice. We've had panels with people in the industry. We've had globally renown Hip-Hop artists also. We've had a bunch of things to where people can learn not just music ideas, but also in business and management and other things as well. I'd say that our support from Cooley College as far as the students, it's a big support system that we have.

DK Daze chimed in with the following statements about how Hip-Hop Congress is much more than just a music organization that uses its standing for social change:

It goes beyond the music. Hip-Hop Congress is at its core music base, but they don't stop there. They teach students, upcoming artists, how to know the game, but we also use that platform for social activism. We use that platform for change. I honestly think that that's what the heart of Hip Hop Congress is. Our slogan is, we separate the grinders from the grazers, which is basically what it is. And I was nervous coming into the organization, because I don't make music, but there's something for everyone. Hip-Hop Congress is so inclusive and so diverse that they will help you with everything because it is, at the end of the day, beyond the music. Music is just the platform. Music is just the passion, the machine that drives the social change.

Purpose defined by self-awareness. Support from the institution in the form of advisors, mentors, and departments that provide resources that aid the Hip-Hop organizations and their members were mentioned as a major component to enriching the student's sense of belong and retention. The various forms of support fulfilled some of Astin's (1993) environment factors and Strayhorn's (2012) tenets for sense of belonging such as self-actualization, esteem, belonging, safety, and social spaces to result in positive outcomes of involvement, happiness, achievement, and retention. Jessica disclosed how Hip-Hop Congress and its advisors gave her opportunities and connections that have been beneficial to her:

I feel like joining Hip Hop Congress has opened up a lot of doors because our advisor has been able to connect us with so many people. I've been able to meet people that are with music companies and things of that sort. I've been able to attend music festivals for free and do things like we partner with local clubs. It's really cool building those relationships, if I ever do need something, I know they can open doors for me.

DK Daze claimed that one of her Hip Hop Congress advisors helped her in one of her greatest times of need during the COVID-19 pandemic, which in turn kept her in school:

In fact, right when COVID hit, I didn't have a job. My rent was coming up. I was going to have to move back home and get a job to finish paying for rent and save up for next semester. And I called my Hip Hop Congress advisor. I called him telling him that I can no longer be on the executive board because I would have to move back home. And he was like, Let me call you in five minutes. He called me back five minutes later, I had a job with the university. I didn't have to go back

home, let me tell you. Everything that's good that's happened to me at university has come from this organization.

Drizzy added a similar outlook on his life at Cooley College since joining Hip Hop Congress:

Joining Hip Hop Congress for me have been positive because the reason that I have the job that I have now, and the TRiO with the Upward Bound program, I got it through Hip Hop Congress. All the opportunities that I have right now, even being interviewed for this study, I got it through Hip Hop Congress.

Harley spoke on how his involvement in Hip-Hop Congress strengthened his confidence in following his musical dreams and gave him opportunities to hone his craft:

If I never joined, I'd say I probably would have never taken music seriously. I started out producing when I was a freshman. Then later on I started to DJ, and in my sophomore year I took DJing more seriously than producing. I've had my own club nights since I was 20. It's just a whole bunch of support that I've gotten from the school and I've gotten from people in the organization, to where if I didn't have that before, my dreams and aspirations probably would've dwindled. I don't know what I would be doing without it, honestly.

Tobio disclosed information about how her academic confidence grew as a result of the sense of belonging she accumulated from the Lit dance group asserting:

I guess once I started becoming more confident in my academic abilities and where I was headed in my career, I felt more confident in my community because I started stepping up as the PR Director of Fair Eastside Lit and I think they're

pretty connected. I mean, once I started feeling like I belonged at the school I also felt more comfortable in Lit... I think it was before I joined Lit, I felt like dance was more of a side hobby type of thing. But then I think once I got to college... It sounds bad but I was dedicating as much time to the group as I was studying, but I wasn't doing bad in my classes either. It was just something I was really passionate about and I felt a sense of belonging in and I wanted to put a lot of time and energy into the Crew.

I asked Tobio to explain what aspects of the Hip-Hop dance organization strengthened her self-esteem and enhanced her collegiate experience. She responded:

I think being surrounded by other people of color who were also aiming for success and doing well in school, it motivated me. When I see my friends who are also working really hard towards their goal it encourages me to think, I can do this as well. And I belong here. Everyone here is struggling but also doing their best in dance but also in school and career wise. So, I think just being surrounded by people like them helped me also want to do better in school and in my career.

Drizzy added how his involvement in Hip Hop Congress had made him a more conscious activist and emcee:

Hip Hop Congress experiences made me more of a student activist. Made me want to fight for equality. Also, I do it through my music as well, talking about my experiences and stuff like that. My songs sometimes. It makes me more awakened to the what's going on in the world.

DK Daze noted how her involvement with Hip Hop Congress made her want to get more involved on campus and engage with others outside of the Hip-Hop space:

It wasn't that I felt like I belonged on campus and then I felt like I belonged in Hip-Hop Congress. It was the other way around. Being a part of Hip-Hop Congress made me want to be a bigger part of the campus, made me want to make changes on campus. Made me want to make an impact on campus. Made me want to make incoming freshmen want to stay. That was all because of Hip-Hop Congress. Hip-Hop Congress taught me how to be strategic. And so if I feel like I belong on campus, it's because of Hip-Hop Congress. So that belonging solidified my belonging in Hip-Hop Congress. Hip-Hop Congress made me explore the campus more and made me actually want to stay.

In contrast, a few students did mention not feeling as if they had the same support and considerations of their institution in various areas such as finances and struggling to be allowed to use spaces on campus to meet, practice, or make music. K Dot explained,

Even though Hip-Hop is the most streamed and consumed genre in the last two or three years already, I feel like they treat us as like it's necessary to keep the people quiet, but it's not being nurtured so that way you could thrive in the future. They do give us a studio in terms of the generic university studio, but that one gets priority for music classes and everything like that, so there's hardly a time where we can use it at a normal time. When we would produce music and use that studio, it'd be 9:00 PM. I guess the way I see it, it's like we're second class students, where it's like, "All right. Yeah, we know that you guys need your rap

music, but we're here to polish up our classical music, and we're here to polish the music that's already been cemented as good music.

Tobio emphasized similar frustrations about having difficulty obtaining practice space and funding from a university department over dance organizations at her institution:

We don't get a lot of funding from the school. And so that forces us to only be able to put up one show a year. So we often struggle with getting practice space from the university. We basically have to schedule our practices weekly, so we don't know our practice time until the week of and we get the leftover space from the groups that are already in dance department. And so I think we've been struggling for a long time about getting the department to recognize us, even though pretty much everyone knows about Lit, so I don't really think makes sense.

While these participants shared their displeasure of not feeling that their institution was as supportive of their organization as it could have been, the bonds and experiences the participants had inside the Hip-Hop organization overshadowed their frustrations with their institution.

Therapeutic remedy. For some participants, elements of Hip-Hop culture or their Hip-Hop organization provided them a way to channel their frustrations, depression, anger, and lack of confidence, in a way that allows them to continue in life and at their institution despite what they were experiencing. Positive psychological and cognitive outcomes as described by Astin's (1993) I-E-O model were achieved with the participants quoted in this section, along with esteem, belonging, safety, and engaging social spaces as major factors to help students remain positive to endure challenging

times they experienced. Tobio expressed Hip-Hop dance helped her deal with stress and perform better in the classroom, stating:

I think being able to dance, it's just stress relieving. And I feel like being in a community where I felt like I was comfortable with and I felt I was doing well in, helped me do better in school.

Bubbles expressed how Hip-Hop had been a form of therapy in his life:

I've been breaking eight years now, and I can't imagine life without it. I've had great role models, this PhD student, he was going through his like most stressful period, he wouldn't break dance that much, but I would force him to almost, and it would just get him out of his little cave. And yeah, it kind of like saved us in a sense. I always treated breaking as a kind of therapy. My mom was always like, "This is why the arts are important." And so, at this point I'm like, Wow, I'm probably going to be breaking for a long, long time. I'll probably teach my kids how to break. I do think of it as a therapy, as an escape. 100%.

Tony Kim added a few statements about indicating that Hip-Hop dance and music are expressive outlets for him:

I mean I can't always say it was a smooth choreography process and sometimes you just don't get along with people, so it's not always amazing. And for me, I always listen to music and for me to be able to translate the music I love into a physical kind of interpretation, I think that is therapeutic is a way. I don't know how to describe it...it is actually more freeing. I don't know I guess some people go to parties and dance it out and that's that for me, but for me I guess I also like

the structured part of it and being able to be very technical and understand what moves go better with what songs. And learning other styles and just put it random all together so I can have more of a vast library to be my creative outlet.

DK Daze made a powerful statement about needing Hip-Hop to be a part of her life:

Hip-Hop doesn't even have to be that great. For me, it's as simple as breathing air. I have to have it. I have to listen to rap. I have to listen to R&B. Music. So, it doesn't have to be this big, Oh, it brings us back from the brink of darkness, or whatever. It's there. Sometimes you don't notice it, right? If that makes sense.

The participants revealed several elements of Hip-Hop culture and organizational involvement to describe the power and influence Hip-Hop possessed in serving as bonding and coping mechanisms for them. The uncomfortable feelings several participants discussed as being vulnerable moments during their transition to their private and public HWIs were able to be overcome by way of interests they possessed in Hip-Hop culture before enrolling in college and through their Hip-Hop organizational engagement. These factors align with Astin's (1993) I-E-O model and Strayhorn's (2012) sense of belonging model. Elements of Hip-Hop culture existed in the input and environment factors associated with Astin's model. The self-actualization, esteem, belonging, and social spaces tenants from Strayhorn's model were achieved via Hip-Hop organizational involvement based on study participants' declarations.

To summarize this section about research question one, responses from participants were given regarding their insights, detailing that their involvement in Hip-Hop organizations affected their sense of belonging to their institution. Study participants

offered reasons and memories connected to their sense of belonging to their institution before and after membership in their Hip-Hop organization, relationships formed throughout their participation in Hip-Hop culture and organizations, reasons behind their disengagement or distrust with their institutions, how their Hip-Hop organization embraced, supported, and enhanced them, along with the opportunities afforded them because of their Hip-Hop organization that impacted their collegiate years and will impact their lives post college. Many of their insights into obtaining a sense of belonging to their institution by way of their Hip-Hop organization were associated with finding their home away from home in their Hip-Hop organization. The participants also stated that their Hip-Hop organization aided them with engaging with their peers in the local Hip-Hop community at their institution, exposed them to impactful and fulfilling programming produced by the Hip-Hop organization, and offered them support from the organization's advisors. Participants also declared that their Hip-Hop organizations gave them reasons to stay at the institution, cultivated their personal and professional development due to programming opportunities, and improved their leadership abilities from involvement in the culture, and offered therapeutic remedies for various difficulties experienced in their everyday lives. Given that the first research question was formulated to collect information on whether Hip-Hop organizational involvement enabled ethnically diverse students' sense of belonging to their HWIs, I assessed the personal accounts from the study participants and their response to what connections, if any, they had to an institution through their membership in their Hip-Hop organization.

The findings that emerged were that all participants had a strong sense of belonging to their organization. However, some participants had mixed feelings or a

negative connection to their institution despite their deep-seated connectedness to their organization. Several participants mentioned having a hard time transitioning to their institution, being unsure of themselves, and fitting in at their institution. Some participants voiced that while their institution stated that they embrace diversity, little or no actions support their statements, which makes students of color truly feel like outsiders at their institution. Some participants stated that their institution made minimal effort to recognize the various cultures represented in their student body. The cultural student organizations coordinated the cultural appreciation events for the campus. Each of the participants shared how their involvement in their Hip-Hop organization enhanced their self-esteem and heightened their comfortability, which aided with personal development. Lastly, participants expressed many ways that elements of Hip-Hop culture and Hip-Hop organizational involvement were mentally restorative, as helping them manage their anxiety, stress, and insecurities.

Findings for Research Question Two

The second research question stated, “how do students of color at a HWI describe the influence of Hip-Hop culture on their scholastic experience?” This research question was constructed to understand participant's experiences to determine whether Hip-Hop culture elements impacted their academic progress. The findings concerning research question two are presented in this section in terms of three themes that surfaced from the interview transcripts: (a) Hip-Hop offered a creative lens for academics and motivation to succeed, (b) Hip-Hop and academics living in separate worlds, and (c) academics not being a priority. The data indicated that most participants did not make their academics a top priority, even though all participants persisted through their collegiate years. That is

not to say they were on the verge of flunking out of school. However, they had made the decision to perform well enough to pass their courses and graduate, while preferring to spend more time engaging with their Hip-Hop organization, engaging in other clubs they were involved in at their institution, or having fun with their friends. A good number of participants mentioned how their Hip-Hop organization motivated them to do well in the classroom and were a positive representation of their organization on campus and in the community and a positive role model for other students. Table 3 includes the emergent themes and relevant codes that correlate to research question two. The codes were created using Dedoose (Dedoose Version 8.0.35, 2020), while the categories were coined a posteriori and formed and grouped through analysis of the interview transcripts.

Table 3

Emergent Themes and Relevant Codes for Research Question Two

Theme	Relevant Codes
Inspiration to Academically Excel	Elements of Hip-Hop culture assisted with completion of assignments Hip-Hop organization motivating members to do well academically and hold them accountable
The Great Divide	Students kept Hip-Hop life apart from academic life Hip-Hop culture did not influence academic performance
Academically Disengaged	Did not care about academics Lack of strong foundation on importance of education Lost of faith in academics/college

Inspiration to excel academically. During our conversations, participants discussed several ways that Hip-Hop aided their academic performance positively. When assessing the data using Astin's (1993) I-E-O model, the Hip-Hop organizational

environment achieved all of the model's outcomes for the study participants. Tony Kim shared that elements of Hip-Hop culture assisted him with how he tackled class assignments by disclosing:

I ended up majoring in physics right, which really has nothing to do with Hip-Hop culture, but I think a lot of the creativity I learned from Hip-Hop dance culture and just being able to mash-up the styles helped me be creative as a problem solver when it came to maybe a test or, doing problem sets. And there's an argument for going from the problem solving aspects of physics to me understanding that, okay I'm given a song, what's the best kind of moves I can put into, and making the best choreographies I apply my problem solving skills to choreographies as well. But in terms of just the Hip-Hop dance culture, and just being understanding of different styles such as locking, popping, break dancing can be integrated and create something new, just gave me the idea that creativity can come from just being able to not be ridged by learning a lot of different styles and kind of creating something unique.

Drizzy provided additional insight that some people have about Hip-Hop sharpening his writing skills by disclosing the following:

I can say how Hip-Hop has really changed my academic culture as well is the sense of writing my music and being more poetic. It's really helped because there're the things that I would have expressed through just writing it than just singing it. It's helped me with my classes. With my English classes, I remember the reason why I started to enjoy writing my essays and all that different kinds of things is because the stuff that I'm talking about in my essays is the same thing

that I would talk about in my music sometimes. It just basically helped me love writing. It made me love writing. It made me want to continue writing.

Several study participants also talked about how their organization motivated them to perform effectively in the classroom and to set a positive example for other students. Tobio divulged how peers in her Hip-Hop dance group motivated her to perform better inside and outside of the classroom:

Yeah, I think being surrounded by other people of color who were also aiming for success and doing well in school, it motivated me. I think when I see my friends who are also working really hard towards their goal it encourages me to think, I can do this as well. And I belong here. Everyone here is struggling but also doing their best in dance but also in school and career wise.

Also, Drizzy described that the academic standards of Hip Hop Congress forced him to do well in the classroom, be a positive representative of Hip Hop Congress, and a role model:

I will not lie to you. My academics were, I'm not saying they were horrible, but they can be a lot better. But being a part of Hip Hop Congress, I have to keep a certain GPA. In my head, I hold up standards of holding up to a certain GPA, holding up how you talk, how you walk and basically I just put on this suit of becoming an example for another student, just like me. Coming to the school not knowing where to find your belonging, where do they belong or anything like that, or they're still trying to find themselves. I put on this suit of basically becoming an example when I joined Hip Hop Congress.

Similarly, K Dot admitted that his Hip-Hop organization did help him settle down and better apply himself to his academics by stating:

Academically I was feeling like, if you're in a road, you're going somewhere. You just don't even know where. With the Cyphers, it started teaching me to find that direction. So even if it's a slower start than everyone else, I at least know that I'm going the right way. So academically, or if you just see the numbers, you'll see that there's no change. If my grade went up, down every semester, and if you just find the line, it doesn't stray very far from it. But I guess it was the mentality change that the Cyphers kind of gave me.

For some students, Hip-Hop organizational involvement might not have helped them perform better or worse in their courses. However, it kept them engaged enough to remain at their institution despite their negative feelings towards their institution. K Dot said his Hip-Hop organizational involvement kept him from dropping out or transferring to another institution by commenting:

If it weren't for them, I would say that I would have dropped out in my second year. And at that time, I was always thinking, well, if I drop out, I'll go to community college for a year, and then I go to a state school. With the Shakur Cyphers I really learned way more culturally. So, if it weren't for the Cyphers basically coming up with all the cool stuff that I learned there, I would have just been like, this isn't worth \$70,000 a year and \$30,000 in debt overall. It was kind of them just being that cool group that I'm like, is this worth 30k for the next four years? I think so. It felt like the thing that I could suffer for.

Elements of Hip-Hop culture and organizational involvement were mentioned by one student as factors that kept them on track when feeling tension about performing well in class. DK Daze remarked on how Hip-Hop music helped her perform better academically when stressing over assignments and tests:

College is very stressful. I remember academics, our finals were coming up last year. Finals were just everywhere. Finals, driving everyone crazy. I'm not saying Hip Hop Congress has everything. The organization got me to where I am, but it was a big step, it was a big part of it because anytime I felt like I was being too stupid, they were there to check me. And also Hip-Hop was there, the music was there to bring me back to my senses....With my academics, I have the GPA I have now because I had Hip-Hop to fall back on. When stress was getting too much, I had the music. It brought me back to myself. I've had 4.0 these past two semesters...And I'll attribute that to Hip-Hop and Hip-Hop Congress. So, the impact is tremendous. It's a great impact.

DK Daze pointed out additional information about how Hip-Hop Congress supported her and motivated her to change majors to do something she is passionate about for a future career:

There's those moments where I feel stupid and I feel like I don't know what I'm doing, and Hip Hop Congress would bring me back. My majors before were Anthropology and International Studies. And I was sitting with my friends who are all Hip-Hop Congress members, and I was just like, "You know what? I love these, but I like music, man. They checked me so hard. And they really convinced me to pursue film as a major, to pursue videography as a major, because that's

what I want to do. I want to make music videos. I want to manage artists. And so with that feeling of, Oh, I've got this, even if it's just something as small as changing your major, it's prevalent in everything.

The above quote by DK Daze was a noteworthy insight, because as a researcher, I never thought about how an organization could influence a student's choice regarding their field of study. Hip Hop Congress was influential in a variety of ways in DK Daze's life and was described to be a significant support system and source of strength and safety, as he further explained:

It hits me during finals when I feel like I can't make it. I have a support system. It is this organization. I have these friends that are there for me, and then I have the music. And so, because of that support system, because of that security or that sense of belonging, my academics are easy. I don't even worry about them right now. Yeah, I attribute it to them.

Drizzy proclaimed how Hip-Hop Congress assisted him with being an example for others and a more polished professional for life after college:

It helped me put on the suit of becoming an example and it's also helped me a lot more, become a lot... I don't think at first when I came to campus, I didn't see myself as a professional person. It's like just certain skills that after joining, when I have to send professional emails, how to put signatures and all these different stuff. Like how to talk to certain people about certain stuff. It just flipped me on a lot of game of how to become a professional overall. I feel like it's really helped me also because sometimes I feel like now, I can manage myself.

The great divide. While several study participants mentioned how elements of Hip-Hop culture or Hip-Hop organizational involvement aided them academically, other participants revealed that their Hip-Hop involvement had no impact on their academic performance. More than a few study participants discussed how they never overlapped their Hip-Hop culture and Hip-Hop organizational experiences and lifestyle with their academics. Their scholarly domains were said to not be influenced at all by their Hip-Hop cultural domains and vice versa; they subconsciously kept those two worlds separate. Tobio was one participant that described how Hip-Hop dance did not impact her academics, and admitted to making Hip-Hop dance a bigger priority in her life at one point than she did before because of the sense of belonging she developed with her organization:

Before I joined Lit, I felt like dance was more of a side hobby. But then I think once I got to college... It sounds bad but I was dedicating as much time to the group as I was studying, but I wasn't doing bad in my classes either. It was just something I was really passionate about and I felt a sense of belonging in and I wanted to put a lot of time and energy into the dance crew, but I don't think it affected my academic performance in college.

Additionally, Bianca acknowledged that her Hip-Hop dance organization involvement did not impact her academic performance and that she was always a good student:

I think that my academic performance before and after I joined Source probably was the same. Before I joined Source, I was a pretty good student and I definitely felt like the clubs I was in weren't as intriguing. I felt less motivation to do things and to be involved. I don't know if that ended up translating into my academic

success or failure during that year. I think after I joined Source as a sophomore, I felt ... sophomore year I was better at time management and organization. In terms of academic grades, I was much more efficient when I was a sophomore, because I wanted to really have that fun time with Source.

Similarly, Harley exclaimed that Hip-Hop and academics did not overshadow, nor impact one another positively or negatively:

My academic performance, I would say it never went up, but it didn't go down either. There was times where I was struggling in classes, maybe because I didn't like it or I didn't fully understand some of the stuff, but I was able to get to a lot more places and meet more people because of my organization, and then I could get help if I ever needed to. Academic-wise, it was never really an issue.

Jessica's academics were not impacted by Hip-Hop either, and she was indifferent on her academic performance and the need to take it too seriously by stating:

I'm an average student. I mean, I do take school seriously. I've been very glad that I've gotten the opportunity to go to college. I know that I guess you can't take life too seriously. You still got to live. Being with Hip Hop Congress has made me realize that I have a life to live... I try my best to do good in school, but within Hip Hop Congress I'm just like...there's more to life than just being straightforward on how good I can do in school.

Academically disengaged. Given that prior research on Hip-Hop and higher education had not revealed that Hip-Hop culture correlated with academics being viewed as important, it was interesting but not confusing to hear some of the study participants

voice how their academics was not top priority. Throughout the interviews, participants revealed various reasons why they did not stress over how they performed in their classes. Some of the participants mentioned that academics had never been a priority in their lives, going back to their primary and secondary education years. Given that information, one could not expect that the same participants would suddenly view academics differently and their number one priority. The next few quotes shed light on why some participants held their academics in high regard while in college. Bubbles discussed how he valued the relationships and memories from his Hip-Hop break-dancing organization over his academics:

My academic experience? I never really cared about my GPA all that much, so spent a lot of time breaking, especially my first two years. Did it help me study better? I think exercise helps you study better, and I think the culture, and having a sense of belonging also just helped. I actually didn't like my academics very much; I could say it's probably one of my least favorite parts. I didn't feel like I was learning very much in college in the first place. I really think the value of college was getting to know these groups. These are the people who are going to be in my wedding, these are the people that I'm going to care about in like 10, 20 years. I'm not going to remember the books I read, and I realized that on pretty early.

In that same vein, K Dot asserted that education was not needed for him to be successful due to how various Hip-Hop artists have been successful without obtaining college degrees:

If you think about Jay-Z, he was not the academic guy, but he was the first rapping billionaire. Kanye came up from a different upbringing in Chicago, and he ended up being a billionaire. J. Cole went to college, and he used college as a way to market his music. Kendrick didn't even go to college, and he is one of the best poets, lyricists from this generation. So, it always told me, if I'm not good at college, I need to formulate my plan to find some way towards my success.

There's not just one path. It's not just going to college.

DK Daze took a strong stance by voicing how she thinks college is a scam stating the following:

College is a scam to me. It's a massive scam. I love learning but college, if you take the learning away and you take the social act away, all it is, is big money machine just sucking you dry.

Previously in this section, the researcher shared direct statements and reasons participants gave on if elements of Hip-Hop culture and involvement in Hip-Hop organizations affected their academic performance. Participants' comments in this section were related to relationships formed throughout their participation in Hip-Hop culture and organizations, standards possessed by their Hip-Hop organization, and their outlook on the impact academics truly have on their future careers and lives. Some of their outlooks could be entwined to their search for belonging, need to live in the present and enjoy life, need to be positively guided and supported, and to be positive representations and influences for other students of color at their institution. Although the second research question was constructed to gather data to determine if Hip-Hop culture or organizational involvement may affect the academic performance of students of color at

HWIs, the researcher looked to statements from participants that spoke about how they performed in their classes pre and post membership in their Hip-Hop organization. Results were that the students' answers were all mixed but, at the same time, interconnected.

All but one of the students enrolled at the private institutions stated they did well academically before and after Hip-Hop organization involvement. For most of them, Hip-Hop was a non-factor in their academics. Even the participants that spent more time hanging out with their friends in their organization than studying did not struggle academically for the most part. A higher percentage of the participants from the public institutions leaned more on their Hip-Hop organization to support them in performing well academically and some participants voiced that they were either struggling more in the classroom or being indifferent towards the importance of education in general. Regardless, in discussions about a sense of belonging to their Hip-Hop organization or leaning on Hip-Hop to get through tough times, participants declared, a few times passionately, that they would not have had a worthwhile undergraduate college experience or even stayed at their institution had it not been for their Hip-Hop organization. Participants expressed that their self-esteem increased because of the positive experiences and influences in their organizations, along with the elements of Hip-Hop culture. From my perception, the majority of participant's engagement in campus life and academic persistence was because of the benefits of being involved in a Hip-Hop organization.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the evaluation of the data according to Moustakas's (1994) procedures as outlined in the third chapter of this study. Moustakas (1994) recommended that interviews for phenomenological studies be recorded and transcribed to obtain pertinent testimonies from the interviewees. Finding the invariant meaning units of the lived experiences and "clustering the invariant meaning units into themes" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122) were completed. In addition, I described the sense of belonging experiences obtained from synthesizing the pertinent information communicated to me by participants, which caused themes to emerge.

The information gathered and examined for this study provided student narratives of the phenomenon of Hip-Hop culture and the organizational impact on sense of belonging, retention, and academic achievement for students of color enrolled at Historically White Institutions. Participants provided explanations of their experiences, which produced seven emergent themes: (a) inadequate connectedness to institutions, (b) being unified through commonalities, (c) having their purpose defined by self-awareness, (d) Hip-Hop culture serving as a therapeutic remedy for the study participants, (e) Hip-Hop culture provided inspiration to excel academically, (f) divided perspectives on academics and Hip-Hop culture were uncovered, and (g) academic disengagement was revealed. These themes materialized from participant responses to the two research questions posed in this study, concerning students of color experiences with Hip-Hop organizational involvement's effect on their sense of belonging to their HWI, along with Hip-Hop culture's influence on their academic achievement at their Historically White Institution. The purpose of Chapter V will be to integrate the themes that emerged into a

thorough explanation of the phenomenon and address the implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Overview

The purpose of this study was to provide insight into the lived experiences of students of color enrolled at HWIs, and how their involvement with Hip-Hop student organizations impacted their sense of belonging and academic success at their Historically White Institutions. Included in this chapter, are a summary of the findings, implications for practice, and future research ideas. Interviews were conducted with nine students of color, (i.e., four enrolled at a public HWI, and five enrolled at various private HWIs) during the 2020-2021 academic year. Data collected for this study were accumulated from conducting in-depth interviews with each of the study participants and evaluated utilizing an ongoing process that began with reviewing and coding each interview and then merging codes repetitively across interviews to obtain overarching themes (Moustakas, 1994). Results of the study are explained further down in this section as related to the research questions. The remainder of this chapter includes summaries of the themes that emerged in the study, and the implications and recommendations from the findings on practice, policy, and potential research.

Summary and Discussion of Research Question One

The first research question asked, “What aspects of Hip-Hop Student organizational involvement might foster a sense of belonging for students of color at HWIs?” Four themes emerged on Hip-Hop organizational involvement for the students of color at HWIs: (a) inadequate connectedness, (b) being unified through commonalities, (c) purpose being defined by self-awareness and (d) Hip-Hop being a therapeutic remedy.

Inadequate connectedness. Numerous participants in this study described various existences of not feeling a sense of belonging and having a disengaged disposition to their institution because of the minute presence of students of color and authentic cultural recognition at their institution. Some participants voiced instances of feeling used by their institution as a walking and talking poster board for diversity. Other participants shared examples that depicted that their institutions may not value their existence or worth. For example, Drizzy mentioned how he felt a disconnect from his institution because of the campus police at Cooley College racially profiling him and using excessive force because he is Black:

One time, me and my friends were sitting at the park...the campus police caught my friend smoking and I was just there and not doing anything like that.... I thought ok wrong place, wrong time. One of the police officers checked everybody, but they checked me twice. Then like I felt like he was getting aggressive. He was getting a little too aggressive, his tone was getting too aggressive. Then he tells me, check him again. he's like, he looks like he smokes. I'm like, what does that mean? What does a person look like that they smoke to you? What does that mean? I had to control myself because I know the kind of environment that I'm in. That was something that really bothered me.

In addition to participants sharing occurrences when they felt they might not have been as welcomed on campus as they hoped. Some participants talked about how they felt their institution was using them or their Hip-Hop organization to depict having a diverse student population without the institution truly cultivating a campus that practiced cultural appreciation. For higher education institutions to implement initiatives to engage,

support, and develop better relationships with their students of color, the leaders of the institutions must recognize and take ownership of their shortcomings in supporting students of color while establishing plans to make conscious changes.

These findings are congruent with existing research centered on engaging students of color and how students of color attain a sense of belonging. Astin (1993) revealed the environmental factors of programs, policies, customs, institutional environment, and extra-curricular opportunities and organizational memberships as essential factors of successfully transitioning to and staying at a higher education institution. The environmental factors from Astin's (1993) I-E-O model above, but a few areas HWIs can start working on initiatives to improve the experiences of their students of color. Participants in this study indicated that students of color at HWIs who do not feel welcomed, respected, recognized, and valued by their institution might never truly attain a sense of belonging to the institution regardless of having strong connections to extra-curricular organizations and programs.

Unified through commonalities. The Hip-Hop organizations in which the participants were involved were described as safe havens sheltering them, while at the same time, fighting against any systematic racism existing at their institution. For other participants, joining their Hip-Hop organization allowed them to associate with and learn from people from different cultures and backgrounds. Participants mentioned having the opportunities to engage with peers from different walks of life enhanced their personal development and cultural awareness. Strayhorn's (2012) explanation of sense of belonging is in line with what the participants of this study shared. Strayhorn (2012) defined sense of belonging as "a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of

matter or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)" (p. 3). Hip-Hop organizations of which the participants were members of met several of the critical facets of sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012). Additionally, Hip-Hop organizations provided positive environments that were critical in the participants attaining a sense of belonging. After forming positive bonds with their peers and advisors in the Hip-Hop organization, all the study participants shared numerous accounts of how their college student experience was enhanced. For example, Tony Kim discussed that he was proud of the Hip-Hop dance organization he started because it invited students from diverse backgrounds to be appreciated for their uniqueness and their shared interest of Hip-Hop dance:

We had a lot of people from different backgrounds, whether it be modern or jazz or break dancing or hip-hop. And we just kind of meshed well together, we had a diversity in dance background, but we also had diversity in racial background as well. We had a lot of White, Asian, South East Asian, and Black people. I was able to get a lot of people from different sororities and fraternities to participate, and normally those kind of people wouldn't participate.

As the literature review proposes, achieving a sense of belonging by students of color is dependent upon the positive campus environments, peer support and engagement, and engaging academic curriculum (Brooms, Goodman, & Clark, 2015; Doan, 2011; Wiggan, 2008; Yearwood & Jones, 2012). The findings from this study indicated that students of color benefited in various ways from involvement in Hip-Hop student organizations. Hip-

Hop organizations served as a second home for the participants and aided in their successful transition to and progression at their Historically White Institutions.

Purpose defined by self-awareness. Astin's (1993) environment factors and Strayhorn's (2012) tenets for sense of belonging, such as self-actualization, esteem, belonging, safety, and social spaces were displayed in much of the commentary that the participants shared in regard to how they found purpose by way of self-awareness. Several participants discussed various ways that their Hip-Hop organization provided them with assistance and mentorship, in conjunction with surrounding them with a caring, nurturing support system. Nelson Laird, Bridges, Morelan-Quainoo, Williams, & Holmes (2007) identified students of color having impactful relationships with advisors and mentors as meaningful to them engaging and persisting at Historically White Institutions. In this study, Jessica talked about how Hip-Hop Congress advisors opened doors for her, which made her feel comfortable and confident that she knew where to obtain any resources she needed to be successful:

Hip Hop Congress, our advisors are partnered with Student Diversity and Inclusion and I've gotten to meet a lot of people in that department. I feel like joining Hip Hop Congress has opened up a lot of doors because our advisor has been able to connect us with so many people. It's really cool building those relationships because if I ever do need something, I know who to go to. I know they can open doors for me. I feel like I've just made a lot of connections.

Other participants disclosed how their involvement in their Hip-Hop organization assisted them in developing their confidence to take on leadership roles, make connections outside of their organization with other students and campus officials.

According to prior research on student engagement and persistence, these building blocks shape a student's sense of belonging to their institution (Caruth, 2018; Chen, Ingram, & Davis, 2014; Guiffida, 2003; Quaye, Griffin, & Museus, 2015). Students and their parents hope that college offers a safe and nurturing environment to develop and grow academically and personally. Engstrom and Tinto (2008) discussed college as a place where students are motivated to succeed because of being permitted to express themselves and learn from other individuals. The majority of the participants voiced different accounts of what they acquired from their diverse Hip-Hop organizations and how much their experiences helped them persist in succeeding at their Historically White Institution. Participants persisting at their institutions by way of involvement in their Hip-Hop organizations illustrated the effectiveness of Hip-Hop culture on academic settings.

Therapeutic remedy. Researchers have reported that students of color who are unable to obtain a sense of belonging to their institution may have unfavorable outcomes, such as, discontent, anxiety, thoughts of harming themselves, or dropping out of the institution (Balcacer, 2018; Lewis, 2018; Strayhorn, 2012). Sulé (2016) asserted that Hip-Hop culture elements serve as therapeutic tools for college students, stating that Hip-Hop aided with giving students a sense of belonging, fostered cross-cultural relationships with peers, and provided students with an emotional release. The results of Sulé's (2016) corresponded to the outcomes of this study, with all participants acknowledging that Hip-Hop was a form of therapy, stress reliever, and coping tool. This study confirmed Sulé's (2016) findings, because several participants mentioned that their Hip-Hop organizations and elements of Hip-Hop aided them when dealing with the stress. For example, Tobio

made a short statement on Hip-Hop dance relieving her stress and helping her perform better academically:

Being able to dance, it's just stress relieving. And I feel like being in a community where I felt like I was comfortable with and I felt I was doing well in, helped me do better in school, I think.

A few participants mentioned Hip-Hop was ingrained in their identity, which influenced them to live using the principles of Hip-Hop culture. Bubbles was one participant who stated that she could not imagine life without breakdancing and wanted to pass his love for breaking down to his children later in life:

I've been breaking eight years now, and I can't imagine life without it. I'll probably teach my kids how to break. It has become a big thing of my identity. I think a lot of the values that Hip-Hop teaches, like peace, diversity, respect, inclusion, those basic common-sense things. I think that they're really important, and sometimes I don't see them reflected so much in our society or in our school even.

All study participants obtained a sense of belonging in their collegiate setting because of their Hip-Hop organization's involvement. However, three of the nine participants made it clear that their sense of belonging stopped at their Hip-Hop organization and ethnic community within the institution. They still did not truly feel a sense of belonging to the institution. Given this, the results indicated that students achieve a sense of belonging to their organization without having a connection to their institution. All participants were able to persist and remain at their institution.

The study participants credited their persistence to having attained a sense of belonging through the bonds and rapport established through their Hip-Hop organizational involvement. Hip-Hop culture and organizational involvement were mentioned as essential for several participants to maintain their composure to stay engaged in school. A few participants acknowledged that Hip-Hop was a necessary component of their lives, which they could not fathom being without. Participants also noted that writing, rapping, and activism facilitated the relief of anxiety and uneasiness. The results of this study indicate that Hip-Hop is an effective stress-relieving and coping mechanism for individuals who participate in Hip-Hop culture and the information herein adds to the literature on the effective ways to engage and retain college students in a non-traditional manner.

Summary and Discussion of Research Question Two

The second research question asked, “How do students of color at HWIs describe the influence of Hip-Hop culture on their scholastic experience?” Another three themes emerged from the data that indicated that characteristics of Hip-Hop culture organizational involvement influenced the academic experiences of students of color attending HWIs: (a) Hip-Hop inspired participants to excel academically, (b) Hip-Hop and academics were divided into separate entities by participants, and (c) the participants being academically disengaged.

Inspiration to academically excel. Astin (1993) identified the environments at higher education institutions in which students must experience positive outcomes to be successful. Astin’s (1993) I-E-O and Strayhorn’s (2012) sense of belonging models allude that must experience positive peer interaction and encouraging social spaces to

help students obtain a sense of belonging and succeed academically. In existing literature, student organizations have been identified as being helpful resources and spaces at institutions of higher education to aid in engagement and be positive influences the academic success of members (Doan, 2011; Guiffrida, 2003; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Museus, 2008). One of the research questions that guided this study was to assess whether or not the Hip-Hop organization's peer environment affected the participant's academic achievement. To ascertain whether or not Hip-Hop organizational involvement affected how the participants performed academically, they were asked to discuss how they performed academically before and after joining their Hip-Hop organization.

In the previous chapter, a statement made by the study participant, Drizzy, demonstrated Hip Hop Congress having a grade point average standard that motivated him to make good grades in his courses. Other participants such as DK Daze, K Dot, and Tobio shared that members from their Hip-Hop organizations assisted and motivated them to perform well academically. The results of this study concerning Hip-Hop organizations having academic standards and peer support that aided its members in obtaining academic success resembles the outcomes of other studies on peer and student organizational environments (Baker, 2008; Cerezo et al., 2015; Moreno and Banuelos, 2013; Williams, 2017).

The great divide. While elements Hip-Hop culture were found to engage students outside of the classroom, several participants stated that they kept their Hip-Hop and academic lives separate. This acknowledgement meant that Hip-Hop did not influence the approaches they took academically, and how they performed in the classroom had no impact on their Hip-Hop organizational involvement. Many participants confessed that

they did not care much about their academic performance and devoted more time to their organizations and some of their other interests. Prior research indicated that students are more engaged in the classroom when they are given challenging and engaging coursework (Love, 2014; Wiggan, 2008). Participants in this study that did mention how elements of Hip-Hop culture and their Hip-Hop organization influenced their academics, which indicated that they had a more positive attitude about their scholastic progress than participants who did not connect Hip-Hop with academics. These findings are akin to the results of Montelongo's (2003) study which uncovered that students of color who strongly identify with cultural student organizations had a positive connection to academic performance and engagement.

A few participants revealed that they did not take their academics as seriously or view education as important as other students may. That mindset does not mean they were failing courses, but they alluded that they would rather hang with friends and their Hip-Hop organizations than worry about how they performed academically. Other students took their academics more seriously but still did not let Hip-Hop culture or Hip-Hop organizational involvement influence their academics. Harley was one participant that said his academics were not negatively or positively affected by his involvement in a Hip-Hop organization:

My academic performance, I would say it never went up, but it didn't go down either. There was times where I was struggling in classes, maybe because I didn't like it or I didn't fully understand some of the stuff. Academic-wise...it didn't conflict with Hip Hop Congress at all...nothing ever overshadows the other.

The findings of the study indicate that Hip-Hop culture did not influence all participants' academic outcomes. While Hip-Hop was not spoken of by the participants as negatively affecting them, it is possible that the participant's coursework did not allow for elements of Hip-Hop culture to be applied. If the participants had opportunities in their classes to utilize elements of Hip-Hop, it is likely that they would have been more interested in completing assignments and thus been more engaged in their classes.

Academically disengaged. For some participants, academic coursework and rigor did not play a role in obtaining and keeping their interest while still passing their classes. A few participants stated that they were not interested in their course work before their collegiate years. In the previous chapter, quotes were shared by study participants that detailed their disinterest in their academics. One student stated that they believed college was a scam and that their family preferred they work instead of attending college, while other participants shared that the success of some individuals in Hip-Hop culture indicated people do not need a college degree to be successful in life. Several participants mentioned that they took their academics seriously, but only because they needed to perform well enough to pass their course and progress through their college years. Prior research on Hip-Hop pedagogies and academic success have identified that creative instructors use of real-world scenarios and utilizing non-traditional learning methods have a higher success rate in keeping their students engaged and interested in their courses than those that do not. Participant Drizzy shared that being in a class where he had the freedom to choose writing topics allowed him to enjoy the assignment instead of being forced write on topics included in a syllabus that he could not relate to or had no interest in:

In my first English class...the reason why I started to enjoy writing my essays is because the stuff that I'm talking about in my essays is the same thing that I would talk about in my music sometimes. It just basically helped me love writing. It made me love writing. It made me want to continue writing.

Drizzy's experience displayed that some students can perform better in class and enjoy completing assignments in which they are interested. Realistically, students should be able to do what they want in every course, but professors should incorporate creative methods to pique students' interest, which will be beneficial and memorable to students. Glenn (2000) reported that students are more engaged in courses containing self-guided learning options, collaborative learning atmospheres, several methods for receiving constructive criticism, and alternative options to complete assignments, and utilizing methods that offer significant learning experiences for students. Some participants who voiced their disinterest in coursework signaled the significance of academic engagement in shaping students' attention to their lessons and academic achievement. That is not to say that gaining a student's interest in their coursework is enough because it is equally vital for higher education institutions to offer helpful atmospheres that enhance student's interests while learning.

Discussion of the Findings

This study's findings are limited to nine students of color holding membership in various Hip-Hop organizations enrolled at HWIs who agreed to participate in this study. Given that the findings are restricted to this group of participants, the results of this study should not be generalized to all students of color holding membership in Hip-Hop student organizations enrolled at Historically White Institutions. Nevertheless, the findings

brought forth thought-provoking ideas that sense of belonging plays in cultivating persistence and retention. Some researchers may wonder if belonging is important to retention, while others may speculate if students of color need to obtain a sense of belonging to persist and remain at HWIs. Scholars could also question how important it may be for students to be engaged in a phenomenon more significant than the traditional campus environments, or if those environments have to be associated with the campus for the sense of belonging to be maintained to the institution.

Prior researchers stated that students of color who engage in a common interest, such as social and culturally-based student organizations were more likely to attain a sense of belonging and persist at their institution (Baker, 2013; Chen, Ingram, & Davis, 2014; Doan, 2011; Garcia, 2019; Gonzalez & Morrison, 2015; Park, 2014). Though limited research exists on Hip-Hop's effect on college students' sense of belonging and academic persistence, researchers (Hall & Martin, 2013; Petchauer, 2012; Sulé, 2016) reported positive results for several of their participants in both engagement and academic persistence. In fact, Hall and Martin (2013), Petchauer (2012), and Sulé (2016) recommended their findings to higher education practitioners as a way to increase persistence and retention among students of color. All participants mentioned that they did not think they would have enjoyed their college experience or built as strong of a sense of belonging to their institution without their involvement in a Hip-Hop organization. Furthermore, a few participants mentioned that they would have dropped out of college or transferred to another institution had it not been for their Hip-Hop organization.

Some researchers (Estrada et al., 2016; Guiffrida, 2003; Petchauer, 2010; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001) who asserted that students of color were positively influenced by and attained a sense of belonging to their common interest and culturally based student organizations yielded similar outcomes to this study. The majority of the study participants shared positive comments about and built a strong sense of belonging to their Hip-Hop organization. I did not expect to hear that the Hip-Hop space for some participants was a major factor in keeping them enrolled at their institution. Direct quotes were shared in the previous chapter from participants Drizzy, K Dot, and DK Daze. These participants concurred that they would have transferred to other universities or dropped out of college had it not been for their Hip-Hop organization. K Dot expressed that he would have dropped out two years before this study had it not been for his involvement in the Shakur Cyphers organization:

If it weren't for them, I would say that I would have dropped out in my second year. And at that time, I was always thinking, well, if I drop out, I'll go to community college for a year, make sure that I get my transcript ready, and then I go to a state school... I think because I didn't really find my spot in the university, it gave me that much more drive to find my sense in the club...I guess it was the mentality change that the club kind of gave me.

This quote by K Dot, along with quotes made by other participants, provide higher education administrators with evidence of Hip-Hop culture's ability to engage, motivate, and positively affect college students. This study fills a gap on the positive influence Hip-Hop organizations have on college students of color, especially those students who are enrolled at Historically White Institutions. In the higher education literature on college

student involvement, there is scant amount of research on collegiate Hip-Hop student organizations (Petchauer, 2010). This study provides a scholarly assessment of the multifaceted functions Hip-Hop organizations can provide higher education institutions.

Cultivating a sense of belonging has been identified as critical for students of color attending HWIs because they receive less support from their relatives, have more difficulty forming positive connections with others on campus, and feel as if they do not fit in at their institution (Doan, 2011; Llamas et al., 2018; Murphy & Murphy, 2018; Museus & Maramba, 2011). Results gathered throughout conducting this study concerning whether the study participants attained a sense of belonging are parallel with previously conducted research which revealed that students acquire a sense of belonging by forming bonds with peers who have similar ethics, experiences, and views (Carter & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008; Sulé, 2016). The results are unique, however, because Hip-Hop student organizations have never been the focal point of research concerning sense of belonging at institutions of higher education. The findings of this study indicated that each study participant was involved in Hip-Hop social group settings where they obtained a sense of belonging to that space and the other students who shared the same space.

In this study, three Asian, two Black, three Latino, and one Indian student contributed experiences. The diversity of participants should be acknowledged, especially considering prior research findings on this topic that emphasizes cultivating bonds with others with similar experiences, morals, and viewpoints. Each of the study participants spoke on their ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic contrasts from most of the students at

their institution, causing most participants to acknowledge feeling that they did not belong when they first arrived at their Historically White Institutions.

Participants who felt they had a sense of belonging when arriving on campus pointed to attending schools with similar ethnic/racial demographics prior to attending a HWI and being assigned to living-learning communities, where they were grouped with students with shared interests and majors. Strayhorn (2012) declared that students who can foster a sense of belonging have positive experiences, such as engagement on campus, contentment, and persistence. Conversely, students who cannot cultivate a sense of belonging are more likely to experience adverse results, such as unhappiness, and they are more likely to withdraw from the institution. The students who developed a sense of belonging were active on campus and satisfied with their campus experiences because of their affiliation with their Hip-Hop organization, as expressed by participants. The students who did not develop a sense of belonging were involved on campus but not to the same extent as those who felt they belonged. Also, students who felt they did not belong talked about periods where they were unhappy and considered leaving their Historically White Institution.

Students who did not establish a sense of belonging to their HWI were active on campus through their Hip-Hop organization but only had a strong bond to their organization, not their Historically White Institution. Periods when they felt unappreciated and like outcasts on campus lead them to contemplate leaving their institution. Main topics mentioned that prohibited a sense of belonging were the cultural climate of the institution, the lack of action by the HWI in intentionally supporting students of color and recognizing their cultural traditions, which as a result galvanized to

their lack of institutional assimilation. Participants viewed their Hip-Hop organizations as safe havens that made them feel accepted, valued, and supported, as students of color. The advisors and leaders of Hip-Hop organizations were also mentioned frequently as aiding in molding, motivating, and drawing out a more confident and assured version of the participants. The experiences endured, opportunities gained, and long periods spent with their peers in their Hip-Hop organization were emphasized as critical components for cultivating a sense of belonging and aiding in their academic persistence and personal career development.

Responses from some participants revealed that although scholarly achievement, institutional assimilation, and sense of belonging may be valuable to some students, all students may not agree that it is vital for them to persist. Should the results of this study be replicated in future studies, administrators, faculty, and staff at higher education institutions may acknowledge students of color as assets to HWIs, and implement college achievement plans, which are generally fixated on organizational memberships and engagement. Researchers have supported that fraternities, sororities, cultural organizations, and common interest student organizations have successfully allowed students of color a sense of belonging and provided experiences and opportunities that enhance their academic, professional, and personal experiences while in school and their lives after college. The findings in this study support the argument that Hip-Hop organizations provide the same results for students of color enrolled at HWIs as the organizations previously mentioned.

During the interviews, information collected indicated that all participants attained a sense of belonging to their Hip-Hop organization, but not entirely to their

institution. The participants voiced that a disconnection to their institution created negative experiences that traumatically affected their transition to college before joining the Hip-Hop organization. Organizational involvement can only do so much, regardless of how engaging and multifaceted it may be for students. Undoubtedly, the results of this study support that a one-size-fits-all approach does not exist to aid students in general and students of color to attain a sense of belonging or aid with academic or communal assimilation to an institution. My study allowed me to identify how the Hip-Hop organizations could help participants persist at their institution because of their sense of belonging and connection to their Hip-Hop space influencing their decisions despite facing various hardships and having doubts about their place within their institution. Also, results of my study are in line with previous studies on the connection amongst sense of belonging, student organization involvement and retention. Further, retention is boosted by a student's attaining a sense of belonging by way of organizational involvement (Cerezo et al., 2015; Estrada, Mejia, & Hufana, 2016; Museus, 2008; Patton, Flowers, & Bridges, 2011; Strayhorn, 2012). Thus, the study participants realized a realistic outcome of the theorized correlation between a sense of belonging and persistence based on prior conducted research.

When contemplating over statements made by participants, some did not develop a sense of belonging to their institution, did not hold their academics in high regard, and kept their Hip-Hop organizational experiences separate from their academic experiences. They also gave the impression that a sense of belonging, socializing with their peers, and engagement on campus were vital for their success and happiness during their collegiate life. Also, based on comments by a few of the study participants, they would have been

successful at building a sense of belonging or, at the very least, persisted to graduate from their HWI regardless if they join a Hip-Hop organization or not. However, those same participants stated that they would not have enjoyed their college experience, had the same career and social experiences, and do not know if they would have obtained a sense of belonging to their institution without their Hip-Hop organization. It is feasible that participant's intrinsic motivation to earn a college degree, meet the expectations of their families, or for some, be the first college graduate in their family enhanced their desire to build a sense of belonging and succeed at their Historically White Institution. Some participants discussed that being the first or one of a few college graduates in their family or meeting their parents' expectations to attain a college degree was paramount.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Some students of color enter HWIs with preconceived notions about how they would be treated and have limited awareness about what it would take to succeed. Not all students realize the value that being involved on campus assist in cultivating a sense of belonging. Some people tend to stereotype and take people of color for granted, which forms counterproductive relationships. Higher education institutions should intentionally strategize about offering more customized institutional support systems, cultural involvement opportunities, and mentors for students of color. Recommendations based on the feedback from the study participants are: (a) HWIs should host cultural organization fairs to get students of color involved on campus, (b) HWIs should form mentoring programs for students of color, (c) audit the number of faculty and staff of color employed by the university to determine if more qualified people of color should be recruited, (d) student affairs departments at HWIs ought to host campus-wide cultural

celebrations, (e) HWIs need to provide financial support strictly dedicated to cultural organizations or students of color to host events and attend multi-cultural conferences, and (f) dedicated spaces on campus need to be allocated for cultural organizations to meet, practice, and host events. The findings from this study add to research that promotes Hip-Hop culture and spaces on college campuses that allow students the opportunity to feel a sense of belonging, surround them with a positive support system, and encourage student persistence. The participants in this study obtained significant social and cultural capital from their peers, advisors, academic motivation and accountability, programming opportunities, leadership development opportunities, and collaborative opportunities because of their membership in Hip-Hop organizations at their institutions.

Some families and high school graduates do not view higher education as necessary, do not want to accrue debt from college fees, or feel as though they will not be guaranteed employment or specific salaries after attending college. College administrations are recommended to develop unique and non-traditional methods to attract and engage and keep students at their institution. Results of this study reflect that Hip-Hop culture and organizations are one non-traditional way to foster a student's sense of belonging and enhance their college experience in many ways. The results are honest that Hip-Hop culture and organizational involvement are not all-encompassing approaches to solve all academic, retention, and persistence challenges for students of color. Based on the study participants' commentary, HWIs are strongly encouraged to assess cultural celebrations, programs, and resources or lack thereof aimed at students of color to determine their intentionality and impact. Suggestions on how HWIs can act are:

(a) create a committee of faculty, staff, and students of color to evaluate the impact of previous on-campus cultural events and coordinate future cultural campus-wide celebrations and events, (b) establish a respectable budget for cultural student organizations to host and attend off-campus events, and (c) cultural appreciation, sensitivity, and diversity workshops should be implemented and required for all staff and faculty.

Also, HWIs need to establish more deliberate strategies to assist students engage both academically and socially. Several participants mentioned that they were engaged socially via their Hip-Hop organization but were not as connected to their academics even if they were performing well in courses. Lack of creativity and failure to connect course work with real-life situations or cultural experiences were reasons that participants stated for not being as engaged academically. Based on this study's findings, a system should be implemented to identify students who identify with Hip-Hop culture. When students arriving at postsecondary institutions are recognized as being followers of Hip-Hop culture, faculty or staff who champion Hip-Hop culture should be paired with students to act as mentors. Strategies to develop mentor/mentee relationships that could be implemented are: (a) helping students who are products of Hip-Hop culture recognize potential advisors/mentors, (b) exposing faculty and administrators to a different outlook on Hip-Hop, (c) conducting voluntary seminars to inform faculty, administrators, and students about Hip-Hop culture and organizations.

Lastly, institutions of higher education should classify Hip-Hop organizations as cultural organizations given that prior research has demonstrated that Hip-Hop is a tool used by Black and Latino adolescences to form concepts of self, history, dialect, dress,

writing, entrepreneurship, therapy, and inspiration (Hill, 2009; Pennycook, 2007; Petchauer, 2010). This study has revealed that Hip-Hop organizational involvement provided its members with more than entertainment. The Hip-Hop organizations in this study were found to be valuable spaces that helped their members realize their identities, find their voices, and provided their members with mentorship and social assistance. Once HWIs can recognize and acknowledge their student body's vulnerabilities, they can then act to support their students more efficiently by way of introducing engaging extracurricular programs and implement non-traditional, challenging, and inclusive curriculums. This study has provided details on how Hip-Hop is one of the most influential cultural phenomena in the lives of current and future college students, so HWIs are rerecommended do more to incorporate Hip-Hop into their institution than bring a Hip-Hop artist to their campus occasionally to entertain their students. Historically White Institutions are recommended to fulfill the necessities of their students whom participate in Hip-Hop culture by first acquiring a greater comprehension of Hip-Hop and put forth effort to incorporate various approaches for the students to experience Hip-Hop in the institution's community.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the researcher for this study, several recommendations are provided to create more in-depth perspectives of student involvement in Hip-Hop college student organizations. First, this study should be reproduced with community colleges to determine if the results are comparable. Additionally, repeating this study in different countries/nations would allow researchers to examine similarities and differences of Hip-Hop student organizations and look at Hip-Hop's impact in global collegiate settings.

Further, to add to the limited research, studies should be conducted to gain a better understanding of Hip-Hop as a catalyst of cross-racial interaction within the Hip-Hop organizations at Historically White Institutions. Moreover, White students who are members of Hip-Hop organizations should be interviewed to contribute to research by discussing their experiences with their peers of color inside Hip-Hop organizations. Additional research should also be conducted on the impact the Hip-Hop culture has on faculty and administrators.

Because prior researchers and information provided by participants in this study indicated that advisors and mentors are essential to the academic and personal success of students of color, research on the experiences of advisors supporting Hip-Hop organizations is recommended for future studies on Hip-Hop organizations. Topics, such as reflections of Hip-Hop organization's members academic and personal development through affiliation, the pros and cons that exist when merging Hip-Hop culture and traditional academic culture, and if Hip-Hop organizations fulfill their purpose in academic settings should be examined. Future studies should also investigate the connections present between alumni of the organization and current members to understand their influence on outcomes discussed in this study. The types of institutional support Hip-Hop organizations receive other than from advisors and the sponsoring departments are also important to further support the work of these organizations. These areas of recommended future research add to previous scholarship discussing how Hip-Hop organizations enhance engagement, retention, and sustainability on campus and how students use these organizations to enhance their self-confidence and self-worth while attending college.

Based on this study's findings, more research should be conducted on the role of Hip-Hop in personal psychology and spirituality. For some study participants, Hip-Hop was expressed as being akin to spirituality or as their lifeblood, which is similar to how individuals that believe in God and incorporate the teachings in the Bible, such as adhering to the ten commandments, in their everyday lives. Some participants mentioned that Hip-Hop culture was almost a type of spirituality which is present in their everyday lives, affecting how they dress, speak and with whom they associate with. Earlier in this study, participant, DK Daze, discussed how Hip-Hop is always present in her life and her spirit, so much so that she only realizes when it's missing from her daily routines. Future studies can focus on the role Hip-Hop culture subconsciously plays in a student's life decisions, values, beliefs, and traditions.

Also, each participant in this study shared how they were able to cultivate and achieve a more polished version of themselves and, for some participants, discover a new path for personal and career fulfillment. These findings offer new research ideas to ascertain how Hip-Hop culture and Hip-Hop organizations may be sources for self-development. More research is recommended on the role Hip-Hop culture plays as a form of therapy and students' coping mechanism. Because of the difference in resources provided to student groups at different types of institutions, more research is needed on the support Hip-Hop organizations receive at private institutions than Hip-Hop organizations receive at public institutions. These study recommendations can be valuable because they encourage awareness of diversity and sense of belonging, because Hip-Hop culture offers insight into the covert aspects of student resilience and interpersonal contact within and outside of institutions of higher education.

Conclusion

Some students of color come to college to bond with others and long for the opportunity to associate with other students who have similar interests and want to be active at their institution. Conversely, other students of color may be intimidated to form connections, feel out of place, think they are ill-equipped for college, or are overwhelmed by the change in lifestyle and challenges that transition to college brings. Researchers have revealed that students of color can be successful in college when receiving customized attention, mentoring, positive and motivational engagement with their peers, and assistance from the institution's faculty and staff. Along with the traits mentioned above that aid in student success, students want to build a knowledge bank on effectively accessing the opportunities and services available at their institution. Hip-Hop culture and organizations played a significant role in the participants in this study, cultivating a sense of belonging and persistence at their institution in the face of various adversities. This study indicates that Hip-Hop organizations at private and public HWIs are influential for students of color from diverse backgrounds. Hip-Hop organizations and their members were assisted participants in a variety of ways in not only attaining a strong sense of belonging to the Hip-Hop space, but with attaining a sense of belonging to their institution. Also, participants were groomed by the organization to be involved on campus, develop leadership skills, and persist academically.

Furthermore, some HWIs were called out by the study participants for failing to adequately support students of color in successfully assimilating into the academic and social community at their institutions, which unfortunately traumatized a few study participants from ever fully developing a sense of belonging to their institution.

Historically White Institutions were also said to not provide cultural and non-traditional student organizations with equal support, resources, and attention as traditional student organizations. The results of this study indicated that Hip-Hop culture and organizational involvement can positively impact sense of belonging and persistence for students of color enrolled at HWIs and should be considered as a capable instrument for engagement and therapy by institutions of higher education.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine whether or not students of color who were enrolled at HWIs and involved in Hip-Hop student organizations developed a sense of belonging to their institution and if Hip-Hop culture influenced their educational experience. The themes developed from the participants' experiences centered on whether they developed a sense of belonging focused on the study participants' inadequate connectedness to their institutions, participants being unified with other students through commonalities, participant's having their purpose defined by self-awareness, and Hip-Hop culture serving as a therapeutic remedy for the participants. The themes that emerged from the participants' experiences based on whether Hip-Hop culture influenced their scholastic achievement centered on Hip-Hop culture providing participant's inspiration to excel academically, the participants having divided perspectives on academics and Hip-Hop culture, and the participants being academically disengaged. The information collected from participants reflected that Hip-Hop culture and organizational involvement provided students of color enrolled at HWIs a home away from home, consisting of supportive peers, helpful advisors, motivating standards, opportunities for personal and professional development, and therapeutic

outlets. Some participants disclosed information stating that Hip-Hop culture and student organizations helped them complete coursework and motivated them to achieve academic success. Other participants revealed that Hip-Hop culture and academics were purposely kept separate in their lives, that they did not care about academics, and that they did not experience an upbringing that held education in a high regard thus resulting in them losing faith in the value of a college degree.

This research is distinctive because no prior studies analyzing students of color involved in Hip-Hop organizations at public and private HWIs' experiences concerning their sense of belonging and Hip-Hop culture's influence on their academic persistence. For that reason, this study fills a void in the literature that was not investigated before. This study may act as an original for future Hip-Hop scholars to conduct their examinations. Furthermore, it is possible that this research may improve institutions of higher education's view on Hip-Hop culture and Hip-Hop organization's influence on and usefulness for its members to be more than just a form of entertainment. This study may also encourage college administrators to assess their institution's racial climate to ascertain how inclusive and supportive their campus are towards minority populations. Moreover, with any luck, this research will assist Hip-Hop student organizations in being validated as cultural organizations that can positively influence its members, similarly to fraternities, sororities, and other ethnic student organizations. Hip-Hop organizations receiving the validation and support of higher education administrators and scholars could help participants in these organizations realize that they are not viewed as being lesser than, as outcasts, or like their institution is using them as entertainers or an occasional showpiece for diversity. Lastly, I hope that future Hip-Hop scholars may be

allowed to conduct research in non-traditional methods than what academia has allowed previously so that future research may reach larger audiences more creatively.

Horace Mann (1848) said “Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, —the balance-wheel of the social machinery.” While education may be an equalizer, the fact remains that students of color attending HWIs have historically had to work much harder to be accepted into the institution and be accepted into the campus culture. An argument can be made that Hip-Hop has experienced similar challenges to be accepted in society as well as academia. This study was completed to give students of color that are Hip-Hop products a chance to speak, be recognized, and respected not only by other students, but by college administrators and faculty.

A Final Thought

Before starting my doctoral studies, I had a budding thought that I wanted to research the phenomenon of Hip-Hop's impact on engaging students of color at Historically White Institutions. I was interested in researching and learning about the backstories, the transition experiences and the difficulties faced by color students attending Historically White Institutions. As a Black male that attended an HBCU, a sense of belonging was not hard to attain because I was surrounded by people that looked like me, had similar backgrounds and experiences as me, along with similar interests as me. Hip-Hop culture was also a built-in component into many of the organizations and events I took part in during my undergraduate years. During that time, I could only imagine what it must be like to be Black or Latino and attend an HWI, where experiences and situations would be the complete opposite.

Upon reflection, I challenged myself to learn what students of color encountered when arriving at their HWI, why they join their Hip-Hop organization, and their college experience after joining their organization. I was interested in uncovering if they achieved a sense of belonging and experienced personal, academic, and professional development, and I wanted to know the stories behind those experiences. It was a privilege to connect and talk with the study participants. Though I assumed and anticipated that the participants would disclose interesting and compelling narratives of their experiences, I could not foretell the degree of frankness and the rawness to discuss their challenges and joys. They shared in-depth information about their lives before college and during the time they were transitioning into an HWI, revealing that racism, classism, and prejudice are thriving. Nevertheless, they all shared how they combated various challenges and still have persisted at their institutions. This study, like Sulé's (2016) study, revealed that Hip-Hop culture was vital to the study participants because it makes people from diverse backgrounds feel understood and accepted by others that engage in Hip-Hop culture.

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APPENDIX A

First Email Distributed - Recruiting Emails Distributed to Students of Color
Involved in Hip-Hop Organizations at Historically White Institutions During the 2020
and 2021 academic year

Subject: Hip-Hop Sense of Belonging Interview: Please submit by (Date, TBD)

Date: TBD

Hello,

Hopefully by now you have heard about Hip-Hop sense of belonging study that has been designed to help colleges and universities determine how best to nurture Hip-Hop students' feelings of inclusion and satisfaction at their institutions. By participating in this study, you will share your important perspective and help institutions of higher education better support to Hip-Hop students and most effectively support your succeeding in college.

The interview will take about 45 minutes to complete and an optional review of the interview transcript. If you complete it by (Date TBD), you will be eligible to win one of the prizes below. Your responses will be completely confidential. Before the interview, you will have the opportunity to review the Informed Consent document to ensure you understand the study. You will be reminded that participation in the study is voluntary and that all information will be kept confidential. Next, you will be asked to sign the Informed Consent if you wish to participate in the interview and you will be given a copy of the Informed Consent for your records. I will then ask you for permission to video record the interview. Once the Informed Consent is signed, I will review the completed demographic questionnaire and confirm the pseudonym to be used

in the findings and discussion section of the dissertation. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and the institution's identity. The final step will be the interview, in which I will ask questions about your Hip-Hop cultural experiences, Hip-Hop student organizational involvement, sense of belonging to your institution, and your educational goals.

I am seeking participants who meet the following criteria:

- Identify as a person of color
- Is 18 years old or older
- Is enrolled at a Historically White Institution (HWI) in the USA
- Is a member of a Hip-Hop student organization or space at their institution

Participants have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Those who complete the interview will be entered into a drawing (optional) with three winners: a. 1st prize winner gets \$50 Ticketmaster eGift card b. 2nd prize winner \$25 Live Nation eGift card c. 3rd prize winner gets a \$25 Amazon eGift card.

If you wish to participate in the study, please contact me at jsherman@shsu.edu to schedule the interview or to ask any questions you may have about this study. All of the input received will be taken very seriously and will help inform policies and practices for current and future Hip-Hop students.

Thank you very much for your time!

Sincerely,

Jerrell Sherman EdD Candidate, Sam Houston State University

With the support of [Dr. Ricardo Montelongo and Educational Leadership Department]

APPENDIX B

Follow-up reminder email

Subject: Hip-Hop Sense of Belonging Interview Deadline Extended through

(Date, TBD)!

Date: TBD

Hello,

This is a THANK YOU to those who have participated in the Hip-Hop sense of belonging interview and a REMINDER to those who haven't. Please take a moment to inform me that you are willing to share your important perspective and help colleges and universities respond to student concerns and suggestions to engage and retain Hip-Hop students. Please schedule a date and time to speak with me by (Date, TBD), to enter a drawing to win: \$50 Ticketmaster eGift card b. 2nd prize winner \$25 Live Nation eGift card c. 3rd prize winner gets a \$25 Amazon eGift card.

I am seeking participants who meet the following criteria:

- Identify as a person of color
- Is 18 years old or older
- Is enrolled at a Historically White Institution (HWI) in the USA
- Is a member of a Hip-Hop student organization or space at their institution

Thank you very much for your time!

Sincerely,

Jerrell Sherman EdD Candidate, Sam Houston State University

With the support of [Dr. Ricardo Montelongo and Educational Leadership Department]

APPENDIX C

Informational Recruitment Flyer



Hip-Hop students of color, your voice is needed!

**Cut from a Different Cloth:
Examining the Role Hip-Hip Plays
in Belonging at Select Institutions
of Higher Education Study**

**8-10 students of color involved in Hip-Hop student organizations
needed for virtual interviews!**

**Those who complete interviews will be placed in a drawing for: 1st
prize winner gets \$50 Ticketmaster eGift card, 2nd prize winner \$25
Live Nation eGift card, & 3rd prize winner gets a \$25 Amazon eGift card.**



Sam Houston State University

**Contact Jerrell Sherman
@jrs076@shsu.edu for
more info**

or



APPENDIX D**Sam Houston State University****Consent for Participation in Research**

My name is Jerrell Sherman, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program in the Department of Educational Leadership at Sam Houston State University, located in Huntsville, Texas. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study *Cut from a Different Cloth: Examining the Role Hip-Hip Plays in Belonging at Select Institutions of Higher Education*. I am conducting this research under the direction of Dr. Ricardo Montelongo. The purpose of this study is to understand how students of color involved in Hip-Hop student organizations achieve a sense of belonging while attending college and how their sense of belonging contributes to their persistence. You have been asked to participate in the research because you identify as a student of color involved in a Hip-Hop organization or space enrolled at a Historically White Institution (HWI) and may be eligible to participate.

The research is relatively straightforward, and we do not expect the research to pose any risk to any volunteer participants. If you consent to participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. Any data obtained from you will only be used for the purpose of contributing to the lack of knowledge on this topic and for better understanding levels of support for ethnically diverse students at Historically White Institutions. The records from this study will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. All

audio or video files for this study will be stored in a private external hard drive accessible only to the researcher and password protected by a code that will be changed every month for security purposes. No reference to the true identity of the participant or institution will be made in oral, video, or written reports which could link participants to the study. Upon the completion of the research study, the data (video recordings and typed transcripts) will be destroyed after 3 years.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision about whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you volunteer to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following: 1. Complete a demographic questionnaire. Information collected from this questionnaire will be used to determine eligibility for participation in the study. 2. Complete a virtual one-on-one interview about your sense of belonging as a student of color involved in a Hip-Hop organization or space. Interviews will take place via Zoom, and should last approximately 45 minutes, and will be video recorded. 3. Review the transcript from the interview and provide corrections or clarification if necessary.



Sam Houston State University

Those who complete the interview will be entered into a drawing (optional) with three winners: a. 1st prize winner gets a \$50 Ticketmaster eGift card b. 2nd prize winner gets a \$25 Live Nation eGift card c. 3rd prize winner gets a \$25 Amazon eGift card. Participants can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants will not be eligible for the drawing if they withdraw from the study prior to completing the interview.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact me, Jerrell Sherman, or Dr. Ricardo Montelongo. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact Sharla Miles, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, using her contact information below.

Mr. Jerrell Sherman SHSU Department of Educational Leadership Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (936) 294-4820 E-mail: jrs076@shsu.edu	Dr. Ricardo Montelongo SHSU Department of Educational Leadership Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (936) 294-3587 E-mail: rxm059@shsu.edu	Sharla Miles Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (936) 294-4875 Email: irb@shsu.edu
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☐ I understand the above and consent to participate.

☐ I do not wish to participate in the current study.

APPENDIX E



Sam Houston State University

Consent for Participation in Research

Cut from a Different Cloth: Examining the Role Hip-Hip Plays in Belonging at Select Institutions of Higher Education

Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to participate in a research study exploring the lived experiences of a student of color involved in Hip-Hop organizations enrolled at Historically White Institutions, conducted by Jerrell Sherman, doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership at Sam Houston State University. I am conducting this research the direction of Dr. Ricardo Montelongo. You have been asked to participate in the research because you identify as a student of color currently enrolled at a Historically White Institution and may be eligible to participate. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision about whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

Why is this research being done?

A large percentage of people of color have experienced walking in and out of a revolving door in regard to higher education in America. The hard truth is even though

access to higher education has improved for people of color, the percentages of individuals from that demographic obtaining a college diploma are not positive. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which aspects of Hip-Hop culture and Hip-Hop student organizational involvement might foster a sense of belonging and student success for students of color that are enrolled at Historically White Institutions (HWIs) throughout the United States of America. Risks involved are minimal, as you will be sharing past experiences with collegiate, educational settings. Possible benefits include contributing to the lack of knowledge on this topic and better understanding possible support systems for ethnically diverse students enrolled at Historically White Institutions.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which aspects of Hip-Hop culture and Hip-Hop student organizational involvement might foster a sense of belonging and student success for students of color that are enrolled at Historically White Institutions (HWIs) throughout the United States of America.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to be in this research, you would be asked to do the following things: Potential participants will be provided an informed consent denoting details of the study, risk, and benefits. Once the participants consent to be in the study, you will be interviewed by the researcher. The interview will take place virtually via Zoom. The interview will be recorded to aid the researcher in transcribing the what is shared after the interview. Each interview will last approximately 45 minutes. The researcher will interview the participants via a semi-structured interview. The interviews will be video recorded and transcribed for data analysis. The transcription will remove all identifying

information about the participants, and participants will be able to review the typed transcription. No more than 10 participants may be involved in this research at Historically White Institutions throughout the United States of America.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

There will be no physical or psychological risk or discomfort due to your involvement in this research study. The virtual interviews will be recorded and encrypted (password protected). Even after providing consent to participate in this study, you may withdraw participation at any time.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

The data gathered from this research study will contribute to the field and to HWIs. Collegiate administration, faculty, and staff may gain increased knowledge pertinent to interacting with and supporting ethnically diverse students enrolled at HWIs. Those who complete the interview will be entered into a drawing (optional) with three winners: a. 1st prize winner gets a \$50 Ticketmaster eGift card b. 2nd prize winner gets a \$25 Live Nation eGift card c. 3rd prize winner gets a \$25 Amazon eGift card.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

All information gathered from this research will remain confidential. Participants' identity will not be disclosed to any unauthorized persons. Only the researcher at Sam Houston State University will have access to the research materials, which will be kept on a password protected external hard drive. Any references to the participants' names that would compromise the anonymity will be removed or disguised prior to the preparation of the research report. Any audio and visual recordings will be destroyed or

erased after the completion of the study. Participants' name will not be used in the transcripts of the audio and visual recordings.

Questions About the Research Study

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact me, Jerrell Sherman, or Dr. Ricardo Montelongo. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact Sharla Miles, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, using her contact information below.

Mr. Jerrell Sherman SHSU Department of Educational Leadership Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (936) 294-4820 E-mail: jrs076@shsu.edu	Dr. Ricardo Montelongo SHSU Department of Educational Leadership Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (936) 294-3587 E-mail: rxm059@shsu.edu	Sharla Miles Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (936) 294-4875 Email: irb@shsu.edu
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Agreement to Participate

I have read the information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research.

Consent: I have read and understand the above information, and I willingly consent to participate in this study. I understand if I should have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I can contact Jerrell Sherman at (936) 294-4820 or by email at jrs076@shsu.edu. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Your name (printed): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

VIDEO RECORDING RELEASE CONSENT

As part of this project, video recordings will be made of you during your participation in this research project for transcription purposes only. This is completely voluntary. In any use of the video recordings, your name will not be identified. The video files of you will be used for transcription purposes and your identity will be protected or disguised. The transcriptions will be typed; and you will be able to review the transcribed interview. Upon the completion of the research study, the data (video recordings and typed transcriptions) will be locked in a safe for 3 years. After this time, all data will be destroyed. You may request to stop the recording at any time or to erase any portion of your recording.

Your name (printed): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F**Sam Houston State University****Demographic Questionnaire**

To ensure anonymity, you will be identified using an assumed name during the interview.

What would you like your pseudonym to be? _____

What is your age? _____

What is your racial/ethnic background? _____

Please choose a gender. Female Male Other

What is your classification? _____

What is the name and location (city & state) of the institution you are currently enrolled in? _____

What is your academic classification? _____

What is the name of the Hip-Hop organization or space you are a part of?

APPENDIX G**Sam Houston State University****INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Sense of Belonging of African American and Latino Male Hip-Hop Students

Participant Name:

Instructions and Introduction

My name is Jerrell Sherman. I am here today to learn more about your sense of belonging to your institution as an ethnically diverse Hip-Hop student. This interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Those who complete the interview will be entered into a drawing (optional) with three winners: a. 1st prize winner gets a \$50 Ticketmaster eGift card b. 2nd prize winner gets a \$25 Live Nation eGift card c. 3rd prize winner gets a \$25 Amazon eGift card.

I appreciate your honest and candid feedback. Your experiences are important and can help us understand how ethnically diverse Hip-Hop students describe a sense-of belonging and determine if that [sense of belonging] contributes to their persistence as a student.

Even though you have agreed to meet me today, you still have the option of declining to participate. Your participation is voluntary, and you can opt out at any time. Any information you choose to provide today will be kept confidential; I will not connect your responses with your identity.

Thank you for completing the demographic questionnaire prior to the interview. Please review your responses and let me know if you need to make any corrections. I will be recording the interview today so that I can accurately capture the information you provide. Upon the completion of the research study, the data (video recordings and typed transcriptions) will be locked in a safe for 3 years. To protect the confidentiality of you and the institution, I will not identify any individual in the transcripts. Do you have any questions?

Is it okay that I audio record this interview? Yes or No (circle the response)

Is it okay that I video record this interview? Yes or No (circle the response)

-----Begin Recording-----

Before we begin, do you have any questions? Okay, let's begin.

Opening Questions:

• Where are you from, How did you decide to attend this university? • How important was it for you [and your family] for you to go to college?

Sense of Belonging Interview Questions:

Hurtado & Carter (1997) defined sense of belonging as “the psychological sense that one is an accepted member of a community” (p. 327). Furthermore, Strayhorn (2012)

described sense of belonging as “the students’ perceived social support on campus, a feeling of connectedness, or that one is important to others” (p. 16).

- 1) After hearing these definitions, did you have that sense of belonging before you came to this university as a student, or was it developed once you were here? Why?
- 2) Think of the first time that you felt a sense of belonging within the greater campus community when you started at your institution.
 - What was it about the campus that made you feel that way?
- 3) What people or experiences were important in influencing your sense of belonging positively or negatively?
- 4) Think of a time when you felt as though you did not belong within the greater campus community when you started at this institution.
 - What was it about the campus that made you feel that way?
- 5) How did you become involved in your Hip-Hop organization?
- 6) Describe specific characteristics that made your Hip-Hop organization stand out in your mind as a worthwhile organization.
- 7) Do you believe the campus community understands and accepts the purpose of culturally based organizations such as your Hip-Hop organization? Could you explain or tell me why?
- 8) How do you believe your college experience would be different if you had not joined your Hip-Hop organization?
- 9) Please describe a time when you did not feel a sense of belonging within your Hip-Hop organization when you first joined?
 - What was it about the organization that made you feel that way?
- 10) Describe to me how has your participation in your Hip-Hop organization affected your sense of belonging within the greater campus community here at this institution?
- 11) How does your sense of belonging on the greater campus affect your sense of belonging within your Hip-Hop organization?
- 12) Describe the influence of Hip-Hop culture on your academic experience?
- 13) Talk to me about your academic performance before your organizational involvement?
- 14) Talk to me about your academic performance after your organizational involvement?

Conclusion: We are at the end of our interview time. Is there anything that you would like to share that we haven’t already talked about? May I call or email you if I need to clarify anything you said or ask additional questions? Are you willing to help me identify other students of color involved in Hip-Hop organizations or spaces to participate

in this study? If so, I will send you the recruitment materials that can be emailed to people you think might be willing to participate.

As a reminder, you will receive an email with the transcript of your interview within 72 hours of completing the interview. At that point, you will have five days to amend the transcription before I move forward with the transcript for your interview for the study. This is the end of our time together. Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview. If you do not have anything else to share, that concludes this interview and I will end the recording. I appreciate your time and feedback. If you have additional information or would like to meet with me after the conclusion of this study, feel free to contact me [give participant researcher's email address].

-----End Recording-----

VITA

Jerrell R. Sherman
Associate Dean of Students for Judicial Affairs and Student Development
Sam Houston State University

Academic Degrees

Doctor of Education, Sam Houston State University, Degree expected December 2020

Master of Arts, Webster University, 2008, Advertising & Marketing Communications

Bachelor of Arts, Southern University & A&M College, 2007, Mass Communications

Professional Experience

2015-Current Sam Houston State University, Dean of Students Office
Associate Dean of Students for Judicial Affairs and Student Development
Dean of Greek Life, 2012-current

Spring 2019 Sam Houston State University, Office of Equity and Inclusion
Program Evaluation Intern

Fall 2018 Sam Houston State University, Emergency Preparedness Office
Emergency Management Intern

2012-2015 Sam Houston State University, Dean of Students Office
Assistant Dean of Students for Greek Life

2009-2012 Sam Houston State University, Dean of Students Office
Greek Life Coordinator

2007-2008 Webster University, Counseling and Life Development Office
Graduate Student Assistant

Professional Committees

2019-2021 Sam Houston State University Staff Council Member

2017-2018 SERA Graduate Student Council Campus Representative

2015-Current Co-Chair Sam Houston State University's Students of Concern Committee

2015-Current Advise and train the Sam Houston State University's Student Disciplinary Committee