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**THE RHETORIC OF APPROPRIATION: HOW
UPPER MIDDLE CLASS WHITE MALES FLIPPED THE
SCRIPT ON HIP HOP CULTURE AND BLACK LANGUAGE.**

presented by

Jill McKay Chrobak

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THE RHETORIC OF APPROPRIATION: HOW UPPER MIDDLE CLASS
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By

Jill McKay Chrobak

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# ABSTRACT

## THE RHETORIC OF APPROPRIATION: HOW UPPER MIDDLE CLASS WHITE MALES FLIPPED THE SCRIPT ON HIP HOP CULTURE AND BLACK LANGUAGE.

By

Jill McKay Chrobak

This project investigates the rhetoric of appropriation, specifically how and why upper middle class white males appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language in order to better understand and thus value the complex sociolinguistic and rhetorical strategies and significance enacted in this unique phenomenon within the field of composition and rhetoric. What makes these individuals' strategies, moves, and speech linguistically and rhetorically significant is that while attempting to become part of a culture and language through appropriation they are actually creating something altogether different from what they intend to appropriate. These individuals have crafted a new culture and language, one based on appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language, what I have come to call a rhetoric of appropriation. The crux of this research focuses on case study interview data collected over a two year period of 30 upper middle class (UMC) white male participants who evidence a deep interest in Hip Hop culture and appropriation of that culture and Black Language. In studying these participants it is my belief that our field will be better suited to understand the unrelenting proliferation and appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language writ large into mainstream culture and society and how this widespread growth pertains to students, instructors, researchers, and scholars alike.

*For Michael, my everything—then, now, and forever. Without your love, support, friendship, and remarkable brilliance there is no way I could have completed this dissertation while maintaining a semblance of sanity. However, I still recognize that "you know who" are crazy. No exceptions. Thanks for loving me anyways.*

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

*Hip hoppers continue to flip the public script on undervalued Black life by making their aesthetics the overwhelming standard by which popular music and style are evaluated.*

--Elaine Richardson (2003)

*Hip Hop has now become a force that operates on a global scale. Having started in the postindustrial rubble of the South Bronx and then moved through America and into the global cultural economy, Hip Hop has become a form of expression that maintains these roots but also can be made specific to the culture appropriating it. Hip Hop, then, is internationally known, nationally recognized, and locally accepted. It has moved from Frisco to Maine, and then on to Spain, from the state's capital, from the Pineapple to the Big Apple. Hip Hop is worldwide.*

--Todd Boyd (2002)

In suburban areas all over America a cultural and linguistic phenomenon is occurring and booming. White boys and men in upper middle class (UMC) neighborhoods are aligning themselves with a culture and language that is decidedly not theirs, specifically Hip Hop culture and Black Language[1]. While this kind of appropriation is vast and varied, my work focuses on a mere corner of the appropriation globe, UMC communities surrounding Detroit, Michigan. These communities are rife with white men ages 18-30 who identify in fluctuating degrees with Hip Hop music, but what is most fascinating is the growing population of those who appropriate both the culture of Hip Hop and the language most often used within that culture, Black Language. In my 10 years of living within this community and my two and a half years actively researching this, I have discovered that the way UMC white males who appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black

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[1] The term Black Language refers to the predominant language of the African American community sometimes referred to as Ebonics, African American Vernacular English, African American English, and/or Black Vernacular English. I use the term "Black Language" to establish what I feel are the two most important components 1.) With the rising proliferation of Hip Hop culture Black refers to not just African Americans but people of African decent all over the globe, thus Black is more inclusive to these communities; 2.) Language firmly linguistically situates my belief and the overwhelming research that the Black community have a language that is unique lexically, semantically, and syntactically.

Language situate and identify these appropriations is rhetorically and linguistically significant. What makes their acts of appropriation significant is that while attempting to become part of the cultural and linguistic community of Hip Hop through appropriation they are actually creating something altogether different from what they intend to appropriate. These individuals have crafted a new culture and language, one based on appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language that I have come to call the rhetoric of appropriation.

The purpose of this project is to investigate that rhetoric of appropriation— specifically how and why UMC white males appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language—in order to better understand and value the complex sociolinguistic and rhetorical strategies enacted in this unique phenomenon and apply this new knowledge to the field of composition and rhetoric. This project uses case study interview data from 30 upper middle class (UMC) white male participants collected over a two year period. All of the participants displayed and articulated a deep interest in Hip Hop culture and appropriation of that culture and Black Language. These case studies of appropriation rhetoric are analyzed and examined using established cultural studies theory and methodology from the field of composition and rhetoric. In studying these participants it is my belief that our field will be better suited to understand the unrelenting proliferation and appropriation of Hip Hop and Black Language writ large into mainstream culture and society and how this widespread growth pertains to students, instructors, researchers, and scholars alike.

This chapter begins with my research methodology followed by my personal impetus for embarking on a project that deals largely with rhetorics of color and the

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whiteness that appropriates from this culture and language. For me, it is important to showcase where the researcher stands concerning the work/data not only theoretically but personally. However, the overall purpose of this chapter is to focus on the theoretical, to introduce the predominant themes and theories that will aid in more fully explaining the rhetoric of appropriation in the coming chapters. That is, this chapter will supply and analyze previous research on rhetoric, language, and culture that has helped to shape the theoretical base I will be working from in order to craft original arguments on/about Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Furthermore, this chapter firmly situates linguistic and cultural appropriation as a means to better interpret the case study research on UMC white males and their appropriations of Hip Hop and Black Language.

**Research Methodology and Method: Case Study**

Methodologically, I chose to represent my 30 interviews with my UMC white male participants as case studies. Mostly this choice stems from the need for this dissertation not to be defined as merely a sociolinguistic study but also as a work well positioned in the field of cultural studies—to make meaning of not only the way in which these participants speak but also to draw conclusions about their perceptions and attitudes concerning why they phenomenally appropriate Black Language and Hip Hop culture and what these appropriations mean for language, culture, and mainstream society. Of course the main unit of study is the interview and some of these interactions will be abstracted from in order to more effectively discuss linguistic qualities of language. Overall, however, these individuals will be represented as "cases" falling into defined categories based on the level of appropriation and the rhetorical savvy they evidence in their explanations. That is to say, these participants are people, they have names,

identities, clear ways of defining and portraying themselves in the world that formulates them as both unique personas and part of a cultural and linguistic phenomenon.

The method I used to frame my research questions on Hip Hop culture and the rhetoric of appropriation is case study research. To delve deeper into the assumptions and beliefs of the appropriators I conducted 30 interviews with upper middle class white males who affiliate themselves with Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Therefore, I used case study methodology to collect and compile the data for purposes of further examination and analysis. Furthermore, the unit of analysis for this methodology is the individual and/or group interviews themselves in order to most effectively discuss the implications and proliferations of these appropriations on and within Hip Hop culture and Black Language.

I call my research method case study because I consider each interview and each individual to be a case unit. All of the participants in my study share a few common denominators: white, age 18-28, deeply involved/interested in Hip Hop, admit to using Black "slang"/vernacular at times. Each interview lasted at least one hour and no more than 4 hours. By recording their verbal responses, linguistic variables, individual utterances and observing their "performance" (dress, gesturing, posturing, tone) I feel I am attempting to draw informed conclusions about how and why UMC white males appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language. I say attempting because I recognize the limitations of this project in that there is no data that includes language in natural settings and no way to triangulate with other contexts. So while I cannot definitively explain the motives for language use, especially because it is drawn from constructed/leading questions, I am doing my best to extrapolate from the rhetorical

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situation of the interview as well as my past interactions and knowledge with/of the participants infer as to what their motives behind the appropriation may be.

Overall, the purpose of case studies is to investigate contemporary cases for purposes of illumination and understanding (Hays, 2004:218). Case studies often involve the close examination of people, topics, issues, and/or programs (Hays, 2004:218). A collective case study is a study of a number of cases to inquire into a phenomenon (many individuals or groups) (Stake, 2003). My research can then be categorized as a collective case study in that it looks at a particular group of individuals (upper middle class white males) to inquire into the phenomenon of Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation.

It must be said that case studies are bounded, they examine individual people or individual group practices and beliefs. They do not examine the practices of an entire people or culture. Therefore, my research can in no way be described as an ethnography, seeking to gross wholesale understanding of the culture of Hip Hop. My research seeks only to evidence the phenomenon of Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation by upper middle class white males. To be sure, there is a fair amount of literature presented pertaining to Hip Hop culture and Black Language to further support my original theories about the rhetoric of appropriation as well as to draw conclusions and analysis on/about Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation by the participants. In a case study, the researchers' purpose is not to study everything going on in the "case" but to focus on specific issues, problems, or programs (Hays, 2004:225)—in my case Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation by upper middle class white males. The data presented here is analyzed for Black Language patterns in the participants' everyday

speech as well as the participants' rhetoric concerning assumptions, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes concerning Hip Hop culture and Black language.

To achieve the most natural speech, participants are not told I am looking for Black Language patterns, though I am transparent in my instruments concerning my wish to garner their ideas about Hip Hop and appropriation. The participants were asked to voluntarily participate in this study by me. The interviews were conducted by me and asked the participants focused questions that were voice recorded after attaining informed consent forms (see appendix A and B for focused interview questions and consent form). The participants' privacy is protected through informed consent forms that are stored in a locked cabinet which only I may access.

I obtained consent before any interviews were conducted. The participants were presented with a printed consent form before the interview which they signed and dated the bottom of and were able to retain the top portion which explains their protection rights and provides them my own, Dr. Geneva Smitherman (the primary researcher) and UCRIHS chairs' contact information for further questions or concerns. I then collected and retained the signed portion of the consent form.

Potential benefits for the participants in my study include but are not limited to: Provision of an open forum in which to discuss hip-hop/rap music and culture which the participants enjoy and identify with and a greater understanding and comprehension of the participants' own assumptions, beliefs, perception, and attitudes towards hip-hop/rap culture and Black Language.

Potential benefits for the field of composition and rhetoric include but are not limited to: A greater understanding of the phenomenon of UMC white male appropriation

of hip-hop/rap culture and black language and the development of a precedent of case studies to form a more solid base for future research on this subject.

**Personal Impetus**

The fact that I am a young, white female calls into consideration my appropriateness, objectivity, and effectiveness in doing cultural studies research that focuses on a culture of music and language that is originally from communities of color. I am sure there are many people who don't and will never understand why I find value in researching Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation. I can give you my standard response and say that I feel that doing this and other research on Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation will only permit a greater understanding of this popular phenomenon, where it came from, what it has to offer the fields of cultural studies in rhetoric and composition, and perhaps most importantly what our field has to offer Hip Hop culture, Black Language and their appropriators. Also, it is my belief that this research only further validates the need to see Hip Hop as more than a fad but as a cultural revolution that has vast implications for education in our society. Furthermore, examining the language and cultural practices of UMC white males as they appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language will aid those of us in the field in understanding how cultures and languages morph and stretch when appropriated and what that means for the students, researchers, and teachers in public, personal, and civic spaces.

These are my altruistic beliefs about my research and I hold them dear to my academic heart. They serve to prove to our field that my work has value and a legitimate place in our scholarly community. There are other more personal reasons that perhaps

should be made clear in order to better understand why I am doing this research, in this way, and for this audience.

To be sure, this research is personal. I grew up in and around Detroit deeply entrenched in Hip Hop music and culture and appropriating Black Language before I knew what it was or what I was actually doing. To me, these interests and behaviors were normal for someone like me who lived in a predominately Black and Hispanic community. When I later moved to the predominately white northeast suburbs, I sought friendships with those whose experiences mirrored my own, though we didn't fit in with the suburban culture surrounding us. So I spent the latter part of my teen years attempting to hide my "urban" leanings. I distanced myself from my Puerto Rican best friend that everyone labeled as "ghetto," started listening to alternative music even though I really didn't get it or like it, and drastically altered my speech. No one knew where I was from, that I had grown up poor in a single family home, that I worshipped Mary J. Blige and owned every Hip Hop single tape known to man from 1984 and on. I performed upper middle class white-girl the best I could and it worked for a while. Then something strange happened. The Hip Hop music I loved started getting radio play, people who had never even been to Detroit started claiming that they were "from the D," kids started talking, dressing, and acting like the people from my old neighborhood. Every UMC white kid around me was performing Hip Hop culture and Black Language through varied forms of appropriation and I couldn't understand the sudden change. Why would these white, privileged people decide to associate themselves with a culture and language that largely represented oppressed people of color—what was in it for them? I had a clear view of both sides of the fence, I grew up alternately lower to lower middle class struggling both

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economically and socially, and I knew that the economic and social grass was definitely greener on the suburban side.

Certainly, suburbia has always been rife with musical influences whether or not the content of the lyrics refers directly to suburban citizens. Heavy metal, alternative, and punk music culture and linguistic influences on mainstream society have come and gone, but Hip Hop is still here and stronger than ever. Is this a result of savvy appropriation by the white masses? Though the kids from my late high school and early undergrad years have evolved into tax paying, law abiding citizens in the "real" world, many still bump Hip Hop in their cars and appropriate aspects of Black Language. What is most remarkable is that the new generation of teenagers and young white adults (especially the males) I interact with in my suburban neighborhood and composition classrooms have taken appropriation to whole new level, situating them as a part of Hip Hop culture and fluent in Black Language. Because I had watched this phenomenon evolve I had to investigate what it meant—why UMC white males continue to find such kinship in a cultural and linguistic practice they have nothing geographically, economically, and racially to do with? I always knew I was white and that Hip Hop and Black Language did not belong to me, that I was just a resident alien in my old urban neighborhood. However, I also felt a kinship to the culture and language, that I was somehow sanctioned to understand it even if I did not feel 100% part of the culture, because I lived around and with it for 15 years. When did Hip Hop stop being just music to the UMC and Black Language actually become a recognized and valuable vernacular by white youth?

What I have found in my research is that UMC white male justifications, opinions, and beliefs about Hip Hop culture, use of Black Language and appropriation

vary but that all of them clearly invoke complex rhetorical strategies and appeals that are central to their identity. Through interviewing UMC white males I began to see how the media and mass consumer society has taught them this rhetoric of appropriation. But to fully know and understand the roots and moves of this phenomenon I recognize I had to go deeper, look more critically, and examine more closely the ties that bind my original research to cultural studies within composition and rhetoric. Ultimately, I want to be able to teach the rhetoric of appropriation as evidence of how and why Hip Hop culture and Black Language have proliferated so widely in mainstream society and conversely how Hip Hop culture and Black Language can change the study of traditional rhetoric, composition, and sociolinguistics.

**Theorizing Culture and Language**

In order to effectively theorize my work I recognize that it is imperative to clearly define how I am using cultural studies for the purpose of this research and what previous scholarly work I am drawing upon to further theorize the material. For all intents and purposes when I refer to cultural studies theory, methodology, and/or pedagogy I am situating cultural studies that comes out of the field of rhetoric and composition. That is, I am drawing upon theories and methodologies established in composition and rhetoric that were initially borrowed from the field of cultural studies founded at the CCCS/Birmingham school in Great Britain but that have evolved into a distinct set of approaches within the field. Therefore, my view of cultural studies is based on the CCCS assumption that the study of culture is a way to access more structural and systematic social phenomena and to make meaning of that phenomenon through observation of cultural and linguistic practices. To be sure, I draw upon work done in cultural studies as

a discipline to support my research but only for the purpose of evidencing the need for cultural studies foci/approaches in the field of rhetoric and composition and in writing classrooms.

I am aware that even within composition and rhetoric the concepts and theories encompassed in cultural studies are vast in origin and topic. Brilliant and robust cultural studies work has been done on a myriad of popular culture phenomenon including but not limited to: punk (Sirc, 2002), rock 'n roll, TV sitcoms, etc. This variation is what allows for phenomenological research such as mine to exist in our field and furthermore to attain legitimacy and sustainability. Sometimes cultural studies is indeed invoked by scholars in composition and rhetoric to update their stale pedagogy or venture into new and previously exotic research. What hooks (1990:124) would call "chic" programs or domains that "re-inscribe patterns of colonial domination where the 'other' is always made object, appropriated, interpreted, taken over by those in power, by those who dominate" (125). My project is in no way dedicated to the "chic" cultural studies approach and more importantly the findings of my research will serve to work against these "patterns of colonial domination" by proving the value of diverse rhetorics and literacies through maintaining close inspection and transparency of the dominant cultures and languages that are embedded in our social, political, and educational institutions.

Cultural studies has proved incredibly useful for those who wish to approach cultural phenomenon seriously, analytically, and ethically. For us, cultural studies theories in comp/rhet provide both a justification for studying the once unstudied or overlooked and a methodology in which to do so. In this project, I am invoking the basic concepts of cultural studies, specifically studying the phenomenological to make meaning

of a particular culture, in order to draw connections within and through Hip Hop culture, Black Language and their appropriators that perhaps had never been attempted or successfully drawn before in composition and rhetoric scholarship.

Previous work on cultural studies in rhetoric and composition (Berlin, Bruch & Marback, George & Trimbur) provides a framework for me to conduct original research on Hip Hop culture, Black Language and its appropriators. This work is important in that it supports the value and forms a base for the new forms of rhetoric and cultural phenomenon discussed in my project as it pertains to the field of composition and rhetoric. If Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation has truly gone mainstream its affects will and have been felt everywhere and therefore warrant close consideration by a field that prides itself in studying cultural phenomenon as a way to make meaning available and accessible to society through education. We must fully examine the nature and implications of Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation in order to more effectively understand the nature of our classrooms and public spaces and the culture impacting them. Students and educators should be made aware of the cultural capital Hip Hop holds, the unique and valuable linguistic properties of Black Language, and the ways they are appropriated by the media and mainstream society writ large. We as an academic community, can learn from the complex rhetorical strategies and justifications that are presented by the participants in this study concerning the evolution of culture and language through appropriation, specifically how Hip Hop culture and Black Language are shaped and/or affected by appropriation and how UMC white males learn complex performance strategies and means of identity formation through appropriation.

When dealing with specific linguistic and sociolinguistic issues surrounding this research I rely heavily on the theory of language as social construction and draw from the work of Smitherman, Bahktin, Rickford, Delpit, and Gilyard among others. Smitherman's (2000, 2003, 2006) work serves to situate the unique linguistic qualities of Black Language, especially the social construction of sermonizin', testifyin, and tonal semantics. By evidencing the deep historical, linguistic, and social roots of Black Language I juxtapose the UMC white male's appropriation to the Black communities' authentic speech to determine how/if these appropriators are affecting similar constructions.

Relying on Bahktin's (2001) argument that no utterance is original, posits theorizing language as social construction by illustrating UMC white male's appropriation of Black Language as perhaps a natural progression of language change. Furthermore, Bahktin's belief in language as a sign system shows how the participants use language to construct identity, using Black Language to somehow legitimize themselves within Hip Hop culture.

I find Lisa Delpit's (1995) work complements the theories of my project in that she argues against James Gee's notion that individuals are not "locked" in to a dominant discourse that we need to recognize the many voices and discourses that communities have access to (551). In short, that language is not set in stone—existing in a vacuum—it is socially and contextually constructed. For the participants in this study there is no logical reason why they have been able to learn and thus appropriate a language that is geographically, linguistically, and culturally distant from them. Despite these mitigating factors, UMC white males have indeed crawled out of the dominant discourse of their

linguistic place and learned/appropriated another discourse, even going so far as to showcase the ability to code switch from their dominant discourse to Black Language. Furthermore she posits that "acquiring an additional code comes from identifying with the people who speak it, from connecting the language form with all that is self affirming and esteem-building" (2002:39). This notion is significant to my project because it evidences not only how but perhaps why these individuals appropriate Black Language. For some it is a way to connect to a language community that holds a certain social or cultural cache.

In discussing broader themes of culture and language, I focus on Anzaldúa's (2001) argument of language as ethnic identity as well as similar ideologies that appear in the work of hooks, Smitherman, Gilyard, Pough, Powell, Cushman, and Lindquist. Anzaldúa argues for the acceptance of mixing languages and cultures to create unique identities. In this way, her work evidences implications for how UMC white males endeavor to learn and use Black Language contextually as part of their personal identity. Perhaps their ability to code switch is part of what makes them unique from other white men in their suburban communities, that they are knowingly creating or performing an ethnic identity.

Cushman (1998) and Lindquist (2002) also write about how language is directly related to identity as well as the social constructions of language, literacies, and rhetorics. For Cushman the participants in her research learn to use their language to navigate a myriad of gate keeping strategies in an urban community. Lindquist's participants prove that language is inextricably tied to class evidenced by the unique rhetorical moves enacted when discussing politics in a working class bar. The participants in this research

evidence similar linguistic and rhetorical savvy in attempting to perform an ethnic identity through appropriation. Ultimately, the analysis of my case study data will show whether or not the participants view their appropriations as mush-faking or as an authentic part of their linguistic identity. To be sure, these implications and others will be discussed further in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

To theorize broad issues of culture in relation to Hip Hop culture, I rely on a vast array of works that argue explicitly for Hip Hop as culture (Chang, Pough, Richardson, Hill-Collins, Watkins, etc.). More specifically, for the purposes of my study I will be invoking Bourdieu's (1977) argument of culture as capital, that *habitus* produces individual and collective practices in accordance with schemes generated by history. After close examination I have discovered that the participant's social and linguistic appropriation practices are motivated by a want/need of cultural capital and that these beliefs have been fueled by mainstream society's own appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language.

Broadly, I will be invoking the traditional rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos as a means of critically analyzing how UMC white males construct a cultural and linguistic identity through appropriation. More specifically I am working with Kenneth Burke's view of rhetoric as a way for "individuals to examine their identities to determine what they are" (Heath, 1986:202) as well as Bazerman's belief that rhetoric is "a study of how people use language and other symbols to realize human goals and carry out human activities…ultimately a practical study offering people great control over their symbolic activity" (1988:6) as a way to frame the discussion concerning the rhetoric of appropriation. Both Burke and Bazerman's definitions of rhetoric lend critical framing to

why and how appropriators do what they do. In essence, the rhetoric embraced by UMC white males who appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language is decidedly linked to how they identify themselves through symbolic language (Black Language), appearance (dress), preferences (Hip Hop music), etc.

**Theorizing Cultural Studies in Rhetoric and Composition**

Drawing from one of the founding father's of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), Raymond Williams, my project engages with his notion of culture as "a whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual" (Sadar and Van Loon, 1997:29). I argue that Hip Hop is not just music but culture; it's a way of life and speech, a political agenda, a social stance, a way of being in the world that sets individuals and communities apart from the mainstream while also blending easily into popular culture. More complexly, talking about Hip Hop as a culture sets the stage for a wider understanding of Hip Hop as a youth movement and as a cultural phenomenon that encompasses a variety of genres (Pough, 2004: 5). Richardson (2003) further argues that "it is important to view Hip Hop as a total culture" (69) and:

> "Hip Hop is more than the surface appearance of vernacular speech and style. It is born from a culture of underground struggle and survival on a deep level, no matter if the surface appears to comply with official dominant discourses. Historical memory, deep cultural practices along with resistance to current oppressions plays a major role in maintaining, developing and creating world views, identities, and means of survival." (72)

I indeed do not stand alone in viewing Hip Hop as music, culture, and rhetoric, which are inextricably connected to the concepts and theories characteristic of cultural studies. Further and deeper discussion of Hip Hop and Black Language's rhetorical and linguistic significance will be provided in Chapter 2.

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While I understand that not all studies focused on culture are cultural studies, I do believe my amalgamation of disciplines in which to draw upon in my research of appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language is decidedly cultural studies work in the field of composition and rhetoric. My study is rooted in cultural studies theory and practice because it investigates appropriation as a social practice. That is, the participants in my research appropriating Hip Hop culture and Black Language as a means to pursuing cultural capital and draws conclusions about these linguistic and cultural appropriations in relation to dominant power structures in mainstream society. To use cultural studies theory in my research is to posit that all cultural phenomenon, traditional and non-traditional, is worthy of careful study and consideration. In addition to theory, cultural studies in practice allows for the integration of the theories, conclusions, and concepts born out of this project to be valued and heard in the composition classroom. The topoi of Hip Hop culture, Black Language, and their appropriations act as a catalysts to critically discussing and viewing power relations in a writing class.

Sadar and Van Loon (1997) state that "cultural studies takes whatever it needs from any discipline and adopts it to suit its own purposes" (7). In this way, my research can be defined as cultural studies in composition and rhetoric because I am borrowing concepts from sociolinguistics, African American studies, Hip Hop studies, and classical rhetoric in order to examine how and why Hip Hop culture and Black Language are appropriated and how these appropriations are linguistically, pedagogically, and rhetorically significant. I believe that UMC white male appropriations of Hip Hop culture and Black Language occur as a form of socially constructed performance that has clear rhetorical and linguistic strategies and practices that has yet to be fully examined. If as

Berlin and Vivion (1992) posit that cultural studies is "the study of ways social formations and practices are involved in the shaping of consciousness, and this shaping is seen to be mediated by language and situated in concrete historical conditions" (ix) then it is the best field to draw from in order to present my research findings in making meaning of the phenomenon for the benefit of rhetoric and composition teachers, scholars, and students. Furthermore, cultural studies in composition and rhetoric allows for the evaluation of non-traditional/non-canonical texts to make meaning of largely overlooked or forgotten cultural phenomenon not only in the classroom but in rhetoric and composition theory research writ large. As a critical discipline, cultural studies insists on the relevance of all texts as objects of cultural analysis. It questions the notion of "high culture", especially as the sole domain of the classroom, enabling students to draw upon their familiarity with the texts of popular culture (George and Shoos, 1992:200).

There are many scholar's work/theories and methodological and pedagogical approaches that I draw upon to conduct and examine research on UMC white male appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language. I find that hooks' (1990) work provides a clear space in rhetoric and composition for my research in/through cultural studies. She argues that cultural studies and ethnographic research may just be the way for scholars of all races to approach research on a level playing field if done correctly. hooks believes that it should be possible for scholars, especially those who are members of groups who dominate, exploit, and oppress others, to explore the political implications of their work without fear or guilt (124). She goes on to discuss cultural studies in composition and rhetoric as a space for dialogue between intellectuals, critical thinkers,

etc. who may in the past have stayed within narrow disciplinary concerns while calling attention to race and similar issues and gives them renewed academic legitimacy (125).

As mentioned earlier, cultural studies can act as a "chic", new way to approach researching and teaching composition and rhetoric, drawing cursory conclusions from varied "sexy" topics for the purpose of attention-getting rather than the creation of new, critical knowledge. Again, this is not what this project is based on. I find support in hooks who encourages work like mine, that engages in cultural studies in the field of composition and rhetoric, if done right, and believes that it can offer much insight to the field. Furthermore, she cites that these new ethnographies, or in my research, case studies, call on us as researchers to "bear witness, and patiently wait for revelation" (133). In this way, one can infer how to ethically invoke cultural studies in composition and rhetoric as a way to more fully and honestly discuss case study or ethnographic data.

While I know Malea Powell (2002,2004) does not call her approach to her research cultural studies, it is in fact historiographies of Native American culture, literacy, and language practices and therefore bears the mark of inclusion into the field of cultural studies. This is due to the fact that she looks to non-canonical historical texts of Native Americans to evidence rhetoric that has long been dismissed in white, masculine heavy Western rhetoric. Her work borrows from feminist theory and uses historiographical methods to draw attention to voices of survivance that evidence enormous, complex rhetorical savvy, traditionally reserved for old, dead, rich white men. Though my research topics differ from hers in many ways, I employ a similar approach through the lens' of varied disciplines to achieve the same ends, to make meaning of the rhetoric of appropriation effecting Hip Hop culture and Black Language.

Abalos' (1999) work is perhaps more similar to mine and shows how popular

culture can and should be studied to enhance and broaden the rhetorical knowledge in the

field of composition and rhetoric. Abalos examined the popular TV series "Miami Vice"

to show how the drama is revealing in regards not only to ethnic imbalances, but also to

those involving gender, sexual orientation, and national origin (168). She believes that

despite the overt appearance of the "buddy show" technique employed by other hit

programs, Miami Vice's Black character is actually relegated to a subordinated position.

Furthermore, she posits that this program is not just a show, but in fact reflects the society

that produced it (168). Hence, for Abalos, popular culture really does imitate life. In

short, Abalos is using a cultural studies approach to deconstruct a popular TV show.

Cultural studies methodology in rhetoric and composition has allowed her to borrow from

race, ethnic, and sexuality studies to examine a non-canonical artifact to make meaning

of a certain popular culture phenomenon, in this case the Black/white male "buddy"

genre. To be sure, critical analysis and rhetorical critiques of popular culture artifacts is in

many ways at the heart of cultural studies in rhetoric and composition, to make meaning

of the phenomenological so as to better understand the general workings of our society.

While Powell and Abalos' research has helped immensely in shaping my own

notions of cultural studies and the broad concept of studying culture, it is Dick Hebdige

(1979) who specifically examines the notion of sub-culture which is clearly aligned with

my research of UMC white males who appropriate cultural and linguistic practices of the

Hip Hop community. If Hip Hop is a culture, which I strongly believe it is, then the

participants in my project can certainly be considered part of the sub-culture of Hip Hop.

Their appropriated linguistic and cultural practices clearly define or symbolize their style,

a style that marks them as unique from the suburban hegemony surrounding them.

Hebdige states:

> The challenge to hegemony which subcultures represent is not issued directly by them. Rather it is expressed obliquely, in style. The objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed at the profoundly superficial level of appearances: that is, at the level of signs (17).

It is imperative then, to situate UMC white male appropriations of Hip Hop culture and Black Language as performances of style, rooting their practices in linguistic and cultural "appearances". More concretely, we must look at culture for these individuals as something this style of language and appearance seeks to attain. The analysis of the UMC white males in this study will show they are challenging hegemony through their appropriations of Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Work like Hebdige's clearly posits cultural studies as a means to studying sub-culture, to make meaning of "the process whereby objects are made to mean and mean again as style" (3).

**Cultural and Linguistic Appropriation**

Cultural and linguistic appropriation is nothing new for the U.S. In fact, some may argue that modern day appropriation is decidedly an American trait. Let's face it, this country is young and American culture when compared to the rich linguistic and cultural histories of our European, Asian, and African counterparts comes up looking like a parasite of other cultures. American culture is so all encompassing, so blurrily defined and rooted in W.A.S.P.-ism that it can be viewed as lacking a unique culture. Much of who and what America is comprised of today is due to the amalgamation of races, religions, and social and economic divisions.

He is a Polish-American, she is an African-American, I am a Canadian-American. As Americans we have always sought out other cultures and languages to legitimize our

identity, our unique beings, in this increasingly culture obsessed world. Perhaps this has

vetted us a nation of appropriators, looking to the next cultural or linguistic fad that suits

our fancy, creating identities through claiming ethnic-Americaness. It can certainly be

argued that the majority of our appropriations are ruthless; we take the capital we can use

of a culture, language, religion, etc. and throw the scraps to the wind.

The purpose of this discussion on culture is to establish the connection between

the growing phenomenon of UMC white male appropriation of Hip Hop culture and

Black Language and the history of American hegemony that fosters these and other

appropriations over the course of our short history. Kitwana (2005) echoes this belief and

further specifies it to white youth, both in America and abroad, stating:

> White youth are not simply consuming pop culture messages wholesale, any more
> than black kids are. Most Hip Hop kids—white, Black, Latino, Asian, and Native
> American—are taking from popular culture what they find useful, fashioning it to
> local needs, claiming it as their own and in the process placing their own stamp on
> it. This is happening regionally and internationally, as youth the world over are
> claiming Hip Hop (3).

This argument helps to show not only how Hip Hop has become part of the mainstream

but also how widespread varied forms of appropriation are occurring. Kitwana is

evidencing that appropriation has become almost a right of passage into mainstream

popular culture.

If this is true, and I believe it is, then it would behoove us as academics to look

more closely at the nature of appropriation writ large. To be sure, academia is filled with

anthropological, ethnographic, and linguistic research that focuses on how various

cultures and communities come to identify themselves in society. However, most of this

work centers on appropriated behaviors, aspects of language and culture that are not

inherent or intrinsic and warrant explanation because their practices and characteristics

are not understood by those outside the community being studied. There is a fair amount

of linguistic research that focuses on how dominant discourses are learned (Labov,

Delpit, Gee, Smitherman) but what makes my project unique is that it emphasizes how

language and culture is learned outside the dominant discourse community. UMC white

males who appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language are products of both nature

and nurture. In essence, the participants in this study have cultivated an identity and

language through appropriation with help from other facets of society, most notably mass

media.

Penelope Eckert's (1989) ethnographic study on how social categories and

identity are formed and navigated in a suburban high school is an important work in

theorizing how and why UMC white males take their appropriation one step further into

adulthood. Even though Eckert's participants were largely under the age of 18 and so

considered adolescents, their rhetorical moves and strategies concerning their social

stance and identity are strikingly similar to the participants in my study. For example,

Eckert's discussion of how "Jocks" and "Burnouts" categorize themselves is largely

through symbols like clothing and music tastes. Eckert posits:

> What everyone knows of their difference is what shows—the symbolic
> manifestations of category affiliation....Clothing and other forms of adornment,
> ways of speaking, territory, and even substance use and school performance all
> have symbolic value in …However subconsciously, they all stand for deeper
> cultural differences that may themselves not be accessible to all who participate in
> the symbolic system… Category symbols attain their value from association with
> clear differences in both form and content, developing around salient social
> differences between the categories and maximizing distinctness in visible form
> (49-50).

This is to say that what people see and choose to show is largely how people are

categorized in society and in many ways these choices are culturally and linguistically

significant because they symbolize deeper social and class standings. Eckert's argument clearly straddles Bahktin's belief of language as sign system, evoking intrinsic meaning from the seemingly mundane. This clearly parallels how the UMC white male participants in this study evidence their social stance and identity through similar symbols, predominately music choice, clothing, and speech. These participants knowingly chose these symbols and many times are unaware, like the Jocks and Burnouts, of the deeper meaning these symbols portray. In many ways the UMC white males in this study perform appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language to distinguish themselves, some from those in mainstream society (burnouts, wiggas[2]) and other's from the margins of society (jocks, neo-wiggas[3]). Therefore, they seem to be appropriating Hip Hop culture and Black Language to be different or unique from the aspects of society that they feel, or wish to be, least affiliated with.

Similar to Eckert's study, Stanley Cohen (1972) discusses the importance of symbols in shaping identity, though his subjects are largely considered "deviant" for their time (Mods and Rockers) in 1960's Britain. He states that:

> Communication, and especially the mass communication of stereotypes depends on the symbolic power of words and images...There appear to be three processes in such symbolizations: a word (Mod) becomes symbolic of a certain status (delinquent or deviant); objects (hairstyle, clothing) symbolize the word; the objects themselves become symbolic of the status (and the emotions attached to the status) (27).

Many participants in this study have experience with these three processes of symbolization through their appropriations. For example, wigga is a word that has become symbolic of a white male who wants to talk and act black. He is seen this way

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[2] Term created from the combination of the words white and nigga, commonly used to categorize white males who wholly appropriate Black culture and language.
[3] Author's original term used to describe those who evidence rhetorical savvy in their selective and partial appropriations of Hip Hop culture and Black Language.

because he wears his pants baggy, his baseball cap backwards, and a do-rag underneath the cap. Currently this image connotates a myriad of value-added judgments about this individual; lazy, thug, fake, ignorant, etc. Let me be clear that I do not believe UMC white males who appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language should be considered or even labeled as delinquent, however, their behavior can be classified as highly unusual and largely misunderstood by society as a whole, especially those who are still operating on the stereotypical belief of Hip Hop as violent black music, and Black Language as slang.

Cohen also lends insight into how the mass media and dominant culture construct these individuals who stand out from the "norm" in negative ways. He argues:

> Each society possesses a set of ideas about what causes deviation...and a set of images of who constitutes the typical deviant.. and these conceptions shape what is done about the behavior. In industrial societies, the body of information from which such ideas are built is invariably received at second hand. That is, it arrives already processed by the mass media and this means the information has been subject to alternative definitions.... (1972: 7).

As stated earlier, the UMC white males in this research have not come to appropriation on their own, they have certainly had help. Their behaviors can be seen as always socially, and sometimes rhetorically, constructed. It is no coincidence that in the last 10 years Hip Hop culture has become the marketing angle of choice for media outlets (MTV, VH1) and large corporations (BoostMobile, McDonalds, Pepsi), ostensibly pushing an appropriated version of Hip Hop culture and Black Language to the masses. While the shift of Hip Hop becoming part of mainstream popular culture will be more thoroughly covered in the later part of this chapter, it is imperative to note that this shift has greatly impacted the proliferation of appropriation concerning Hip Hop culture and Black Language.

Building off of Cohen's research of the mods, Hebdige discusses the contrasting sub-culture of the skinheads in 1960's Britain who grew out of the "hard mods". Like the mods before them and the participants in my study, the skinheads constituted an identifiable subculture appropriating the dominant culture aspects that suited them and reviling the rest. Hebdige explains:

> In order to express a more stringent [hard] identity, the skinheads drew on two ostensibly incompatible sources: the cultures of the West Indian immigrants and the white working class...In such accounts, the black contribution tends to be played down: confined solely to the influence or reggae music, whereas the skinheads borrowed individual items of dress, argot and style directly from equivalent Wet Indian groups...It was not only by congregating on the all-white football terraces but through consorting with West Indians at the local youth clubs and on the street corners, by copying *their* mannerisms, adopting *their* curses, dancing to *their* music that the skinheads 'magically recovered' the lost sense of working class community (55-56).

This description of the skinheads appropriation of West Indian cultural and linguistic practices is strikingly similar to the participants in my study and further validates the work done by Eckert and Cohen concerning symbolization and style as a way of crafting identity. What Hebdige does is take the issue of symbolization one step further by evidencing symbolization by means of appropriation. The skinheads appropriated West Indian symbols as a way to 'magically recover' a sense of working class community in much the same way UMC white males symbolize the style and language of Hip Hop to connect to a Black culture and in essence create a subculture of their own.

**Hip Hop Culture and Black Language Appropriation**

Appropriation of Black culture and language is certainly not a contemporary occurrence. In the mid to late 1920's, the music, art, poetry, and overall Black aesthetic of the Harlem Renaissance were mass marketed to mainstream America for the purposes of white enjoyment and eventual appropriation. Bastions for black culture and

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entertainment like the Cotton Club in New York would perform toned downed versions of their music and language for the white patrons during the day and early evening and reserve "the real" experiences for after hours, dubbed CP (colored people) time. Whites thought that they were getting the authentic black experience and wore their new found knowledge and appropriations as a badge of honor or "coolness", while blacks knowingly kept the real "cool" on lockdown. In many ways the white community of the 1920's is not so unlike the white community of the present, both are appropriating a watered down, mainstream version of black culture and language.

Norman Mailer's (1958) article "The White Negro" was one of the first works to specifically discuss white appropriation of black culture. Mailer opened discussion of an alternative white masculinity, uniquely informed by the black culture of the day, particularly jazz (Boyd, 2002:22). In the same way that jazz was held up as an appropriated cultural artifact of the 1920's, Hip Hop is now experiencing a similar position in popular culture. As Kitwana (2005) posits, "talk long enough to almost any white kid into Hip Hop, and he or she will openly acknowledge a fascination with black culture" (2).

Eric Lott's (1993) book on the connections and intersections of blackface performance and class further examined white fascination with black culture and aesthetic. While Lott is specifically discussing minstrelsy, his observations lend insight as to why whites appropriate black culture. For Lott, it is true that, while blackface sometimes seemed an authentic instance of black culture, its "black" simulations were even less a populist product than popular arts usually were (101). Therefore, those who were performing blackness were considered factually correct in their portrayal. Their

blackface performances encompassed all the stereotypical "black" actions, gestures, and lexicon. However these performances were based only on what they thought to be popular in black culture, only what the black folk allowed them to see but was not actually what was popular. What was on display in minstrelsy was less black culture than a structured set of white responses to it (Lott, 1993: 101). In many ways this is what is occurring in UMC white male appropriation of Hip Hop culture. The individuals in this study are appropriating mass produced notions of Hip Hop culture and therefore creating and adding to the rhetoric of appropriation that surrounds Hip Hop in mainstream society. Lott calls this phenomenon "popular counterfeiting", which in the case of blackface depended as much on American and racial ideologies as on the political tendencies of popular culture (104). Whatever you wish to call it, appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language, like blackface genre, is largely dependent on how the mass media and mainstream society have chosen to portray this culture and language.

In 2006, Hip Hop is quite literally, everywhere. What was once a musical genre born out of linguistic and racial oppression in the South Bronx and performed by predominately Black and Hispanic artists, has now become a mainstream popular culture staple with every white suburban mom in America referring to their jewelry as "bling-bling" and lauding their burgeoning backsides as "bootylicious". So how does a language and culture once so underground and "of the streets" become a societal norm?

If, as Smitherman (2000) argues, the term Hip Hop refers to urban youth culture (268) than it is imperative to understand when the "urban" variable of that equation became negotiable. Some claim that Hip Hop went mainstream when record execs got involved and started marketing the culture to the masses in the early 90's. MTV, BET,

*The Source*, *Vibe*, and other media outlets peddled albums and artists like Dr. Dre's *The Chronic* and Snoop Doggy Dogg's *Doggy Style* as seminal works that appealed to all young males, whatever their ethnicity or social status. Their subsequent videos seemed to ask: didn't all boys everywhere just want to bounce in hot cars to hotter beats, hang out with their crew, party all night, and spray conceited bitches with malt-liquor? (Chang, 2005: 420). Apparently so, considering that these were the first Hip Hop albums that I remember catching the interests of the white kids at my Catholic school, kids who had no geographical, social, or economic ties to Hip Hop before then. Chang (2005) further posits that these albums also distilled a shift in corporate thinking; growing convictions that these massive paradigm shifts—demographic change, broadcast to niche, whiteness to post-whiteness, the rise of the "urban"—were not such a bad thing after all. Hip Hop offered a way this elusive generation could be assimilated, categorized and made profitable (420). This proves how the term "urban" became redefined as a marketing tool rather than a geographical space. In many ways, Hip Hop's crossover to the mainstream was scripted and carefully planned, but for something to sell it has to be in demand and the social and political climate of the early 90's provided the gap that Hip Hop culture could fill. In many ways, absorbing aspects of Black youth culture, largely via popular culture, young whites have created their own subculture (Kitwana, 2005:124). Furthermore, Kitwana contends that though Hip Hop is largely youth-centered that it "only requires its participants to have a mouth, the ability to listen and frustration with business as usual" (11). In short, he is positing that anyone in mainstream society can argue connection to Hip Hop culture just by feeling stressed or put upon by everyday life.

However, it must be noted that many scholars believe Hip Hop didn't ask to be part of popular culture, that popular culture had a jones for it. Boyd (2002) posits that Hip Hop never went mainstream, the mainstream came to Hip Hop, and this reversal or shift in power relations underlies a number of cultural concerns (16). Most widely known, is the concern of the growing phenomenon of white appropriation of Hip Hop culture. While some scholars like Boyd see the altruistic promise of appropriation, more appeal to a mainstream white audience equating to greater acceptance of Black culture, others see it as a direct threat. Greg Tate (2003) believes that white's get "everything but the burden" from Black culture, a term he borrowed from his mother to "decry the long-standing, ongoing, and unarrested theft of African-American cultural properties by thieving, flavorless whitefolk" (2). He sees appropriation as decidedly malicious and dangerous to black folk in that it takes cultural nuances that are proudly black and turns them into a white washed version to make it more palatable for the masses. Smitherman (2000) is not as fervent in her beliefs about appropriation but is nonetheless concerned with the ramifications:

> "Whites get the "nigga metaphor" at bargain-basement prices. They don't have to pay no dues, but reap the psychological, social, and economic benefits of a language and culture born out of enslavement, neo-enslavement, Jim Crow, U.S. apartheid, and twentieth-century hard times. Lacking the depths of this experience, sometimes whites get it all wrong..."(32).

Despite these concerns and outcries there are some who still see the promise of Hip Hop appropriation, not that they support wholesale appropriation per say, but do in fact note that Hip Hop can and has done something that hasn't been done since the Civil Rights Movement. In many ways Hip Hop has formed a bridge of youth culture that can be

traversed by people of all ages, classes and ethnicities. As noted Hip Hop artist and political activist Chuck D states:

> "…It's something to see videos connect to white kids in Utah to black kids in South Chicago to Croats and Brazilians. This is the sound and style of our young world, the vernacular used in today's speak from scholastic to sports…It's difficult to stop a cultural revolution that bridges people together. Discussing differences through artistic communication and sharing interests in a common bond—rap music and Hip Hop have achieved that in 20 years" (from *Time*, 1999 in Smitherman, 2000).

Perhaps Chuck D's observation strikes a little too Pollyanna for some Hip Hop scholars, but his statement cannot be denied if some forms of appropriation are seen in a positive light. Hip Hop separated from marketing imperatives is still something this generation can control and define with suburbanites uniting with urban residents; whites could learn to respect Blackness, not to merely consume it (Chang, 2005). Whether or not Chang's notion of appropriation as respect versus consumption is possible remains to be seen. It is my belief that by showing varying degrees of appropriation from a sampling of case studies involving UMC white America that we will be able to realize the depths and motivations of Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation.

To be sure, the merits or lack thereof of appropriation can be debated indefinitely and that is not the purpose of this portion of the dissertation. The goal is only to evidence what the climate of scholarship is concerning the appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language in order to better examine the findings of my case study research of UMC white male appropriation. What Hip Hop artists, moguls, and scholars have been noting for years—and more recently mainstreams society—is how Hip Hop bridges gaps, initiates change, and proliferates varied forms of knowledge from city to city, generation to generation, race to race, and even class to class.

The greatest example of Hip Hop culture appropriation that adds even more complexity to the issue is the appearance of white rap artists. While white rappers have been present since the advent of Hip Hop (Beastie Boys, Third Base) it is the recent emergence of controversial white rapper Eminem that has got everyone up in arms. He has become key to granting the white community a sense of legitimacy within the rap game but has come under much scrutiny in the black community. Much of the white youth community see him as their entrée into receiving the much coveted "ghetto pass", due to his talent being recognized by both respected black and white artists in the rap game. Much of the black community calls Eminem's "ghetto pass" into question. As Rux (2003) states, "Eminem may have been born white but he was socialized black, in the proverbial hood—and the music of the proverbial hood in America for the last twenty-five years has been hip-hop music" (21). So while the black community can and does recognize Eminem's musical talent they still cannot seem to get past his whiteness, therefore many argue he can truly not be of the legitimate hood, but rather the 'proverbial hood'. That is to say, Eminem is considered talented because he correctly and legitimately invokes his socialized blackness and therefore his music, and talent, in not coming from a place of whiteness. Eminem's talent is unique and reserved for only those white folk who do right by their black socialization, a white kid from an UMC suburb no matter how talented could never be considered legit in the rap game. Rux (2003) argues that Eminem, and others like him, are not real but surreal, socialized constructions of the dominant Hip Hop culture that surrounds them.

> "[Eminem] confounds Niggaz and white people alike in the multicultural schoolyard with his mastering of Nigga language and assumption of Nigga style. His presentation is not overtly authentic, but infused with the authenticity because

he has lived in Nigga neighborhoods and listened to Nigga music and learned Nigga culture..." (Rux, 2003: 27).

If this is true, then it would be foolish to think of Eminem as the consummate anomaly in Hip Hop. There will be more like him, who have learned from him, that will continue to baffle both white and black communities. This is not to say that white rappers spell the demise of Black culture in Hip Hop. In fact it would take an army of Eminems to divorce the image of Hip Hop from young Black men, who after thirty years still dominate the art form (Kitwana, 2005:2). Eminem is merely both the prime example *and* the catalyst to a world-wide appropriation of Black Language and culture and the dichotomy will only grow more prevalent.

The aforementioned scholars have evidenced that the culture of Hip Hop is pervasive in today's mainstream society but what remains to be fully discussed is how and why Black Language, a cornerstone of Hip Hop with a rich African American linguistic history, is rising in appropriation. Specifically, the research provides insight as to why various unique linguistic patterns of Black Language have become apparent in the white male community. However, it is imperative to more closely examine the linguistic and sociolinguistic research conducted on Black Language in order to fully discuss the findings of the case study research in the coming chapters.

*Black Language Appropriation*

For even the most "lame" scholar, as Labov (1972) would term those who research a culture that is not their own, it is obvious that Black Language and culture is markedly distinct from that of other cultures and languages that have amassed in America. In fact it was Labov that first drew linguistic attention to the fact that Black Language was diverging from Standard White English (Labov and Harris, 1986).

Whatever you want to call the it, Black English, African American Language, African American Vernacular English, Black Vernacular English, Black Talk, Ebonics, etc., the fact remains that linguistically the language is decidedly different from the Language of Wider Communication (LWC) or Standard English. Black Language has its own patterns and was previously used exclusively in the African American community. Smitherman (2000: 19) states that 90 percent of the African American community uses one or more aspects of the language some of the time.

The relatively new phenomenon is the use of Black Language in the white youth community. There has been much speculation as to why this has occurred. Rose (1994: 5) posits that, "whites are fascinated by black culture's differences, drawn by the mainstream social constructions of black culture…as forbidden narrative, [and] a symbol of rebellion." Most people would agree with the notion that what is different, exotic, and/or foreign is a source of much interest and curiosity. However, when does fascination become appropriation? Delpit (1995) points to the need to recognize the many voices and discourses that communities have access to (551). This argument is helpful in thinking about the varied approaches to language individuals take in the Hip Hop community while still maintaining their status as members despite slight linguistic difference. In many ways Delpit provides an argument that supports how individuals are able to appropriate Black discourse and thus gain limited entrée into the Hip Hop community. In essence she believes individuals can learn the "superficial features" of dominant discourses, as well as their more subtle aspects.

Hewitt (1986) further discusses the two-sided role of whites whose close contact with Black culture makes them the reference point for its promotion to their peers. For

many whites this contact is not even needed anymore as the culture has become so widespread. Evidence of this lack of connection to Black culture is most identifiable in Black Language appropriation by UMC, white, young adult males with the appearance of the "wigga".

According to Smitherman (1994) a "wigga" (white nigga) is an individual who wears baggy jeans, a reverse baseball cap, designer sneakers, and has a taste for rap music. What Smitherman's definition does not include however, is the "wigga's" speech, which is almost always saturated with aspects and/or patterns of Black Language. The exclusion of the speech characteristics of wigga is likely due to the previous lack of research done on these individuals. Tate (2003) provides perhaps the most comprehensive definition of a wigga:

> "One of the more peculiar outgrowths of hip-hop's popularity has been the birth of the "wigga"—the so called white nigga who apes Blackness by 'acting hip-hop' in dress speech, body language, and, in some cases, even gang affiliation. Some in the African American community see the appearance of the wigga mutant as a comical form of flattery, others as an up-to-date form of minstrelsy."(8)

Complete with a critical overtone, Tate (2003) is clear in his characterization of the wigga but also leads the reader to see both the altruistic promise of Hip Hop culture/language proliferation and the complications. The wigga persona comes more fully into view through recent research by Cecilia Cutler.

Cutler (1999) embarked on a longitudinal case study of Mike, a white 16-year old boy from an upper class section of Manhattan (Yorkville) who uses many aspects of Black Language. More specifically, Mike's speech shows evidence of phonological and lexical features but lacks the tense and aspect system (Cutler, 1999: 428). For example, Mike and his friends were more prone to g-deletion (goin'), r-lessness (othah), and lexical (yo, phat) patterns of Black Language versus grammatical systems such as

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singular –s absence and habitual/aspectual *be*. However, Mike also was prone to using tonal semantics depending on his social context. This linguistic variable was most likely picked up through Hip Hop music. As Smitherman (2000) states, rappers employ tonal semantics ("words and phrases carefully chosen for sound effects") in order to provoke meaning and rhetorical mileage by triggering a familiar sound chord in the listener's ear (222). In Mike's case Hip Hop music has indeed triggered a form of linguistic appropriation.

It is through research like Cutler's that we can begin to understand how widespread the appropriation of Black Language has become. Although, recognizing the existence of such a phenomenon is not enough. To fully understand the variations we must look at the roots of what caused such a proliferation of Black Language into white male communities.

Undoubtedly, the most prominent influence on white appropriation of Black Language is Hip Hop. Ever since "Yo! MTV Raps" went on the air in 1989, sales figures for Hip Hop music among middle class white teenagers have exponentially increased (Rose, 1994). Hip Hop music videos have animated a cultural style and aesthetics and have facilitated cross-neighborhood, cross-country dialogue in a social environment that is highly segregated by class and race (Rose, 1994:9). Moreover Hip Hop's proliferation can further been seen in the culture's appearance overseas. "Fashion-conscious Japanese teenagers who want to look cool, black, and American much like their hip-hop idols...dress in funky clothes, dye and weave their hair into cornrows and darken their skin at tanning salons with makeup"(Genocchio, 2004: 36A). It is undeniable that Hip Hop has become part of mass consumer culture, absorbing all walks of youth. Though

various cultures have poached from other cultures ways of dress and overall style, it is perhaps even more interesting to look at how Hip Hop has influenced language in UMC white males who are seemingly so far removed from the community, socially as well as geographically.

With the lessening need for face-to-face encounters with native Black Language speakers, access to the language is readily available by Internet, lyrics from CD cases, and film. The Internet is one increasingly important source for Hip Hop terms and expressions, and young people can turn to a host of on-line dictionaries and chat lines to improve their Hip Hop repertoires (Cutler, 1999: 434). Hip Hop lyrics available both online and verbatim in CD cases have also provided the white community with access to authentic Black Language. Furthermore, films that mirror the black "ghetto" experience have become increasingly popular and with that popularity have played a role in the transmission of Black Language to whites. "Ghetto" films such as 'Boyz'n the Hood' (1991), 'Menace to Society' (1993), and 'New Jack City' (1991) and the most recent string of the 'Barbershop' (2004, 2005) series and 'Soul Plane' (2005) serve to transmit views of inner-city ghetto life, in some cases a glamorized version, from which the white community can selectively choose to construct their stereotypes about Black and Hip Hop culture and language (Cutler, 1999).

I would be remiss if I did not include research that points to another cause of Black Language proliferation in the white community, that of the direct correlation between Black Language and masculinity. As a consequence of racism, black masculinity in the U.S. (and elsewhere) has long been ideologically associated with hyperphysicality that involves physical strength, hyper(hetero)sexuality, and physical violence (Davis

1983), which is predominately linked more to men than women (Bucholtz, 1999). Therefore, it can be said that many white males have adopted patterns of Black Language for the purpose of sounding "hard" or "ghetto". Bucholtz (1999) calls this use of Black Language by white males Cross-Racial AAVE or CRAAVE. The acronym, she says, is intended to reflect speaker's sometimes ambivalent cultural and linguistic desire (Bucholtz, 1999: 445). Here we see the notion that while white males look to Black culture and language for masculinity and that they may not be aware of why they are doing it.

This argument is more fully realized when looking at the overarching themes of violence, oppression, and misogyny in Hip Hop. If white males had previously misunderstood why they felt drawn to the seemingly more masculine traits of the black man, now it is clearly laid out for them in the songs. This is not to say that rap promotes violence—as Toop (1991: 164) said it best, "rap was at most the soundtrack [of violence], not the cause"—however, it does purport an overtly masculine culture that appeals to many males, Black, Hispanic, and white.

It is only with an understanding of the above research that one can hope to begin to fully comprehend the appropriation of Black Language, culture, and music. It is my belief that my research will shed even more light onto the subject as well as providing new insights as to what this appropriation means to/for UMC white males and the African American community.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the predominant themes and theories that will aid in more fully explaining the rhetoric of appropriation in the coming chapters.

To be sure, appropriation does not occur overnight, it is a carefully and slowly crafted phenomenon that has deep cultural, linguistic, and social ramifications. In order to fully comprehend the significance of how and why UMC white males appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language it is imperative to draw connections about how culture and language are constructed and how those constructions shape identity. Chapter 2 of my dissertation presents the theoretical research conducted with/through Hip Hop culture and Black Language to prove the rhetorical and linguistic significance of both. Specifically, it will evidence how Hip Hop culture has a rhetoric of its own, in many ways calling for a return to a rhetorics of citizenship, and how Black Language serves as a source of linguistic pride and celebration throughout this culture due to its rich and unique history born out of oppression and degradation. Chapter 3 introduces established research conducted on linguistic appropriation of Black Language and Hip Hop culture as well as presenting an irrefutable argument for Black Language as a legitimate and widely practiced language. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss the what, why, and how of linguistic and cultural appropriation through analysis of original case study data. Chapter 4 looks specifically at the participating UMC white male's perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes concerning Hip Hop culture and Black Language and more importantly why and how they identify and situate themselves within and through Hip Hop culture, Black Language, and their appropriations of both. Chapter 5 seeks to show the variance of appropriation by rhetorically analyzing select case study units. This chapter will clarify how deep and/or shallow the performance and identification of/with Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation through the examination of wiggas versus neo-wiggas. Chapter 6 builds upon the research in the previous chapters to draw conclusions about the

study of the rhetorical, linguistic, and literacy strategies employed by appropriators and

how these appropriations can and should be discussed in the rhet/comp classroom.

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# Chapter 2: The Rhetoric of Hip Hop

*I applaud the Hip Hop nation for seeking to disturb the peace lest the chain remain the same.*

*--Geneva Smitherman (2001)*

*Hip Hop has always been about having fun, but it's also about taking responsibility. And now we have a platform to speak our minds. Millions of people are watching us. Let's hear something powerful. Tell people what they need to hear. How will we help the community? What do we stand for? What would happen if we got the Hip Hop generation to vote, or to form organizations to change things? That would be powerful.*

*--DJ Kool Herc (2005)*

In order to effectively and fully discuss how Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation by UMC white males has evidenced a rhetoric of appropriation, it is imperative to discuss the rhetorical significance of Hip Hop culture itself. Without exposure to the rhetorics encompassed in Hip Hop culture, these individuals would have been hard-pressed to navigate the culture and to exhibit moves and strategies that serve to justify their appropriations. By treating Hip Hop as "a rhetoric" I am arguing that there is a wide audience for the mechanisms and strategies invoked in the public horatory discourse of Hip Hop music/lyrics and political/communal involvement as well as an ideology rooted in the culture and social constructions embedded in Hip Hop and Black Language. Therefore, the rhetoric of Hip Hop can be defined as related to both civic discourse through logical, emotional, and ethical appeals to a growing variety of audiences (urban youth, UMC white males, etc.) as well as an overall ideology that formulates and supports the culture of Hip Hop, that Hip Hop is in fact a way of life, a social stance.

What this means for the analysis of the data in this project is that there are deep historical roots upon which the rhetoric of Hip Hop is based and that this rhetoric is employed as both a sub-cultural ideology and oral/written discourse. When analyzing the UMC white male participant responses in the following chapters and the previous research contained in this chapter, it is imperative to establish the ideology and discourse of the rhetoric of Hip Hop in order to fully recognize and understand how and why these individuals are appropriating, and in many cases, changing this established rhetoric. Furthermore, this chapter will draw connections between how ancient rhetorics work and don't work in imagining rhetoric in diverse, mediated, and complex publics. Though UMC white males invoke strategies and appeals resplendent in Hip Hop rhetoric, it is important to establish that the rhetoric of Hip Hop is steeped in many traditional rhetorics. Therefore, UMC white males are pulling from both traditional rhetorical methods as well as re-invented "cultural rhetorics" when formulating their rhetoric of appropriation. The rhetoric of Hip Hop is indeed a cultural rhetoric, enjoying hybridized status as a cultural, subcultural, and mass cultural form depending on what rhetor is invoking it. When invoked by old school rappers Hip Hop is a cultural rhetoric, drawing directly from African American oral tradition. Used by UMC white males who are distinctly distant geographically from urban centers but still in touch with Black cultural and linguistic norms the rhetoric of Hip Hop becomes appropriated and thus a subcultural rhetoric. The rhetoric of Hip Hop takes a mass cultural form when appropriated by mainstream media and society as a way to market products and a sense of culture itself.

There are a number of scholars who have looked at the rhetorical nature of Hip Hop and the linguistic variations of Black Language to draw attention to their legitimacy in

various fields of study. It is from their previous work that I have garnered the knowledge to evidence the need to study Hip Hop and Black Language appropriation in rhetoric and composition.

The purpose of this chapter is to show the rhetorical significance of Hip Hop, that there is in fact a rhetoric of Hip Hop or Hip Hop rhetoric. Loosely considered Hip Hop rhetoric evidences ethical, logical, and emotional appeals to audiences worldwide, closer to home this rhetoric seeks to invoke notions of citizenship and civic duty. More concretely observed, the rhetoric of Hip Hop is inherently linked with Black Language, whose creation and proliferation is steeped in African American rhetorical traditions intended to evoke pride and constantly reminds us of the deep history of oppression and degradation from which this rhetoric was born. As Smitherman (2001) states "Black talk is never meaningless cocktail chit-chat but a functional dynamic that is simultaneously a mechanism for acculturation and information-passing and a vehicle for achieving group recognition" (61). That is to say if Black Talk/Language is integral to Hip Hop then these same functional applications of meaning, acculturation, information-passing and group recognition apply to the rhetoric of Hip Hop. Hip Hop rhetoric is unique in that it fully embraces the African American rhetorical tradition but makes it contemporary, translated to be applicable and viewable by mainstream society. In short, the rhetoric of Hip Hop knows and echoes its roots but ain't afraid to put its own stamp on the traditional map. This is perhaps what makes the rhetorical strategies enacted in Hip Hop so appealing to appropriators, it enacts both a unique culture while also being applicable to the mainstream. Using the rhetorics that appropriators have picked up from Hip Hop culture and music is an integral part of the rhetoric of appropriation. But before I go too far into

the specifics of Hip Hop rhetorics, I recognize there is need to define more fully the roots
and history that make the rhetoric of Hip Hop what it is.

## Classical Rhetoric

No kind of rhetoric, traditional or modern, has ever existed in a vacuum. From
Isocrates to James Berlin to the lauded Hip Hop artist Common, philosophers and rhetors
have always posited their beliefs and teachings on and about rhetoric as a means to an
end, however varying those means and ends may have been. That being said, for many
scholars of rhetoric the notion of civic duty, citizenship, and morality are recurrent in
their works and in many ways laid the groundwork for the call of civic responsibility in
Hip Hop music and culture. In the Greek city-states the community and citizens revolved
around rhetoric. Much time was spent gathering and listening to one form of oratory or
another. This is not unlike contemporary Hip Hop culture where one can see individuals
gathering to listen to the hot new track dropped by a famous artist. Long before Plato and
Aristotle, lengthy speeches figured largely into the oral poetry of Homer and other
rhapsodes (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001:21). Although the means for Homer was poetry and
the ends being rooted in art, it was Plato and Aristotle that took rhetoric into a more
philosophical means to a moral and political end.

However, the rhetorics of Plato and Aristotle manifest from the individual with
very little being said about the community or civic responsibility. As Kennedy states in
his translation of Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, "Aristotle shows a greater sense of urgency
toward knowing and doing what is morally right and gives higher priority to the
contemplative life than to active political life" (62). For Aristotle in *Rhetoric*, it is more
important to better oneself than to improve one's community. However, it is important to

note that in his other works Aristotle does indeed stress the need for democratic

participation. This representation argues that "Aristotle's view is sometimes cited by

advocates of cultural studies as the view of rhetoric promoting participatory democracy"

(Porter, 1997:33). Through these varying perspectives, it is difficult to definitively

conclude as to how Aristotle truly viewed and portrayed the ideas of civic mindedness in

Greek society. That is to say, much about Aristotle's rhetoric is still open for

interpretation.

It is in the work and philosophies of Isocrates that ideas of citizenship and civic

duty are fully realized. Isocrates has long been considered the first educator of rhetoric,

through his creation and maintenance of a school for the purpose of training men to

become effective and ethical political leaders. By becoming a professional educator,

Isocrates believed that education could improve the natural talents of all men and most

importantly that it be useful to the state (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001:25). Unlike Aristotle,

Isocrates' end for rhetoric was firmly rooted in the common good. He sought to move

people to action in order to better not just themselves but also their community/state.

Isocrates believed that it is imperative for one to participate in public life and their

rhetoric should reflect that. As he states, "men who are the most conscientious in their

dealings with associates, whether in their homes or in public life, are themselves

esteemed as the noblest among their fellows" (Isocrates from *Antidosis* in Bizzell &

Herzberg, 2001:78). Therefore, it is not enough to be a good man, one must also use his

attributes to better the public. Ultimately, Isocrates believes that one cannot be socially

isolated, that the community has an undeniable claim on the philospher-rhetor. He must

try to be a useful citizen and in turn make useful citizens of his students (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001: 71).

In Cicero's *De Oratore* he further stresses the notion that rhetoric should be used for the common good. As the character Crassus, Cicero states that rhetoric makes civil order possible. Therefore, without rhetoric the civic space becomes at best chaotic and at worst null and void. Cicero goes on to state that the essential concern of the orator is style that is dignified and graceful and in conformity with the general modes of judgment and thought (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001:297). For Cicero it is imperative that the rhetor not only speak well, but also speak on issues and terms that the audience is familiar and concerned with. If the speaker does not conform to the general beliefs and notions of the community than it is highly probable that his rhetoric will serve no purpose. Through Crassus as his mouthpiece Cicero implores young men to use their rhetoric to not only better themselves but also to establish institutions in the republic stating "Go on, therefore, as you are doing young men, and apply earnestly to the study in which you are engaged, that you may be an honor to yourselves, and advantage to your friends, and a benefit to the republic" (301). Again, we see the stature civic mindedness and citizenship holds in classical rhetorics.

Though not as specific about the need for civic involvement, in many ways Quintilian echoes the beliefs about moral and civic responsibility in his work. Quintilian's philosophy on rhetoric begets from the idea of the good man speaking well. Therefore, it is not enough for a man to be moral and ethical he must also be able to effectively portray these characteristics to his audience in order to raise their moral and ethical standing. Like Isocrates and Cicero, Quintilian's notions of education were rooted

in the practical. Students should be taught declamation in order to suit practical political and social life. While Quintilian is much more directive in and about his pedagogy, the basis of his rhetoric is always the practical and always student-centered. Like Isocrates he does not wish for his student's skills to exist in a vacuum but rather to be used in the public space to better influence civic discourse.

In these classical philosophers and rhetors, we can see the basis for contemporary notions of citizenship and civic duty. Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian in a myriad of prose and means illustrate that at the heart of their rhetoric is the needs of the state or community. So how does this connect to the rhetoric of Hip Hop?

Though the connection may be difficult for those outside the culture to recognize, Hip Hop artists in many ways embody the same characteristics in their communities as classical rhetoricians. Aristotle, Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian were lauded for their roles in society, they were revered as the teachers who would guide their students to moral civic duty. Today that same ideology is pressed upon Hip Hop artists, mostly leaving out the moral, but nevertheless steeped in the call for a return to citizenship in the modern hood. Those both affiliated with and appropriating Hip Hop culture rank the words of these performers as the highest representations of their own personal identity within both urban and suburban communities.

For example, when Quintilian implores his audience to be "good men speaking well", they are inspired to reflect on the power of their words and to understand the implications their rhetoric has for both them and their community. This is not so unlike the lyrics of five time Grammy winner Lauryn Hill when she asks her community in "That Thing", "how you gon win when you ain't right within? Uh-uh, come again". This

is to say, what good are you to your family, friends, and community if your rhetoric is fronting—portraying a rhetorical façade when the truth is really hidden deep inside your person. It is not enough to be good/moral if you do not share and spread those qualities clearly and effectively for the benefit of your community. Both Quintilian and Lauryn Hill were/are highly respected in the their respective communities, both their words were/are taken seriously and in many instances literally.

Perhaps the parallel is better made between the classical female rhetorician Aspasia and female Hip Hop artists like Lauryn Hill, Lil Kim, and Mary J. Blige. Despite all odds these women were heard. After centuries of being buried beneath the rhetoric of men, Aspasia emerged to be lauded as the one who taught rhetoric to Socrates. Though her pupils and greater audience were almost certainly men, Aspasia was able to flourish as a respected rhetor and orator, evidenced by her teachings being included in the *Rhetorical Tradition*. Like Aspasia, female Hip Hop artists have struggled to be heard and respected but not until recently have they begun to reach the pinnacle of mainstream success. When they rap about the trials and tribulations of women on welfare, people in the communities, both urban and suburban, now sit up and take notice. These female Hip Hop artists put women's issues on the table, clear and unapologetically, in order to draw attention to their plight *as* women, to mobilize men and women as citizens to stop the cycles, cycles of poverty, drugs, welfare, and other pressing issues concerning civic responsibility in the community. As Pough posits, artists like Eve in her song "Love is Blind" and Queen Latifah in her song "U.N.I.T.Y" inspire the desire for collective action and build on the diva qualities of bringing wreck in that they offer testimonies aimed at changing the world, or at least the way we think about women's place in it (2004: 91).

Unfortunately, as the tradition of rhetoric stretched and broadened through the Renaissance, Middle Ages, and the Enlightenment the stress on civic responsibility and discourse waned considerably. With the rise of Christian doctrine and later scientific modes of knowledge and invention, the importance of these rhetorics as they apply to the community was largely limited. Stress instead was placed on the specific individual mind and more broadly on the church. However, with the rise of contemporary methodologies stemming from feminist and cultural perspectives, we are once again seeing a return to rhetoric as a means to an end of citizenship and civic mindedness.

**Rhetorical Tradition of Hip Hop: Resistance and Empowerment**

What helps to bridge the conceptual gap between traditional notions of rhetoric and Hip Hop rhetoric is the field of African American rhetorics, the study of the African American oral tradition. Richardson and Jackson II (2004) define African American rhetoric as "the study of culturally and discursively developed knowledge-forms, communicative practices and persuasive strategies rooted in freedom struggles by people of African ancestry in America" (ix). This definition clearly establishes the legitimacy of a unique rhetoric in the African American community, one that is based on the culture, language, and struggle of Black folk in America. Because Hip Hop is decidedly a culture and musical genre of color, predominately African American, it is no surprise that Hip Hop rhetoric is based upon the discursive and communicative practices of African American rhetoric. Therefore, Hip Hop rhetoric can be considered, and often is portrayed, as an off-shoot of African American rhetoric, embracing the rhetoric of the African American community while blending it with contemporary linguistic, cultural, and political flavor creating a rhetoric of Hip Hop.

As stated in Chapter 1, I subscribe to Kenneth Burke's view of rhetoric as a means to examine and determine identity. Therefore, I consider rhetoric a way/tool for individuals and communities to determine and present their cultural, linguistic, and economic affiliations and leanings. Rhetoric is the heuristic with which we examine ourselves and our place in this world. It is also a way in which we can express and perform those ruminations of our mind and body, how we choose to speak and act to justify our existence, where we sit and stand. To be clear, when I address rhetoric as a conceptual frame and/or heuristic I am holding to Lindquist's (2002) argument that:

> The problem with approaching class culture ethnographically once again returns us to the uses of rhetoric as a conceptual frame. It is in this interpretive domain— that is, in the space between class and culture, between the structural and the phenomenological—that "rhetoric" is activated as a key term in what might otherwise appear to be a traditionally sociolinguistic approach to communicative practice…Though "rhetoric" is a construct more traditionally associated with humanistic approaches to culture, I find it useful here to foreground processes of conflict and identification and to describe tensions between the poetic and horatory in accounting for these processes. "Rhetoric" helps us to account for how the Smokehouse conceives of itself as a political culture, implying strategic positioning, public presentation, and persuasion. To suggest "rhetoric" as heuristic allows for the agonistic as well as the consensual in culture (8).

In short, rhetoric is how we go about deciding who we are and then showcasing that decision by acting and living accordingly.

To be sure, rhetorics can be both intrinsic and extrinsic. We examine our place in society internally and our actions are based on those examinations manifesting themselves externally. From this definition of rhetoric it is clear how Hip Hop culture qualifies as having its' own rhetoric. Hip Hop culture is a reflection of the internal strife of inner city youth in determining who they are and their place in this world. The external result is the music, fashion, and politics that showcase this struggle and pride. Furthermore, rappin—the linguistic performance of Hip Hop—can be seen as the verbal

art that is definitive of rhetoric in the African American vernacular (Campbell, 2005: 24). There are few scholars that explicitly term Hip Hop as rhetoric, but most players in the scholarly game come correct in discussing the importance of the rhetorical appeal, history, and effectiveness of Hip Hop culture.

Richardson (2003) states that "Hip Hop is an example of African American creativity; a merger of African American oral tradition" and that "the American version of Hip Hop mixes Anglo American literacies with Afro-American literacies to create the dynamic literacies of Hip Hop" (68). In this way, Richardson is positing that Hip Hop is a rhetoric in its own right, part of African American literacy but part of white literacy as well. For Richardson Hip Hop not only encompasses a unique literacy and rhetoric but also an entire culture. She argues, "It is important to view Hip Hop as a total culture…and thus, the music and lyrics must be considered in relations to beliefs, values, mores, and complex ideologies" (69). Therefore, Hip Hop music cannot and should not be abstracted from its history, to do so would be a complete disservice to those seeking to understand the complex rhetoric entrenched in the language and culture. The rhetoric of Hip Hop is the ideology, beliefs, and values that the Hip Hop culture embraces as well as the physical evidence of those ideologies portrayed in music, fashion, and politics.

To understand the rhetoric of Hip Hop culture and language one must understand where it came from, the tradition Hip Hop is built upon. Smitherman (2001) provides the most comprehensive breakdown of how Hip Hop music and the Hip Hop artists specifically have come to be rhetorically significant, albeit from a linguistic standpoint.

> Rap music is rooted in the Black Oral Tradition of tonal semantics, narrativizing, signification/signifyin, the Dozens/playin the Dozens, Africanized syntax, and other communicative practices. ….The rapper is a post-modern African griot, the verbally

gifted storyteller and cultural historian in traditional African society. As African America's "griot," the rapper must be lyrically/linguistically fluent; he or she is expected to testify, to speak the truth, to come wit it in no uncertain terms (269).

Hip Hop is a contemporary manifestation of centuries of struggle and the complex rhetorical moves and strategies that were developed in order to navigate that struggle. Just as African Americans employ Black Language as part of their linguistic, discursive, and communicative heritage, rappers/Hip Hop artists act as the modern day griot, or prophet/keeper/storyteller of that language and the embedded historical struggle and pride it represents through Hip Hop. In this way "the rap music of the Hip Hop Nation simultaneously reflects the cultural evolution of the Black Oral Tradition and the construction of a contemporary resistance rhetoric" (Smitherman, 2001: 283).

The argument of Hip Hop as resistance rhetoric is perhaps the most effective way to fully position Hip Hop rhetoric writ large. Pough (2004) discusses Hip Hop in terms of how black females and Hip Hop artists alike invoke wreck or "bring wreck", a term used in Hip Hop to signify skill and greatness; the rapper is so good, has so much skill, that he or she wrecks the microphone (77). However, Pough focuses on how wreck can best be described as "a rhetorical act that can be written, spoken, or acted out in a way that shows resistance" (78). Therefore, Hip Hop rhetoric entails a component of resistance to mainstream, oppressive ideologies through the linguistic choices made by those fully entrenched in Hip Hop culture. Specifically, Hip Hop music is the mouthpiece for this rhetoric of resistance. It was indeed created to showcase the cultural values and struggles of people of color. To be sure, what began in basements, on street corners, in public parks, and throughout the still of the night would furnish young people fertile spaces for crafting new identities, explosive art forms, and whole industries (Watkins, 2005: 9).

However, it is important to note that though resistance rhetoric is indicative of Hip Hop culture and music it is not exclusively a Hip Hop trait.

In her resonating ethnography of African American literacy in an urban community, Ellen Cushman (2004) talks specifically about what makes these individuals' rhetoric so significant and unique. She posits that the language used to navigate gatekeepers of power in the inner city community is institutionalized and thus can and is mitigated rhetorically for the purpose of gaining access and empowerment as well evidencing resistance to the dominant power structure. She states that:

> Institutional language does indeed include both resistance and accommodation, and as a result, community residents' language neither entirely subverts nor wholly reproduces the structuring ideology of institutions (9).

Using institutional language is a tool many individuals in the African American community use to both side-step rules and regulations that have been put in place to frustrate their progress and empower themselves and their communities in the struggle to transgress these gatekeeping strategies. This is to say that African Americans often use institutional language as a form of resistance and empowerment, a rhetorical strategy that often appears vibrantly in Hip Hop culture and music.

Artists like Public Enemy, N.W.A., and more currently The Game and Kanye West all rap about resisting various forms of dominant power structures. Looking specifically at lyrics from Public Enemy's "Fight the Power", we can see an awareness of institutional language blended with Black Language to form a type of resistance rhetoric:

> Cause I'm Black and I'm proud
> I'm ready and hyped plus I'm amped
> Most of my heroes don't appear on no stamps
> Sample a look back you look and find
> Nothing but rednecks for 400 years if you check
> Don't worry be happy

> Was a number one jam
> Damn if I say it you can slap me right here
> (Get it) lets get this party started right
> Right on, c'mon
> What we got to say
> Power to the people no delay
> To make everybody see
> In order to fight the powers that be

The rhetoric employed in these lyrics can be considered Hip Hop rhetoric because it combines aspects of institutional and Black Language to convey a message of resistance and empowerment. It explicitly appeals to the audience to fight the institutional powers that have oppressed Black America for so long. Implicitly, there is a logical appeal displayed in the group's knowledge of American history of Black oppression ("my heroes don't appear on no stamps"). Furthermore, these lyrics clearly evidence a Black vernacular voice, employing syntactical and lexical items of Black Language. In all, these lyrics are an excellent example of Hip Hop rhetoric, conveying a message of resistance and empowerment through Black Language in rhetorically savvy ways.

Kanye West further displays evidence of embracing institutional language as a form of resistance rhetoric in the following rhyme from "Heard 'Em Say":

> And I know the goverment administered aids,
> So I guess we just pray like the minister say,
> Allah Akbar and throw em some hot cars,
> Things we see on the screen is not ours,
> But these niggas from the hood so these dreams not far,
> Where im from, the dope boys is the rock stars,
> But they can't cop cars without seein' cop cars,
> I guess they want us all behind bars.
> I know it.

West recognizes that for African American men to get ahead they need aid from the government, but that it is not enough for them to fully succeed because these individuals are chasing a dream that was not meant for them. Therefore, he uses a combination of

institutional (government administered) and Black Language (nigga, so these dreams not far) to explain how these individuals are wronged and offers a rhetoric of resistance to show his displeasure with the current state of power held by gatekeepers. Though the lyrics of Hip Hop artists like Public Enemy and N.W.A are far more explicit in their claims against Black oppression, West's lyrics also lend to forms of awareness of the current Black struggle, empowerment of the Black community, and resistance to dominant power structures.

In some ways Hip Hop rhetoric can be considered a rhetoric of survivance (Powell, 2002), how a community and/or individual seeks to legitimize their culture through writing/rhetoric. As earlier established Hip Hop artists and moguls are considered modern day griots or carriers of Black Language, history, and pride. In this way they use Hip Hop rhetoric in their music/speech to call attention to the messages resonant in Hip Hop culture, in essence to show the legitimacy and importance of their work and ideologies. Hip Hop rhetoric also dispels the "myth of Americaness" that Powell discusses. That Hip Hop, despite all the negative Black connotations presented in the media, is a decidedly American genre, born and produced here. Hip Hop rhetoric strives to convey that Hip Hop is a culture rife with contradictions and conflicting messages, but a robust culture nonetheless, and the existence of such rhetoric is what serves to protect its legitimacy. Furthermore, Richardson (2003) clearly points out that Hip Hop is a "means of survival" and that "literally in the African American tradition, rap and rappers made a 'way outta no way' when they took elements of their pain and struggle 'along with stray technological parts' and brought into being a subculture of resistance and creativity that has commanded global respect" (72). In this way, the rhetorical movement of Hip Hop as

a form of resistance and survival is similar to Native Americans who employ Native rhetorics for the same purpose.

Much of what is presented in Hip Hop music and lyrics is indeed indicative of the culture of Hip Hop. As both Pough (2004) and Boyd (2002) contend, rap is the act/music; Hip Hop is the culture. Looking more closely at many Hip Hop lyrics, specifically how they are rhetorically crafted, provides evidence of resistance, unrest, and struggle. At the same time the music also echoes messages of hope, faith, and redemption. To be sure, rap lyric subjects that present both positive and negative messages are equally valuable to understanding how and why Hip Hop has formed its own rhetoric. Like anything we encounter in this world, nothing is all bad or all good, and Hip Hop is no different. Whatever the message may be, it is imperative to recognize that the message is there, that this culture has a definitive voice that in many ways has become the representative of Hip Hop culture and community and calls for involvement. The savvy rhetoric evidenced in Hip Hop music is used to invoke anger and action, it calls to those who seek identity within communities, churches, families, and friends. Boyd paints a picture of this rhetoric stating:

> With Hip Hop being so vocal, so visible, so empowered through the success that the culture has had, this becomes the dominant mode of address and the primary way in which we can possibly start to make sense of how Blackness functions in the present (xxi).

To be sure, the growing popularity of Hip Hop rhetoric has become a means for disenfranchised youth and urban communities to be heard and empowered through these proclamations and motivations.

There are some scholars that echo Boyd's notion of making sense of constructions of Blackness through the study of the conscious choice of language in Hip Hop rhetoric.

Specifically, H. Samy Alim (2003) looks at transcriptions of Hip Hop artists speech and lyrics to determine if there is a conscious copula variation present. He ultimately suggests that these Hip Hop artists target members of the African American street culture as their audience and also believes that they modify and vary their speech accordingly (52). That is to say that there are very specific rhetorical moves and strategies being performed in Hip Hop culture and Black Language and it can be clearly seen through the transcriptions Alim discusses. While this work clearly evidences conscious rhetorical choices made by those in the Hip Hop community it also proves that there may in fact be certain themes of topic and/or variances in speech patterns that UMC white males display while appropriating Hip Hop culture and Black Language and this knowledge can lead to a better understanding of how and why they appropriate. As scholars it is our duty, as Alim states, to consider the use of language to not only construct our worlds but also to construct our very beings (55), to recognize that it is our responsibility to discuss these complex intersections of language, culture, and politics so as to gain insight into humanity as a whole.

**Old School Rhetors to New School Rappers**

One way to recognize the value and importance of Hip Hop rhetoric on society is to evidence the growing trend of political and social rhetoric that is becoming indicative of Hip Hop culture and music. Watkins (2005) contends:

> Hip hop's mostly symbolic moves against established authority illustrated how politics can often reach beyond familiar methods and venues...The idea that hip hop can be a political resource is not unique. Afrika Bambaataa, one of the movement's pioneers, experimented with the notion that Hip Hop could and should use its sway to inspire young people to be agents of social change. Despite the corporate takeover of Hip Hop, the movement's die-hard troops have continued to maintain that Hip Hop still belongs to the people and communities that inspired its formations (149).

As earlier established, Hip Hop has always been rooted in struggle. However, until the past ten years, that struggle has been underground, buried in the streets of New York, the ghettos of LA, the projects of Detroit. Though the rhetoric of resistance and empowerment has long been apparent in Hip Hop music and culture, with its growing popularity in mainstream society and constant media attention, Hip Hop now has a world forum in which to embark upon active rhetoric. This facet of Hip Hop rhetoric calls for audiences to become more involved in their communities, to become activists in the fight against racism, inequality, and poverty. The fact that Hip Hop culture, artists, moguls and Black Language are pimped and pushed on every American consumer and viewer has made it clear to those in the rap game that this mass consumerism, once reviled as an evil, whole-sale appropriation, can be used for good. Watkins recognizes this potential stating:

> The desire to develop a more urbane political sensibility within the Hip Hop movement is growing more robust and reflects a certain degree of maturity and introspection. The idea that Hip Hop can—and even should be—a political force has compelled many in the movement to begin thinking more seriously about how best to realize such a vision (151).

It is these political ruminations that posit a distinct call for civic responsibility in Hip Hop rhetoric. When so-called "culture warriors" like Bill O'Reiley sit on the Oprah Winfrey show and spew rhetoric concerning how rapping about "ho's, glocks, and slinging crack" is detrimental to American society, I point to those exact lexical choices as proof of authentic and effective rhetoric that exists in the inner city to legitimize Black struggle and resistance to "traditionalist" notions of what it means to be active. It is in these gansta rap lyrics that one can truly see a call for empowerment to rise up against the dominant power structures, to take control of one's community for the benefit of one's community. Let's face it folks, Hip Hop artists are not rapping about sunshine and daisies because

that's not what is reflected in their daily lives. The majority of these men and women are rapping about struggle, real hardships that many would argue are a result of our country's on-going ignorance towards inner-city poverty, violence, and mis-education. Hip Hop, in essence, provides these individuals the best possible forum for change and they're looking to draw attention to that call for change by any means necessary. Perhaps Pough most clearly argues my point when she states that:

> [There] are Hip Hop activists, Raptivists about change. In the words of that rap entrepreneur Master P they are 'bout it, bout it'. And that 'bout it, bout it' extends further than clocking dollars, mackin' hos and what have you. That 'bout, bout it' is deeply tied to community building and change…the negative press and outrage against the music and culture should be seen as much bigger than anyone could imagine (284).

Hip Hop music and rap lyrics, and the messages embedded within them, do in fact come from somewhere, they are not abstracted from culture and society. It is in all forms of rap music and Hip Hop culture that we can hear the call for action and feel the embedded cultural meanings. Smitherman (2006) most recently states that:

> Those of us in the Old Skool were ecstatic about the potential of this new musical art form to embed deeper social meanings into rhymed couplets. This third genre, while stamping its own, unique aesthetic imprint on the Game, was clearly grounded in and often revisited the Black Musical Tradition. Activists from The Movement days embraced Hip Hop's artistic re-connections to Black cultural roots, applauding this rhetorical strategy that triggered cultural memory in the service of political awareness (84-85).

This is clearly an argument for the societal benefits of Hip Hop rhetoric, that the messages embedded in these lyrics not only carry on the Black Oral Tradition but further that tradition by announcing it to the world.

I argue that it is in Hip Hop rhetoric that we can hear and see the call for civic action. Whether it is to better our cities, our communities, our families, or ourselves as political, social, and religious activists, Hip Hop has provided a space for predominately

marginalized people to make their voices heard. Hip Hop has also appealed and spoken to those within the margins, namely white males—viewed as the paramount symbol of privilege—and sparked in them notions of civic duty and responsibility. It could now be argued that Hip Hop has simultaneously embodied the ethos of the marginalized speaker and gone mainstream in the proliferation of the message(s) portrayed in the music and culture. We see these notions reflected in the words of one of the founding fathers of Hip Hop, DJ Kool Herc:

> To me, Hip Hop says, 'come as you are'. We are a family. It ain't about security. It ain't about bling-bling. It ain't about how much your gun can shoot. It ain't about $200 sneakers. It is not about me being better than you or you being better than me. It's about you and me, connecting one to one. That's why it has universal appeal. It has given young people a way to understand their world, whether they are from the suburbs or the city or wherever (in Chang, 2005:xi).

What DJ Kool Herc alludes to is that there is a cultural revolution occurring right now through Hip Hop, one that is bringing people who were once racially, socially, and/or geographically divided together. What is not specifically mentioned here is the rhetorics is takes to build such communities, nor where these ideas of social cohesion were formed. I argue that Hip Hop encourages a return to a rhetorics of citizenship (Bruch & Marback, 1996). Thus it is imperative—albeit surprising—to look back to old, dead, privileged men in order to examine the manifestations of modern Hip Hop rhetorics of citizenship through the eyes of young, urban, largely marginalized rappers and poets.

Though the masses that the classical rhetors appealed to were vastly less diverse than the ones Hip Hop artists appeal to today, their roles and messages are strikingly similar. As the paragons of their communities these men (Isocrates, Cicero, Dr. Dre, Chuck D) and women (Aspasia, Lauryn Hill) were/are the mouthpiece for the youths they set out to "educate". Granted the classical rhetors took a more conventional approach to

educating, forming schools and study centers. Hip Hop artists and moguls on the other hand revel in the unconventional, preaching their teachings concerning civic duty to the public by any means necessary. The Hip Hop/Rap artists is a modern day griot "a kind of orator, a master in the art of eloquence" and what one recognizes in the speech of both classical and contemporary griots is a narrative form of oratory that in the African American vernacular one might call storytelling or, more loosely, rapping (Campbell, 2005:31). To fully understand how Hip Hop rhetoric came to invoke social change it is imperative to evidence how traditional rhetoricians envisioned the purpose of effective rhetoric.

## Ancient Civics to the Modern Hood

Composition's recent turn toward cultural studies as a research field and as a pedagogy grows out of an interest in imagining the democratic potentials of rhetoric (Bruch & Marback, 1996:156). That being said, one can draw many connections between classical rhetorics and those of contemporary Hip Hop rhetorics. Contrastingly, rhetorics that are most clearly visible today, like Hip Hop, are based in cultural and feminist study, methodologies that represent marginalized and oppressed voices throughout history, whereas the ancient rhetorics represented only men of privilege and stature. Even when one historicizes the construction of classical rhetorics we are hard pressed to find representations of civic responsibility as they relate to women or people of color. Though the audiences are varied we can see that cultural studies in many ways echoes the call of civic duty once voiced by the ancients. That one must not only be a good person/researcher but also that their rhetoric should do something—better society, improve the state of a community.

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James Berlin was a forerunner in making the connections between ancient civic discourse and contemporary cultural studies rhetoric clear. He explains that the goal of education is to create students who are vested in their life and community, stating that "students must come to see that the languages they are expected to speak, write, and embrace as ways of thinking and acting are never disinterested, always bringing with them strictures on the existent, the good, the possible, and regimes of power" (Berlin, 1992:24). In this way he urges teachers and students to be cognizant of cultures in order to act as "good" citizens. As citizens, he posits that we must challenge the dominant ideas and power structures, to reexamine our roles as both educators and students within our communities as active members of those communities. As I'm sure Isocrates would agree, those who do not choose to educate themselves will exist in isolation and thus be useless to the community.

Berlin goes on to specifically address the connection between the significance of civic space to rhetoric in ancient Greece and our modern day cities, remarking that "the ability to read, write, and speak in accordance with the code sanctioned by a culture's ruling class is the main work of education, and this is true whether we are discussing ancient Athens or modern Detroit" (Berlin, 1987:52). What is most interesting for the purposes of this work is the belief that the urban civic space is centrally important to the way rhetorics are taught and enacted within the walls of the classroom as well as on the streets. And the soundtrack of the urban space is undeniably Hip Hop.

Rap music takes the city and its multiple spaces as the foundation of its cultural production. In the music and lyrics, the city is an audible presence, explicitly citied and digitally sampled in the reproduction of the aural textures of the urban environment.

(Forman, 2004: 203.) For me, Berlin's choice of Detroit in his juxtaposition is dually telling. While Athens has long been lauded as the birthplace of rhetoric, Detroit has long been condemned as the primary example of a failed city. So how does one expect to show that Detroit has anything redeemable concerning civic mindedness in comparison to Athens, the city based on civic discourse?

I must admit, it may be easier for me to see this connection. Like Berlin, I grew up in and around Detroit witnessing first hand the brief triumphs and frequent shortcomings of the city and its citizens. One would expect that after 50 plus years of civic disappointment following the race riots, that Detroiters would look and sound nothing like the citizens of ancient Greece, let alone its most exalted city of Athens. However, unlike modern cities perceived to be success stories like Chicago and New York, citizens of Detroit are constantly reminded that they are from/of Detroit and that what they do and say reflects directly onto the image of the city. Much like the citizens of ancient Athens, modern day Detroiters have a reputation to protect. Detroiters wear their grittiness like a badge of honor and the Hip Hop artists that come out of Detroit have a unique style and sound that reflects that attitude. Detroiters are constantly reminded that it is up to them to improve the city's condition and that just as the burden of failure rests on their shoulders so does the spoils of success. Win or lose, Detroiters will take all the praise or blame.

In this way, even though the circumstances of civic participation in contemporary Detroit have changed due to late capitalism and the subsequent civil unrest, education in Detroit is like education in ancient Athens in that it is still an education in citizenship (Bruch & Marback, 1996). This parallel is perhaps why so many Hip Hop artists and

moguls see and embrace the potential of Detroiters and other urban settlers as civic engagers, individuals who can relate to Hip Hop's call for responsibility and engagement in matters of citizenship and community. Neal (2004) his belief about the power of rapping about the urban center:

> Rappers emphasis on posses and neighborhoods had brought the ghetto back into the public consciousness. It satisfies poor youth black people's profound need to have their territories acknowledged, recognized and celebrated. While much of this activity was driven by the need to give voice to issues that privilege the local and the private within the postindustrial city—thus the over determined constructions of masculinity, sexuality, criminality, and even an urban patriarchy—Hip Hop's best attempt at social commentary and critique represented traditions normalized and privileged historically in the Black Public Sphere of the urban North (371).

Encouraging students in the urban space to become more civic minded is one way is to appeal to their sense of comfort and familiarity, which is where the rhetorics of Hip Hop come in. Using Hip Hop in these urban centers to relate to the youth sparks interest and understanding about citizenship that may have been unattainable when working with the "old" canons of literature. This notion of Hip Hop pedagogy is more thoroughly discussed through the work of Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2004) in Chapter 6.

Overall, African American rhetorics in Hip Hop being identified as part of the urban center is nothing new. It is imperative to note that:

> Since it's inception in the mid-to late 1970's Hip Hop culture has always maintained fiercely defended local ties and an in-built element of competitions waged through Hip Hop's cultural forms of rap, breakdancing and graffiti. This competition has traditionally been staged within geographical boundaries that demarcate turf and territory among various crews, clique, and posses, extending and altering the special alliances that had previously cohered under other organizational structures, including but not exclusive to gangs. Today a more pronounced level of spatial awareness is one of the key factors distinguishing rap and Hip Hop culture from the many other cultural and sub cultural youth formations currently vying for attention (Forman, 2004:203).

Hip Hop rhetoric has always been a way of recognizing and defining local and regional affinities but more contemporarily these rhetoric are being used to find ways to uplift the urban center, to not just recognize but to preserve these spaces as valuable cultural entities evidenced through Hip Hop's attempt to "keep it real". As for Detroit, admittedly, there are many who strive for an education to "get out" in order to better themselves personally. However, there are still many that yearn for education to not only improve their personal space but also their civic space (not so unlike those citizens of ancient Athens), to aid their community in bridging the gap from disgraced city to lauded urban center. To date the most prominent factor that breeds hope to close this chasm is Hip Hop music and culture and the rhetoric embedded within it.

*Rhetorics of Citizenship in Hip Hop*

The rhetoric of Hip Hop indeed has always called for resistance to dominant institutions, empowerment of marginalized communities, and more contemporarily active involvement in those communities. It is my belief that this research only further validates the need to see Hip Hop as more than a fad but as a cultural revolution that has implications for ourselves and our communities.

That being said, to better understand the rhetorically charged nature of Hip Hop music and culture that sparks civic mindedness in many communities, it is imperative to look to those that have previously noted and substantiate these notions of civic duty in the modern city. Taking cities such as Detroit into account, we find that Hip Hop appeals to those who will one day lead, i.e. urban youth. Smitherman clearly posits that "Hip Hop refers to urban youth culture in America" (1999:268). This is to say that Hip Hop refers not to one specific race or economic strata but to wide range of youth that live in urban

spaces. To be sure, Hip Hop is embraced most commonly by those who relate on some level to the lyrical messages of oppression, disenfranchisement, and urban street culture. For many it is the soundtrack of the streets and inextricably their lives. This then points to the varied messages about civic duty and citizenship that are available in Hip Hop culture and music. On some levels Hip Hop simply portrays the notion that "living large" is the only viable form of citizenship (Bruch & Marback, 1996). This portrayal in many ways brings hope and meaning to those in urban spaces whose lives are currently void of these beliefs.

While these ideals are universally seen as positive, sometimes the results are resoundingly negative. When Dr. Dre raps "I'm expressin' with my full capabilities/now I'm livin' in correction facilities" (N.W.A. "Express Yourself") he means that what gives him hope and meaning in life is doing what is capable for him as a young, black man in the ghetto which most likely includes in addition to rapping, illegal activities which can get one thrown in prison. Depending on how you analyze it, these lyrics do indeed provide hope or they provide a foreshadowing of bleaker days ahead.

I would posit that Dre's lyrics do both. They implore the listener to understand that he is doing the best he can with what he's got, but by doing so runs the risk of being incarcerated. At first glance these lyrics would not seem like rays of light guiding wayward youths towards a life of civic duty. However one must firmly root themselves in the urban space and ask, where and who are the alternative voices? The truth is that the few hopeful voices from the postmodern city such as KRS-One, Chuck D, and other Hip Hop figures do in fact provide positive images of African American history and the possibilities for urban futures in their music. As Walser (1995) suggests, "dialogue and

other aspects of rhythmic rhetoric demand social explanations, for notes produce meaning only as they unfold in communities" (206). As Bakhtin has previously posited, all utterances are socially organized, no one utterance is original (Bizzelll & Herzberg, 2001: 1215). Therefore, to fully weigh the impact that Hip Hop music and culture create in the civic mindedness of those living in an urban space, one must understand those lyrics are socially constructed from that space.

It must be said that by showcasing Hip Hop as a rhetorical means to increasing civic responsibility in the urban space is to unfortunately broadly sweep past the civil rights movement—THE movement for civic awareness in black culture. However, many would argue that Hip Hop music and culture is the modern version of the civil rights movement. Todd Boyd maintains that the new generation, having grown up in the aftermath of both civil rights and black power, rejects these old school models and instead is asserting its own values and ideas. He states, "many black people still think we are in the 1960s, stuck on 'We Shall Overcome'. They cannot imagine themselves, or any other black people for that matter, doing anything but suffering" (Boyd, 2002:vix). This is where Hip Hop comes in as the voice of those who are tired of suffering and who wish to lament and/or celebrate their lot in urban life. It is Hip Hop that provides a catalyst to both celebrate and improve the urban community through social and political activism. In this way Hip Hop has taken the spirit of the civil rights movement and applied it to increasing civic responsibility today. Boyd supports this notion in the following excerpt:

> Hip Hop has not completely forgotten civil rights though. No, as a matter of fact Hip Hop has done a great deal to firmly place the moments of this era in a larger historical context. The music and culture have always attempted to remember the past, yet have also urged us to move forward. What Hip Hop has done is taught us that true freedom and liberation can begin only if we move beyond being concerned about doing things the "right" way. Hip Hop continually embraces

contradiction as opposed to trying to make everything seem perfect, trying to make everything conform to a dominant moral idea...Hip Hop also allows us to begin to understand how this generation might make sense of their future...(2002: 151).

Here we see evidence of deviation from the ancient ideas of civil discourse. For Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian rhetoric was indeed rooted in the community, to do public service. However, their rhetoric was also planted firmly in the moral, that it is not enough to be a good speaker serving one's state, one must also be a good/moral individual. What Boyd purports is that the rhetoric of Hip Hop is fashioned to impact the minds of this generation in order to think positively about their communities and their own future, however these communities and citizens are not burdened with a strict moral code in which to do so. For Boyd things are not as right or wrong, black or white as they were for the classical rhetors. While the rhetorics of Hip Hop push this generation to succeed for both themselves and their communities, it is understood that this success may have to be achieved by any means necessary, which in many ways would not be considered moral.

To connect back to our classical rhetors let me put this another way. Historically, Hip Hop music and culture was the representational epitome of the marginalized voice. While this still may be true in many aspects, as those mentioned above, the growing push for Hip Hop into the mainstream makes these voices heard on local, regional, and even global scales and has limitless potential for social change as evidenced by the excerpt from Kitwana below:

> Until Hip Hop is recognized as a broad cultural movement, rather than simply an influential moneymaker, those who seek to tap into Hip Hop's potential to impact social change should not expect substantive progress. A unified front between Hip Hop's commercial and grassroots sectors on the issue of sociopolitical action would change the nature of the dialogue. For example, I the same way that the Hip Hop community as a cultural movement inherently answered the question "what is Hip Hop culture?" a new inclusive framework would answer the question "what do we

mean by politicizing the Hip Hop generation?" Is our goal to run Hip Hop generationers for office, to turn out votes for Democrats and Republicans, to form a third party, or to provide our generation with a more concrete political education? (2004: 345-346).

If what Kitwana suggests is true then those who identify with Hip Hop culture and enact Hip Hop rhetorics can ostensibly become a new and powerful social, political, and cultural voice that has long been unheard if it can organize and be recognized as legitimate by mainstream society. That is to say that the rhetoric entrenched in Hip Hop is strong enough and persuasive enough to impart real social change, to move people that largely had no interest or investment in civic duty because it largely did not appeal to them. This movement is not so unlike how traditional notions of rhetoric came to be valued. Ultimately, I am arguing that as the power of Hip Hop grows and strengthens so does the connection between these modern day rappers and classical rhetors. Aristotle, Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian were the classical examples of men with great power and wealth. Their followers/students envisioned them as the learned, the educated, *the* truth. For students today, Hip Hop artists are the personification of the truth. They may not be classically educated, but these artists definitely have the power and the wealth to impact civil discourse.

Perhaps the greatest example of Hip Hop's influence on notions of citizenship is the recent push within and throughout the culture to vote. During the 2004 presidential election one would be hard pressed not to see a Hip Hop musician or mogul of some sort encouraging the citizens between the ages of 18-30 to get out and vote. Hip Hop culture was undoubtedly the first movement in the past 20 years to take into consideration this generation of individuals and to value their political and social opinions. No longer did this generation wish to be associated with the lackadaisical Generation X of the early

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1990's. This generation was and is Hip Hop and this can be shown by the incredible impact Hip Hop/rap moguls like P. Diddy and Russell Simmons had on voting numbers. Like the civil rights generation before them, the Hip Hop crowd is worried about the lack of job creation and vanishing opportunities to make it into middle class, and the ongoing expense of war in Iraq (Powell, 2004: 27).

To be sure, all of these concerns are directly related to this generation and their communities. However, it must be said that without Hip Hop campaigns like P.Diddy's "Vote or Die" and "Citizen Change" or BET TV's "Rap the Vote" these citizens may not have considered the importance of voting, the ultimate civic responsibility. Like Aristotle and Isocrates increased democratic participation with their rhetoric so does P.Diddy and Russell Simmons with theirs. For example in 2001 Simmons launched the Hip Hop Summit Action Network (HSAN). The organization in his words was dedicated to "helping provide a voice for those who did not have a voice" (Watkins, 2005). I argue that these Hip Hop artists and moguls are held in the same esteem today that was previously reserved for white men of wealth and power, those not unlike our classical rhetoricians.

**Conclusion**

The rhetoric involved in Hip Hop has been somewhat established in the field but the strategies and moves involved in appropriation of Hip Hop and Black Language have yet to be fully examined. Specifically, I want teachers, researchers, and students in the field to look to this work as a new and engaging way of approaching cultural studies in composition and rhetoric, as a complex means to a simple end of garnering meaning and understanding. In short, studying the rhetoric of appropriation of Hip Hop culture and

Black Language will show how various communities and individuals navigate cultural and linguistic norms and practices to achieve varied ends and more importantly that these navigations can help us as teachers, scholars, and students to decode these previously misunderstood relations between, within, and throughout language and culture.

# Chapter 3: (Socio)Linguistic[4] Appropriation

*So, if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself.*

--Gloria Anzaldúa (1987)

*Today, Mailer's "white Negro" has morphed into Eminem and dozens of lesser known (and lesser talented) White Hip Hop artists and millions of wiggas ("white niggas"). In appropriately saggin gear, they be lyin and signifyin, talkin and testifyin, trash talkin, snappin, and hoopin all over the place. This too is generational continuity, as contemporary White Americans borrow from African American Culture as did their foreparents during enslavement and on down through the generations. Same song.*

--Geneva Smitherman (2006)

Same song indeed, and they'll be damned if they don't speak the same language too. Of course the language of UMC class white males who appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language is not always a wholesale appropriation but that doesn't mean they aren't trying their damnedest to get it right, make it tight, and keep it real. That is they often do not appropriate all lexical, semantic, and phonological items of Black Language but that they evidence just enough parts to attempt to linguistically pass as down with Hip Hop. For many of the participants in this study their language is a sore spot, an Achilles heel that points to their conflicting identity in the Hip Hop community, that they are upper middle class and white yet act as though they are urban and black. So they've hedged, adapted, and ostensibly learned to code-switch and take pride in that ability. UMC white males are seeking ethnic identity through linguistic identity, they are seeking the twin skin that Anzaldúa speaks of so passionately. By appropriating Black Language many UMC white males knowingly choose to associate themselves with contemporary, mainstream ideals of blackness and this performance gains them partial membership in

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[4] I am situating the terms sociolinguistic and linguistic as (socio)linguistic to show first and foremost that I will be looking at hard linguistic data of the participants responses but am always cognizant of the inherent links between language and society and how that link affects my data.

the Hip Hop community. What many of the participants in this study are not aware of however, is the reality of blackness, what it really means to be a black male in 2006 America past the MTV hype, let alone the history of Black Language.

In this chapter I will showcase how and why many UMC white males appropriate Black Language. My argument is based on case study data gathered from recorded interviews with these UMC white male individuals. This type of (socio)linguistic study is important because it evidences a kind of language appropriation that occurs as a result of identity formation largely influenced by societal trends that in turn affect how mainstream society perceives and performs Hip Hop culture and Black Language. That is to say that UMC white male appropriation of Black Language is a cyclical phenomenon, they model what they see in mainstream media representations of blackness and in turn are shaping mainstream society's perceptions by their appropriations.

Linguistically, all language can be recognized as socially constructed, that language in all it's forms is affected by the culture and society surrounding it and vice versa. Language is shaped by experience, history, by the people who speak it and where and when they choose to do so. As Bahktin posits that utterances are socially organized (1215), the way we speak and what we say is inextricably linked to who we are socially and culturally. Bahktin's overall argument is that language and the forms it takes can be properly understood only as dialogue, as utterances that take place within social situations and that at least partly constitute them.

To complicate Bahktin's view on language to more closely examine the participant's language in my study, I look to a more critical view of socioloinguists through Alastair Pennycook's (2001) discussion of critical applied linguistics (CAL). He

argues CAL is a way of thinking and doing, a "continuous reflexive integration of thought, desire, and action" (3). That is, sociolinguists are correct in their recognition of the importance of culture and society in the construction of language but that we must also be cognizant of the personal idiosyncrasies that are often at play when analyzing language. Pennycook also entertains the connectedness of power and language. That by critically studying sociolinguistics we can come to an "understanding of how power operates on and through people in the ongoing tasks of teaching, learning languages, translating, etc" (28). In this way, Pennycook's work will help me to examine how dominant power structures in society help to shape and shift language appropriations, specifically the UMC white male participants in this study.

If we use these definitions and theories to look at why and how UMC white males appropriate Black Language, we can see how these appropriations relate to language issues in society. That these appropriations are direct reflections of the cultural and societal contexts surrounding these individuals and are also directly connected to constructions of whiteness in America. Despite the fact that they are physically removed from the Black Language community they still live in a world where this language has been appropriated on a grandiose scale by mainstream society through mass media. In essence, UMC white males have learned to create spaces within their own social enclaves to share and thus perpetuate certain linguistic appropriations. If reality is not merely socially, but sociolinguistically constructed, as Smitherman (2001:43) posits, then the participants in this study have been constructed by mainstream society to appropriate Black Language and vice versa. In order to show how UMC white males use Black

Language, it is imperative to discuss the linguistic and sociolinguistic qualities of Black Language itself.

## Black Language Roots and Appropriation

What I call Black Language goes by many names—Ebonics, African American Vernacular English, Black Vernacular English, African American English—but one thing is clear, it is a language unto itself. Black Language can be broadly defined as "a set of communication patterns and practices resulting from Africans' appropriation and transformation of foreign tongue during the African Holocaust[5]" (Smitherman, 2001: 20). Steeped in traditions imported from the African continent, Black Language has its own unique linguistic qualities which are defined by specific lexical and semantic traits. The following is an example of patterns of grammar and pronunciation in Black Language offered by Smitherman's *Talking That Talk* (2001: 23):

- Use of invariant *be* for future

    o **Example:** "I be there in a minute"

- No copula *is* and *are* for equative structures and present tense actions

    o **Example:** "She ready." "They laughing."

- *Ain but* and for limited negation

    o **Example:** "She ain nothing but a kid." (She is only a kid)

- They and yall/yall's for possessive

    o **Example:** "It's yall's bid."

- Initial voiced *th* realized as *d*

    o **Example:** "dem" (for "them")

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[5] Term used by Black activists, writers, Hip Hop artists, and other Blacks to refer to the European enslavement of African people in the United States and throughout the Diaspora (Smitherman, 2006:21)

- Final *th* realized as *f, t,* or *d*

    o "down souf" (for "down south"); "wit" or "wid" (for "with")

- *Ing* and *Ink* realized as *ang* and *ank*

    o **Example:** "It's a Black thang."; "I don't thank so."

- Front shifting of stress

    o **Example:** PO-lice; HO-tel

- Unstressed initial affixes not realized

    o **Example:** "bout it, bout it" (for "about it, about it"); "member" (for "remember")

The participants in this study do indeed invoke many of these linguistic patterns as well as varied forms of tonal semantics. However, in no way do they evidence wholesale appropriation of the language, they pick and choose which aspects to invoke during particular times. To be clear, the participants in this study do not speak Black Language fluently. Therefore, they can be considered categorically to exhibit characteristics commonly invoked by most second language speakers.

On a more soulful and historic level one must also recognize Black Language for what it means to the African American community, that it is a source and performance of linguistic pride and racial struggle. Rickford and Rickford (2000) draw attention to these aspects of Black Language calling it Spoken Soul to more robustly invoke the life behind the language. They posit that:

> Most African Americans….are fluent speakers of Standard English—still invoke Spoken Soul as we have for hundreds of years, to laugh or cry, to preach and praise, to shuck and jive, to sing, to rap, to shout, to style, to express our individual personas and our ethnic identities, to confide in and commiserate with friends, to chastise, to cuss, to act, to act the fool, to get by and get over, to pass

secrets, to make jokes, to mock and mimic, to tell stories, to reflect and philosophize, to create authentic characters and voices in novels, poems, and plays to survive the streets, to relax at home and recreate in playgrounds, to render our deepest emotions and embody our vital core. The fact is that most African Americans *do* talk differently from whites and Americans of other ethnic groups or at least most of us can when we want to. And the fact is that most Americans, black and white, know this to be true (3-4).

Many people are passionate about and take pride in their language, it is a sign of their identity, ethnic and linguistic. However, what Rickford and Rickford point to here is that African Americans have had the unique obstacle of having to defend their language time and again *as* language, something most of us take for granted. Another unique factor of Black Language that they bring to light in this excerpt is that their language is one of community, of inclusion and exclusion. To speak Black Language is to be part of a history of struggle, both linguistic and racial. To speak Black Language and to argue for it *as* language is a form of resistance and survivance, to prove to others the legitimacy, sustainability, and most of all the resiliency of a whole people.

Perhaps the most unique characteristics of Black Language is not its lexical traits but its style and rhetorical qualities, specifically: exaggerated language (unusual words, High Talk), mimicry, proverbial statement and aphoristic phrasing, punning and plays on words, spontaneity and improvisation, image making and metaphor, braggadocio, indirection (circumlocution, suggestiveness), and tonal semantics (Smitherman, 2000: 216-217). These aspects are most repetitively and clearly seen in contemporary spaces and places through Hip Hop music and lyrics.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1988) is a prominent scholars who studied Black Language semantic qualities and draw attention to its rhetorical power, specifically through his discussion of signification. He posits that "signification is a complex

rhetorical device that has elicited various, even contradictory definitions from linguists"

(1581). Signification is complex indeed, as signification is one of the most defining

characteristics in Black Language and perhaps the most difficult to define. For the

purposes of clearly defining, I am working with Smitherman's (2001) argument as she

establishes "signifyin" as "indirect language used to tease admonish, or disparage" (138).

Perhaps this rhetorical quality is most clearly seen in the oral performance of black

preachers, politicians, athletes and of course rappers as described below:

> A clever rapper can talk himself out of a jam, and in sessions of ritual insult such
> as "playing the dozens" (talking about somebody's momma and/or other kinfolk),
> tension is relieved and fights often avoided. Those who are verbally adept at the
> art of "selling woof (wolf) tickets" (boasting) often do not have to prove anything
> by action. It is believed that the African American concept of Nommo, word
> power, can indeed "psych your opponent out". Thus, when [Muhammad] Ali
> engages in the art of black braggadocio, the louder and badder he talks, the more
> black applaud him, but the more whites lacking culture experience in this
> tradition, censure him. Ali symbolizes a cultural value manifested in Black
> Language behavior, suggesting that we are dealing with more than surface dialect
> differences (Smitherman, 2000:138).

Now, even at the risk of generalizing I must pose the query as to which of these groups of

individuals do you think UMC white males are most privy to the oral stylings of? I must

admit I've never seen any UMC white boys streaming into Detroit's First Baptist Church

on a Sunday morning, or had to beat back the droves of them attempting to get a seat at a

political rally hosted by prominent and controversial black politicians. However, I

continue to see tons of white guys bumping Hip Hop music in their cars while wearing

throwback jersey's of famous black athletes. Therefore, I think it is fair to say, and has

been previously established, that UMC white males get their rhetorical and linguistic

guidance from Hip Hop artists, black athletes, and especially from the mainstream media

portrayal of both. So if signification is a markedly Black Language trait and is most

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rampant in Hip Hop lyrics, music, and sports than it should come as no surprise that this sociolinguistic characteristic has been picked up by UMC white males.

This "linguistic crossover" as Smitherman (2006:112) terms it is visible virtually everywhere. MTV's hit show "Yo Momma" is ostensibly dedicated to playing the dozens, where participants of all ages and races compete to see who can signify the most effectively. More so, evidence of Black Language semantics is seen in titles of shows and TV commercials (MTV's "All up in the Grammy's" pre show and the cell phone company Boost Mobile's "Where you at" campaign). To be sure, Black Language appropriation has become commercialized, hence making it easier to proliferate such appropriations in mainstream, white America as will be clearly shown through my case studies of UMC white males.

Due to Hip Hop's increasing popularity and visibility through commercialization in mainstream society this myriad of unique rhetorical devices are readily available to UMC white males. Furthermore, some of the participants in this study actually address their linguistic and rhetorical choices, aware of the specific choices they are making and are not afraid to discuss the when's and why's of their selective appropriation. To be sure, these theories will be more closely examined through actual participant case studies later in this chapter.

**Welcome to My Study**

As stated earlier in Chapter 1, this study was conducted in suburban Detroit because of white suburb proximity to Detroit proper and its historical connections to the music industry. Specifically, the participants at the time were residents of the upper middle class (UMC) communities of Troy, Sterling Heights, Rochester Hills, and

Rochester all of which are located within a 30 mile radius of Detroit proper. While portions of these areas can certainly be considered middle class, the participants in this study self-identify themselves as upper middle class. To more clearly define what I mean by upper middles class my criteria relied upon the majority of families living in these areas having a combined income of between $200,000 to $300,000[6] per year. Furthermore, the majority of the residents in these areas are white with a small minority of Hispanic, Asian, Arabic, and Indian families. African Americans are the smallest minority, making up only 1% of the population in these cities compared with Detroit which is 83% African American[7].

Both the class level and markedly non-diverse factors of these cities made them attractive for the purposes of this study. Most of the participants were solicited by me to participate in this study in social situations with acquaintances at local bars and coffee shops due to my knowledge of their profile and status through mutual friends. Others were approached in classrooms and hallways of Michigan State University as they are former writing students of mine. Some participants approached me after learning about the study and volunteered to participate or solicited participation as a chance to have a conversation about Hip Hop. However, it should be known that participants were chosen based first on their race, then on their socioeconomic status, then on their affiliation with Hip Hop music, culture, and Black Language. That is to say that all participants in this study are first and foremost white, upper middle class Hip Hop lovers. I must admit I was shocked by not only the availability of the individuals in these communities but also the eagerness at which they approached the interview process. All participants were engaged

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[6] http://factfinder.census.gov/
[7] http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-5.pdf

in the interview and seemed passionate enough about Hip Hop to agree to discuss their beliefs, opinions, and attitudes towards Hip Hop culture and Black Language.

As far as the rhetorical situation of the interviews, I positioned myself as both peer and researcher. It was made obvious to the participants that I too am a Hip Hop head and that the impetus for this research is steeped in my deep love and respect for the genre. Of course my race is visibly on display and they are aware of my status as a Ph.D. student at a relatively large Research I institution. Being white, I feel I was at a distinct advantage when interviewing these participants. If I were black, I have to assume that these participants would have been far more apprehensive about discussing issues of blackness surrounding Hip Hop culture and Black Language. A white upper middle class male discussing Hip Hop culture and Black Language, let alone appropriating it in the presence of an unknown black woman is highly unlikely, and might be viewed as borderline hostile and racist in the presence of a black man.

The issues and problems surrounding participant observation I encountered are more directly and articulately dealt with in Gilyard's (1991) argument concerning Labov's (1972) groundbreaking study in Black Language. Though Labov is a premier linguistic scholar, Gilyard contends that his positionality in his urban, linguistic study is problematic considering the fact that Labov may have been recognized as a "lame" within his participant community. Gilyard states that "Labov, being a lame himself, was susceptible to being fooled by any Regular or Cool Cat who wished to entertain him, especially when his method of study of study was suspect to begin with" (118). That is to say that Labov was a strict supporter of studying validity of language only if one has access to normal social discourse but "the chance that Labov was put on to a great extent

is very real" (119). As a white female, I believe I posed no physical threat and there was no way I could be thought to be "judging" them being a white person interested in Hip Hop culture and Black Language myself and therefore did not run such a high risk of being "put on" like Labov. I do recognize that my femaleness probably did provoke performances of some kind. However, UMC white male performances of Hip Hop culture and Black Language was exactly what I was hoping to elicit in order to better understand their rhetoric of appropriation.

What was not made transparent to the participants in this study was my socioeconomic status. They are not aware of my adolescence spent in highly diverse, poorer communities or of my difficult transition to suburban upper middle class life. During my analysis process I often wondered how the interview dynamic would have changed if I had made my past more explicit—would it have caused them to invoke a more "ghetto" performance to more concretely form their legitimacy in the Hip Hop music and linguistic community? Or would it have caused them to be more guarded in their responses, worried that I may call them out as a fake, poser, wigga, or wanksta? Due to these initial, and subsequently ongoing, trepidations I chose not to include my life history as part of the interview process. I did not want to taint their responses whatsoever with my past biases and opinions on Hip Hop and Black Language, let alone race, class, and/or politics writ large.

As previously stated all of the participants identify themselves as avid fans/followers of Hip Hop music. Most answer my questions in a relatively carefree and unguarded manner perhaps because being white and privileged their words and actions have never been scrutinized for racial and economic stereotypes. From my experience

conducting these 30 interviews, all of these young men were willing and to speak about their likes, dislikes, and opinions on a wide variety of topics dealing with Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Not only were they engaged in the interview process, many of them evidenced rhetorical savvy in justifying their appropriations as part of their identity within/through Hip Hop culture and Black Language. That is, they used Black Language and complex rhetorical strategies and appeals to attempt to prove their knowledge of and legitimacy in the Hip Hop community, almost like a performance of their own identity formation. I find these results to be the most prolific and intriguing for the field of cultural studies and rhetoric/composition writ large.

I attribute the participants' seeming comfort level to a few factors, most notably my personal approach to the interview and the interview space itself. For all the interviews, I approached the participants with a focused list of questions. Ultimately, I was trying to create a conversational environment focused to the topic of Hip Hop and Black Language but a conversation nonetheless. Therefore, it should be noted that more often then not only a few of my focused questions were explicitly stated. This development was due to my attempts to keep the natural progression of conversation fluid and open while also remaining generally on topic. For example, if a participant went off on a tangent about the use of the term "nigger" versus "nigga" despite not being prompted to do so (which did occur and will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter), I still engaged the participants to continue their explanations. I did this because I recognized that these discussions may be far more rhetorically and linguistically significant than a discussion shaped by one of my previously devised interview questions. I feel this method led to more robust and introspective discussions that many times

exceeded my expectations as to what a participant would divulge to an interviewer. Also, the fact that the majority of the participants were either acquaintances or former students of mine definitely raised the assumed comfort level in the interview. I was not a stranger and I hoped to infer no judgment as to their responses.

The interviews were always held in a familiar space. For former students we met in unoccupied classrooms on MSU's campus, similar to the ones they occupied as students in my class. For acquaintances we would either meet at a local coffee house or the participant's home. The coffee house space provided a neutral ground, while going to a participant's own private space probably put them most at ease. Leveling the playing field on both accounts, in my opinion, is key to creating a familiar and comfortable interview space.

**Interpretation of the data**

While this chapter will focus on the nuts and bolts of lexical and semantic Black Language appropriation and analysis of those appropriations, Chapters 4 and 5 will provide more detailed background data for the featured participants to more clearly show justifications and rhetorical strategies involved in both their linguistic and cultural appropriations. This chapter will crib data from all 30 participants.

In situating the data analysis in this chapter as well as the data in Chapter's 4 and 5 it is imperative I discuss my methodological choices further. For this chapter I mention using predominately sociolinguistic scholars as a basis for my methodology, however while I continue to echo their strategies I also am also borrowing from the methods of other scholars in the field of composition and rhetoric such as Deborah Tannen (1984) and Wendy Bishop (1999) to support my methodological choices.

From Tannen's work I am using her version of "accountability in interpretation" to justify my interpretations of the participant responses. She clearly states:

> The objection will be raised: how do you know this is what is really going on? It is just your interpretation. To this I have three replies: (1) the multiplicity of interpretations, (2) internal and external evidence and (3) the *aha* factor (48).

For the purposes of my work I am relying on the first two replies from Tannen, the multiplicity of interpretation which states that "I do not offer mine as *the* explanation of what is going on. It is simply one explanation, an account of certain aspects of mass components of interactions" (49) and her reply concerning the internal an external evidence. For the latter I focus on my ability to recognize "evidence in the data in the form of recurrent patterns" (49) and not basing my interpretation on phenomenon that appear once but that reoccur proving that they are "demonstrably motivated, not random" (49). That is, I have drawn my conclusions about what constitutes a wigga versus a neo-wigga in Chapter 5 based on reoccurring patterns in the data compiled from my participant pool.

Though Bishop's (1999) work is largely geared toward ethnography she provides useful guidance on the issue of using case studies concerning my participant's response as narrative.

> The crucial elements of narrative in case study reporting are sequence and consequence. Through an aggregation of details, we produce a sense of verisimilitude, lifelikeness, trustworthiness. A satisfactory account. Although case reporting is not the only way to shape narrative...it is one of the most common methods, and decisions made in this form may be applied to narrative decision made throughout your report (141).

Therefore, I am using these works as guidelines and justification as to how I am coming up with the interpretations and explanations concerning my participant data. In this way I am making explicit what I can and cannot garner through my methods. I am, as Bishop

state's, striving to make "a satisfactory account" and more fully explain the components that go into appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Because much of my participants responses can be considered narrative I find Bishop's work to be complementary and applicable to my work in that it lends legitimacy or "hard" evidence to the validity/honesty of their responses.

**Evidence and Analysis of (Socio)Linguistic Appropriation**

The following evidence and analysis of my case study data reflects a meta-analysis of participant responses evidencing lexical and semantic appropriation of Black Language. More specific cases study data will be discussed concerning attitudes and assumptions about Hip Hop culture and Black Language in Chapter's 4 and 5. This section seeks to clearly show how Black Language is appropriated by UMC white males as well as how these appropriations are justified and mitigated as part of identity formation by these participants.

*Lexical appropriation*

Without even prompting many of the participants they evidence appropriation of Black Language lexical items. The first two participants, Bryan and Jeff, commonly use g-deletion and various words that have been markedly poached from the black lexicon. Both Bryan and Jeff are UMC white males residing in Sterling Heights (and have done so for the greater part of their lives), living at home with their mothers while working full time jobs in the service industry. Bryan is a tall, blonde, mild-mannered guy who speaks in a slow deep cadence. He laughs easily and is considered to be the most malleable and easy going of his group of friends. Bryan's most notable quality is his fierce loyalty to

Jeff, despite many rough patches in their friendship he is Jeff's most steadfast companion and confidant.

Jeff is tall, haltingly thin, with a large tattoo of Jesus Christ on the cross spanning the entire length and width of his back. Initially, Jeff comes off as an extremely polite and stoic individual, all seriousness mixed with hints of bravado. However, spend any amount of time with him and he becomes the goofy, fun-loving guy of the group. It is not uncommon to see Jeff stroke his red-tinted goatee while thinking about answers during the interview and use the same gesture to mock the overall affect of old men in academia. Jeff certainly has a sense of charisma and charm but often these qualities seem to be dampened by attempts to hide his self-esteem issues. Both Bryan and Jeff seem genuinely comfortable in their skin, perhaps because they have not questioned their identity too much. Perhaps this is why they tend to seem the most open and honest of all the participants about their opinions on Hip Hop culture and Black Language. At the time of the interview Bryan was 21 and Jeff was 22. The following excerpts come from our general conversation about Hip Hop artists:

> Bryan (age 21):.....killin' people whatever and then of course all rappers gotta bring in how much money they make.
>
> Jeff (age 22): We're talkin' they blame it on rap music
>
> Bryan: .....what's up brotha?
>
> Jeff:.....what up nigga? what's crackin?.....

There is clear evidence here of g-deletion (talkin', killin') as well as terms normally reserved for native speakers of Black Language (nigga, crackin). These few excerpts illustrate that while the participants have appropriated some Black Language patterns in

their speech, they in no way speak Black Language fluently. There is no evidence of aspectual/habitual *be* or tonal semantics. However, it was evident through the course of the interview that the participants do indeed recognize their use of these patterns. The participants are fully aware that many of their peers perceive them to "talk black" and that some of these peers place negative connotations on them due to their speech. Despite the fact that there are negative connotations associated with "talking black" Jeff and Bryan still continue to do so because they feel it is part of who they are, perhaps what differentiates them from the homogeneity of white suburban life. Later in the interview this argument is more fully realized when I directly address the issue of Black Language, specifically whether or not they think they "talk black" here are some of those responses:

> Jeff: A lot of the words I use, any kind of slang or anything like that, or even when I was in the military I was havin' an accent real bad because, you know the way that I was hearin' words, was using different phrases.

> Jill: Can you give me an example.

> Jeff: Um, dope, fresh, uhh......

It is evident here that the participants are aware of their language and do in fact recognize it as Black Language. What is most interesting about these lexical appropriations is that they recognize some of the terms they use as "black" but identify their tone or semantics as "havin' an accent" or using "different phrases". In no way do they see Black Language as a language—to them it is just a finite number of terms that are predominately used in the Black community that they have heard in Hip Hop songs and mainstream media portrayals of that community.

To more fully shape this argument we can look to another participant's response concerning use of Black Language. The following interview excerpt comes from Charlie,

a self promoting white rapper from the UMC Detroit suburb of Troy. Charlie is a sturdy, somewhat stocky 24 year old with a sharp widow's peak of dark hair cropped close to his scalp. He wears black rimmed glasses and more often than not is sporting a baseball cap, a large hoodie (hooded sweatshirt), and baggy pants—classic wigga attire. However, Charlie's demeanor is in strict contrast to how he dresses. He in not thuggish, or wigga-ish, in any way. Actually, he portrays an absence of these stereotypical qualities. Charlie is earnest, honest, straightforward and sometimes guarded in his answers, most likely due to a stable and loving adolescence in suburbia that taught him to be politically correct and polite. The following conversation took place in a local coffee shop in Troy, close to Charlie's former high school.

> Jill: Do you think the language of Hip Hop is predominately influenced by Black Language?

> Charlie: Oh, yeah (laughs) without a doubt!

> Jill: Do you think you affect any of those language patterns? Do you think some people think you talk black?

> Charlie: Oh, Yeah! But I mean it's really not I mean I don't think it's talkin Black. It just it is what it is you know. Like I like to think that especially because they sell so many records now just in general you know like people like Hip Hop it's not like white or black anymore it's all sorts of stuff. I mean it's like derived from black culture obviously but like to me there shouldn't be any culture in rap particularly. I mean that's the whole point trying to like be against that sort of noise, against artistic oppression. I don't know if it's from that. When someone comes to me and is like "Yo, you speak black or whatever that's just ignorant commenting. Because it depends on who you're talking to. If I'm talking to my mom I'm probably not gonna you know be droppin muthafucka yeah. I just wouldn't do that, it's my mom, my grandmother or some random person I don't know. You know if I'm with my buddies I might have a little bit more slang than with just anyone. That's really it.

> I mean if you're in a certain area you might speak a little different than if you're in a different area. I mean that sounds almost two faced or if you're like not being accurate or representing yourself right or whatever but I don't believe that I just think that around certain people you might weight the way you speak a little bit

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more than not. I mean my 9 to 5 is waiting tables I'm not gonna go like "what up dough" or "what can I git y'all to drink" I don't speak like that anyways.

Jill: When you rap do you invoke any of that?

Charlie: Yeah, but not really not as much as you think. I'm pretty much just rap straightforward just like how I speak, like plain and simple.

Jill: So how much do you think Hip Hop culture is influenced by black culture? Do you still think it's a predominately black culture influence?

Charlie: Yeah, I mean it's always going to be because that's where it came from. If that's like what it's derived from you know. What I mean that'd be like if you speak Spanish like the language is always gonna be Spanish it doesn't matter who speaks it you know what I mean it's always gonna be a certain part of a certain culture. You can't like change the language that it was brought forth from. You know what I mean, like that's the people who started it.

It's like reggae music was formed in Jamaica and it's all over the place but it's derived from Jamaica you know what I mean, plain and simple. There's people like Shaggy who are straight fakers, fakin the funk, and he speaks perfect English.

There is obviously much to be analyzed and discussed concerning Charlie's rhetorical choices in this excerpt but first let's deal with his linguistic ones. In addition to the common Black Language appropriation of final g-deletion he is also uses clearly Black lexical terms evidenced in the the example of saying "what up doe (dog)" as part of his Black lexical characteristics. In the same explanation he uses the Black lexical yall/yall's in stating "what can I git y'all to drink". In both of these instances he is providing examples of how he doesn't talk at work or at home but may in fact invoke these Black terms and phrases when he is performing, literally with his rap group, or in casual conversation with his peers. This is strong evidence of how UMC white males construct identity through linguistic means. Charlie recognizes that people in social circles perceive him to "talk Black" but he pushes this perception aside saying the way he talks "is what it

is". He even goes so far as to call people who perceive his speech as markedly black as "ignorant commenting".

For Charlie, language is not as loaded as it is for Bryan and Jeff. Bryan and Jeff use Black Language to show affinity for Hip Hop and to identify and authenticate themselves as knowledgeable of this culture and music. Charlie is more concerned with the Hip Hop mantra of "keepin it real", that his language is his alone and it has roots in nothing but his own experiences with Hip Hop as an UMC white guy. This sentiment is further argued in Charlie's comments concerning "straight fakers" like the reggae artist Shaggy who speaks Jamaican Creole in his songs but is actually from New York and in his daily life speaks perfect Standard English. I find this comment doubly telling. For one, it again shows that Charlie is deeply concerned with authenticity, keeping it real concerning his own identity and that how he speaks and acts today is only a response to the environment he grew up in. Shaggy is not authentic and therefore is "fakin the funk". The other side of that fence is that Charlie addresses his own hypocrisy stating "I mean if you're in a certain area you might speak a little different than if you're in a different area. I mean that sounds almost two faced or if you're like not being accurate or representing yourself right or whatever but I don't believe that, I just think that around certain people you might weight the way you speak a little bit more than not" but shows no interest in changing the way he constructs himself. He truly feels that his performances, social, linguistic, and musical are strictly real, that they are not appropriating any culture. He distances himself from an artist like Shaggy, who fakes a persona to gain notoriety while failing to recognize that in many ways he is doing the same exact thing, albeit to a much smaller degree.

Charlie, just like Jeff and Bryan, is appropriating Black Language to create an identity that is different or unique from the UMC white community surrounding him. All of these participants use Black Language as a way to stand out and/or draw attention to the identity they are crafting. To be sure, Charlie evidences a rhetoric of appropriation by fully explaining how, when, and why he uses Black Language when he does and in doing so is crafting what he deems to be his own language and culture, one that is an appropriation of Black Language and Hip Hop culture. Of course Charlie is not the only participant who places such stress and importance on "keeping it real".

Adam (from Livonia) and Aren (from Rochester) are both 20 years old and former writing students of mine at Michigan State University. Adam is a big guy, my guess would be about 6 foot 3 and around 210 pounds, but is largely (pardon the pun) the gentle giant type. Extremely respectful and engaged in class, he approaches the interview with the most trepidation I've seen out of all the participants. I think this was due mostly to the teacher/student dynamic hangover from our previous interactions. Aren is the picture of the typical fratboy without actually being one. He has shaggy blonde hair, a quick, sarcastic wit and was often perceived as the class clown. Despite his antics however, Aren was a good student and obviously took pleasure in being able to straddle the cool guy/smart guy binary with ease. The following is an excerpt from my interview with them held in an empty classroom quite similar to where their class with me was held.

> Adam: I don't really listen, all that much like, on the radio but like artists like Snoop Dog, old Snoop, old Dre, Tupac, Biggie, and the recently I just started listening to Kanye, I respect Kanye the most because he's not all about what all other rap artists are about today about money whatever. He's like talking about, like promoting, he's keepin' it real to the elements of Hip Hop, talkin' 'bout his struggle, not talkin' about that much fame and fortune, he does like his catchy

songs, like Gold digga, whatever but that's just to like help sell his records but his other songs kinda like Hey Mamma, that's just like speakin' the truth. Like how his mom's always sayin' stuff

Aren: like He's just keepin' it real for himself. He's like into telling his story not like really into making everybody else happy.

Here again we see cursory Black Language appropriation with g-deletion ("keepin", "talkin", "speakin") and also an example of unstressed initial affixes not realized ("bout" for "about"). However, what warrants closer analysis is the emphasis on keepin' it real. Both Adam and Aren agree that Kanye West is a more authentic Hip Hop artist because he's not just "about money" but he's "keepin' it real to the elements of Hip Hop, talkin' bout his struggle, not talkin' about that much fame and fortune". As established in Chapters 2 the rhetoric of Hip Hop is deeply embedded with the importance of Nommo, or the power of the word, as provided by the griot or in this case the rapper. Largely this word power is rooted in the belief that these individuals are speaking the truth, a trait that is obviously coveted by many UMC white males who align themselves with Hip Hop culture and music. Adam and Aren explicitly state a respect for Kanye West for his ability to speak the truth and keep it real but implicitly they are inferring a need to be like that as well. That is to say that through their admiration of Kanye West and other Hip Hop artist's language they are venturing into appropriation of historically black struggles. Adam and Aren believe that Hip Hop artists evidence more authentic topics and language and have in a sense become cultural critics. Therefore, their appropriations are justified. It's as if they are saying it's cool to like Kanye West, Biggie, or Tupac because they stand for something but leave all that other "ghetto" rap to less refined connoisseurs of Hip Hop music and Black Language.

Overall, by appropriating Black Language by their own rules and rhetorical choices these UMC white males are forging a new dialect or creole of Black Language, one based largely on appropriation of the original but like all reproductions and copies is a bit off, faded, and sometimes fake.

*Appropriation Recognition*

In many of my interviews and conversations with the participants there is evidence of recognition of something going on behind the scenes of Hip Hop culture and Black Language, that there may in fact be engendered and loaded issues culminating behind these cultural and linguistic powerhouses. Specifically, the participants tend to recognize that Hip Hop has something to do with black culture that "black talk" does in fact exist and comes from the black community, etc. However, what is most interesting for the purposes of linguistically establishing the rhetoric of appropriation, is how UMC white males recognize and rhetorically negotiate their appropriations. The following is an excerpt from my extensive interview with Adam and Aren concerning their use (or lack of) of Black Language:

> Jill: What about like the language aspect? Do you think you use Hip Hop language or code?
>
> Aren: I mean, I use slang but I don't think I use a lot of Hip Hop terminology necessarily
>
> Jill: Why not or why?
>
> Aren: I try just...cause I can use like normal language to get by. I don't have to like talk a certain way or anything to like try to convey my ideas.
>
> Adam: It's like you could get the point across without like... cause all this language now is like mainstream. You know it's not like saying all of this is like a set language it's more . There is like no like set language. Like everybody is comin' up with their own. Like fo-shizzle whatever, Snoop Dogg he just made that word up. It's not Hip Hop. He just made that up. It's all catchy and

everybody is using it. To me it's like, I don't believe there's like a real slang to Hip Hop. If you listen to these records they're not like sayin' all these words you don't understand, whatever. It's all poetry.

During this conversation I made no mention of the fact that much of their speech is rife with Black Language lexical items and allowed them to speak freely about their perceptions on their own language. Aren clearly establishes that he has no interest in using black "slang" and that he uses "normal language" to get by because he doesn't "have to like talk a certain way or anything to like try to convey [his] ideas". In essence he recognizes what Black Language is and assumes that he chooses not to use it because it doesn't positively serve him. That is to say that there is an underlying assumption that many UMC white males who affiliate with Hip Hop do in fact appropriate the language because they feel it serves to get them what they want or craft an alternative identity, one that is not "normal" but different. Adam flat out denies that Black Language is a language at all saying "There is like no like set language. Like everybody is comin' up with their own". Furthermore, this statement infers that the only language that he recognizes is an appropriated language that he feels people like him create, devise, and speak however and whenever they want.

What is interesting is that cerebrally, they get it. They understand that much of the Black Language they are privy to is fake, a mass marketed, watered down version of how people in the Hip Hop community speak. This is shown when Adam says that "all this language now is like mainstream". By positing his recognition of both appropriation and what he believes to be real Hip Hop, Adam is in effect crafting an identity that is "real", that he knows the difference. He says that using Black Language is "all catchy and everybody is using it" assuming that he has not fallen into the mainstream appropriation

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trap as well. This analysis posits an interesting theory, that perhaps Black Language appropriation has become so pervasive that the mainstream society has actually crafted an entire new creole of Black Language and it is being proliferated by individuals like those in this study. Adam and Aren are quick to establish they don't speak Black Language for varying reasons, hedging and justifying their linguistic choices in rhetorically savvy ways. For Aren he juxtaposes Black Language against "normal" what Smitherman (2001) calls the Language of Wider Communication (LWC). Adam evidences even more effective rhetorical strategies by appealing to my sense of logic. Adam doesn't use Black Language because it's fake and mainstream and he doesn't see himself as either of those things therefore he consciously chooses not to buy into the hype.

Of course they both do appropriate Black Language as clearly shown in their everyday speech but they honestly do not know it. I assume that when and if they do so in social circles that it is a clear linguistic and rhetorical choice to do so, to fit into a social context of situations. UMC white males are indeed making conscious decisions about their Black Language appropriations, and even justifying these decisions rhetorically, to more clearly identify themselves within/throughout Hip Hop culture. Perhaps the most controversial lexical appropriation can be seen in the next section.

*Bryan and Jeff take on the nigger/nigga debate*

The term "nigger" has a long and tumultuous past filled with racism, racial tension, degradation, and oppression. Webster's Dictionary defines it as an "offensive term for a black person" but that doesn't do much to construct what it really engenders. As Smitherman (2006) writes "dictionaries don't make language, people do" (54). There is no amount of words in the world that can describe the feelings that "nigger" emotes

when implied, let alone spoken out loud. The term was most recently put on shout when famed "Seinfeld" comedian Michael Richards went into a racist rant, repeatedly shouting "nigger" at two black hecklers. Richards apologized profusely on any media outlet that would give him access, but outrage in the African American community ran deep. This recent outburst for many goes to show that all the hatred and oppression that "nigger" implies is alive and well in today's society.

The term "nigga" on the other hand has just as much a controversial past depending on who you talk to. Some people will tell you it's a term of endearment between black folk, others will tell you it's just a modern day way of connotating all the horrible oppression that's wrapped up in "nigger" in a playful, seemingly more socially acceptable way. I'm not about to personally touch this debate with a ten foot pole (I'll just say that I never use either term because they do not belong to me), but that doesn't mean my participants didn't go there.

What this section aims to show is how UMC white males navigate the delicate minefield of using or not using the terms "nigger" and "nigga". Specifically, how they rhetorically illustrate their considerations and musing about when to use and not use such terms and why. To be sure "nigger" is a white man's word established for derogatory purposes but "nigga" has settled more in a grey area. While it is predominately socially acceptable in young circles of the black community and widely accepted in Hip Hop culture "there are some African Americans, particularly those who are middle-aged or middle class, who abhor this public language practice" (Smitherman, 2006:50). The use of "nigga" has been covered in the mainstream press, Eminem doesn't use it but J. Lo

does, both catch hell from the media either way[8]. Let's take a look at what Jeff and Bryan had to say about the matter:

> Bryan: a lot of people use the word nigga and um, it's not meant to be racist or anything like that but um, …..

> Jill: What do you think about that? Do you think that you should be able to use the word nigger vs. nigga? Do you think there is a difference?

> Bryan and Jeff: There is a difference….

> Jeff: There's a huge difference because…

> Bryan: Big borderline there….

> Jeff: There, there's,….

> Bryan: Well, one's callin' out a certain race as a bad, you know, as a bad thing, you know, I mean, if uh, if I walk up to Jeff here and I say "what's up brotha?" and you know I slap his hand five, and uh, you know, it's kinda like the same thing. It wouldn't be any type of, you know, racial, racism in that you know…me saying that so…

> Jeff: My only opinion on that, I guess is, if you straight up and call somebody a nigger, you know n-i-g-g-e-r, versus, n-i-g-g-a, which is more like a big slang term which means African American that's why a lot of white people don't use it. I use it every now and again between my friends but only people that use it themselves. I got a friend that lived in a city all his life and he was around black people all the time and that's a thing that he'll say, almost every one says nigga, you know, it just, it just uh, 'what's up nigga?' What's crackin'? How you doin' man?' You know. Just a way to say what's goin' on man/how you doin'? How's things, basically. But if you come up on somebody and say, you know, it….it's only racist to me if I, you was gettin' in a fight with somebody and said you know, 'listen here nigger' you know

> Bryan: (yeah, yeah)

> Jeff: That's a lot more harsh then you know talkin' with uh, you know, between friends and everything. Yeah, some people take offense to it, you know, a white

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[8] That debate sounds something like this: Eminem who appropriates every aspect of Black culture, being socialized black himself should have a right to use "nigga" right? And J.Lo, well, she's barely Puerto Rican enough let along black and street enough to have cultural capital to use the word. These are just some of the cursory mainstream conversations swirling around that many of my participants draw from in constructing their identity through Black Language lexical appropriations.

man sayin' it, but a lot of people understand hey, that's a word that's used and every…everything, every rap song almost uses it in Hip Hop

Jill: Except Eminem

Jeff: Yeah, except, except Eminem

Jill: He refused to use the word because he doesn't think it belongs to him

Bryan: Although, although, he did say it in his previous records, his underground albums and then he realized he could get into a little bit of trouble because people, people…

Jeff: It's somethin' that……

Bryan: People may think that it is being used as a racist, racist term, you know, but which it's not, but people will perceive it to be a racist term and it won't you know agree with that an it'll just get him in trouble and that's why he doesn't use it anymore

In this excerpt, we can see how they recognize the danger or "burden" of this largely black lexical term "nigga"; however they show no signs of a deeper understanding of why white use of this term can be especially troublesome for the black community. For them, their use of "nigga" is not racist because they feel that it is as much part of their social identity as it is for someone who lives in an urban, predominately black community. However, they fail to effectively show how they constructed this bridge, considering that they have never lived in these areas or become part of the black community. What they do succeed in rhetorically explaining is that these words are different and not necessarily interchangeable. "Nigga" and "nigger" for Jeff and Bryan are terms largely socially constructed and contextually used. In this way they are knowingly crafting an identity for themselves by using this term, they recognize that it differentiates them from more mainstream society in fact, they strive for this difference. They do touch on the negative connotations of the word "nigger" as "callin' out a certain

race as bad" but Jeff infers that he is not opposed to it's use if someone is "gettin' in a fight with somebody and said you know, 'listen here nigger' ".

From a sociolinguistic perspective, what I find most pertinent about this conversation is the fact that they never entertain my suggestion that these words do not belong to them. They feel that they are entitled to use these words because it is part of their identity, Hip Hop speaks to them the same as it does to the black community, therefore their struggle in UMC white suburbia is ostensibly the same (this argument will be further entertained in Chapter 4). This is not an uncommon belief, in fact is it shared by the majority of the participants in this study. Even as UMC white males who have nothing do with black culture and community they feel that by performing what they see and hear through Hip Hop culture and music that they too are entitled to appropriate Black Language freely and are doing so at an alarming rate. These appropriations and discussions are changing perceptions about Black Language and Hip Hop culture. As you can see from these interviews, UMC white male appropriations of Black Language and Hip Hop culture are largely uninformed, they have little to no understanding of the culture and language, they only know what they see on TV and hear in Hip Hop lyrics.

At this point I realize I must be clear in stating that I do not believe appropriation is an all together negative phenomenon. Appropriation can serve to introduce cultural and linguistic traits to society in positive ways, think American appropriation of Japanese technology or immigrant appropriation of American culture in order to assimilate while also keeping their own culture vibrant. In this way UMC white male appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language is not simply negative or positive, in many cases it just is what it is, a reaction to mass corporate marketing of a popular music. What is

problematic about UMC white male appropriation of Black Language is their inability or ignorance of Black Language as a language and the use of offensive terms without knowledge of the offense. What I think best sums up the push and pull of appropriation in the shortest amount of space is an excerpt from a play by Eisa Davis entitled "Umkovu" that appears in Tate's (2003:43) work on white appropriation of black culture. In this excerpt two characters Darryl (Black, president of a record company, 30s, dressed to impress) and Shmoove (Asian, veejay, 20s, and a ladies man) have what starts out as a cursory discussion after Shmoove interviews one of Darryl's Hip Hop artists.

> Darryl: Got everything you need?
>
> Shmoove: Always. Wish I could stay and parlay but I'm goin' east side for a little sushi with this new group. Rock band. Bunjee jump while they play guitar. They're each like seven years old. Hot. Ah-ight, nigga, check you later.
>
> Darryl: I don't think I heard you correctly.
>
> Shmoove: Nigga, please.
>
> Darryl: That word is not yours.
>
> Shmoove: Nigga, I'm the only Asian man on TV! So forget you. You burned down my parents' store in '92 so I'm a loot all your language and all your gear and your hair and I'm a work it. Who the hell is buying your daddy's jazz record anyway? Better recognize. Coltrane? Wu-Tang? Y'all as bad as white folks.

While this excerpt involves appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language by an Asian man and is fictional, I nonetheless find it telling that the same rhetorical moves, strategies, and justifications that occur in many of my participants appropriations. Darryl is obviously offended by Shmoove's use of the word "nigga" in his lexicon which Darryl feels is an exclusively black term for use only by black folk. Despite the obvious caricature of the Asian MTV generation veejay, Shmoove has some valid points in supporting his right to use "nigga". First, he establishes that he too is a minority and had

to endure struggle to get to where he is now as "the only Asian man on TV". Though the participants in this study cannot seemingly claim racial oppression, they do hint at dealing with negative stereotyping by their families and greater society by using Black Language and being thought to "talk black". In this way they feel entitled to appropriate Black Language because they are taking on some of the negative burden that is placed on Hip Hop music, language, and culture by the older generations in UMC society.

Shmoove's next rhetorical appeal is that black people have done him wrong referring to the 1992 LA riots. These riots included the looting of many Asian businesses by predominately Black and Hispanic individuals and therefore he is entitled to take and appropriate whatever he wants from black culture stating in Black Language nonetheless, "I'm a loot all your language and all your gear and your hair and I'm a work it". This sentiment of entitlement is often echoed in my participant's responses. For example, when Charlie states "I mean its like derived from black culture obviously but like to me there shouldn't be any culture in rap particularly" he is obviously establishing his right to appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Because Hip Hop culture and Black Language have gone so mainstream that it no longer belongs just to black culture anymore, that it is just as much part of UMC white male's identity as it is part of urban minority's identity.

The final rhetorical appeal Shmoove posits is two-fold. He argues both that without people like him buying Hip Hop records then there would be no success for Hip Hop artists and the culture as a whole and that black artists have been appropriating other's musical styles for some time. John Coltrane was obviously influenced by various cultures to achieve his unique style of jazz, and the Hip Hop group Wu Tang Clan

parlayed their fascination with Asian culture into a supergroup sporting a traditional Chinese name. This reverse of appropriation strategy is also seen in Charlie's and Adam's beliefs that Black Language and Hip Hop are now part of the mainstream and therefore pimping white culture to achieve financial success, getting guys like them to buy their records, clothing, lexicons, etc. In some part they believe that they are responsible for Hip Hop's success and proliferation to the masses.

Of course, Shmoove ends his justification by stating that "y'all as bad as white folk" leaving the audience with the idea that appropriation may be acceptable between other minority groups but no one is as thieving and malicious as the appropriations of white people. While this may be so, it is interesting and important to explore arguments surrounding appropriation if only to understand their roots and effects more fully.

## Conclusion

This chapter points to the need for discussion of such language appropriations and the implications they have on language and culture in mainstream society. Most of the participants in this study are unaware of the linguistic and historical roots of Black Language, and this lack of knowledge may in fact lead to appropriations that are based in misunderstandings. In many ways, they are appropriating a language for their own purposes and in doing so are changing perceptions of that language based on their appropriations. As a teacher of composition and rhetoric who focuses on language issues, I witness time and again negative and debilitating attitudes directed towards Black Language from both white and minority students. What is decidedly most disappointing and disturbing is how most students need convincing that Black language is a language let alone a language worth celebrating, studying, and preserving.

Like Gail Okawa (2003), I too am calling for the resurfacing of the roots of our language attitudes and that it is after all a "matter of social justice" (110) to do so. As scholars and teachers, it is vehemently important to recognize these appropriations so as to educate ourselves and our students about the roots and shifts of Black Language. Okawa further posits that ignorance of language as systemic social behavior with historical roots is one of the greatest co-conspirators of linguistic chauvinism and internalized linguistic imperialism (111). To allow this ignorance to fester and breed in our society is tantamount to encouraging language discrimination on all levels—social, class, race, gender, etc. What I admire most about Okawa's work is that it points out that while language can become a point of alienation, it can also become a point of reconciliation and reunion—for the individual and the group (127). This is to say that we don't always need to "problematize" language, we can use (socio)linguistic studies like mine positively, as a bridge to history and society, community and politics, family and friends. If UMC white males want to continue to appropriate Black Language then they should do so in an educated and positive way, as a means of evidencing linguistic knowledge, to be viewed as bi-lingual. If this shift is to occur it is our job to change the way society views Black Language. My contribution in this study is to show how widespread Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation is in UMC white male communities and the linguistic and rhetorical power in these appropriations and ultimately to devise a pedagogy that not only showcases these appropriations but more importantly to spark analytical discussion about language and culture writ large. These appropriations and others no longer need to remain "problematic" if the academic community can help to change language attitudes and perceptions.

What I hope this chapter served to prove is not only how UMC white males appropriate Black Language but also why they do so. These individuals are indeed making conscious linguistic choices in order to construct a more ethnic identity. To be sure, white Americans have always felt inferior culturally, always striving to align themselves with nations who could lend them some sort of cultural cache (Italian American, Irish American, etc). In many ways what UMC white males who appropriate Black Language are doing is attempting to appropriate a language to make them feel more cultured, more ethnic, and ultimately more unique and different from the homogenous suburban society that surrounds them.

It is my belief that the study of this linguistic appropriation phenomenon has important implications for the dicipline of cultural studies in the field of composition and rhetoric. If we can learn to more fully understand how and why language is appropriated in this way, perhaps we can mitigate the problematic effects that these appropriations bring to the native language, in this case Black Language. We need to educate our students and ourselves in the field about the history, rhetorical and (socio)linguistic qualities of Black Language so that these appropriations do not continue to be the only examples of the language in mainstream society. To make meaning of Black Language appropriation and to proliferate that knowledge is to show the world that Black Language is a language that should be respected and protected. To continue to allow these appropriations to go unstudied is to watch them morph and stretch the language into unrecognizable forms, becoming a caricature of the authentic language.

Analyzing UMC white male appropriation can also teach us that effective rhetoric can and does occur in the most unlikely of places. The rhetoric of appropriation

embodied by the participants in this study to justify, mitigate, and navigate their appropriations evidences that these individuals are not just doing this for fun, that there are valuable and legitimate rhetorical choices occurring in their appropriations. Of course, none of these appropriations would be possible if not for the widespread and growing popularity of Hip Hop culture in mainstream society. The next chapter will show how these influences have affected UMC white males in their pirating of Hip Hop culture and Black Language and more importantly their opinions, perceptions, and attitudes concerning why they be doing the things they do.

# Chapter 4: The Rhetoric of Appropriation: Flippin the Script

*As young people worldwide gravitate to Hip Hop and adapt it to their local needs, responding to the crisis of our time, they are becoming equipped with a culture that corporate and political elites can't control. It's a youth centered culture that is self-motivating and only requires its participants to have a mouth, the ability to listen and frustration with business as usual.*

*--Bakari Kitwana (2005)*

*A close-knit circle of housewives in the suburbs of Cleveland, all in their late twenties and early thirties, plan a girls night out—a three hour drive to Detroit for a sold-out Eminem concert. "We spend our entire days trying to fit into a perfect little bubble," a thirty-three year old stay at home mom told me. "The perfect $500,000 houses. The perfect overscheduled kids. The perfect husbands. We love life but we hate our lives. And so I think we identify more with Hip Hop's passion, anger and frustration than we do this dream world".*

*--Bakari Kitwana (2005)*

*One of the least understood communicative practices in AAL is the manipulations of European American English's (EAL) semantic structure. Often inappropriately dismissed as "Black slang," this rhetorical maneuvering amounts to what linguist Grace Holt (1972) called "semantic inversion." Today Hip Hoppers call it flippin the script. It is a process whereby AAL speakers take words and concepts from the EAL lexicon and either reverse their meanings or impose entirely different meanings.*

*--Geneva Smitherman (2000)*

What Kitwana alludes to in these excerpts is that appropriation of Hip Hop culture is certainly out of control. It cannot be governed or policed and includes anyone who is interested. These appropriations have spread so far, so wide and have morphed and stretched the Hip Hop culture to its maximum capacity, sometimes making it unrecognizable to those who knew it best and were part of its creation. While this study does not look at how and why suburban moms have taken a shine to Hip Hop as described above, the reasoning behind how and why UMC white males' appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language seem eerily similar. They have indeed equipped themselves with Hip Hop culture to express opinions, to form identities that expose the

passion, anger, and frustration that suburban white America teaches them to push down to the deep, dark places of their souls. Whether right or wrong, UMC white males feel that Hip Hop speaks to them despite their economic and racial makeup and are not afraid to stake their claim and justify their involvement.

What this chapter aims to show is not only how and why UMC white males appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language but more importantly how they enact savvy rhetorical moves and strategies—in essence, flip the script on widely held views of Hip Hop culture and Black Language—in their explanations, attitudes, and perceptions on/about Hip Hop and their appropriations. As stated earlier in Chapter 1, I believe that these individuals are enacting a rhetoric of appropriation, crafting a new version of Hip Hop culture and Black Language through their appropriations, that can and is shaping and changing culture and language in American society. They are using what they've learned and appropriated on and about Hip Hop culture and of Black Language communicative practices to flip the script and create their own interpretation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language that may in fact be detrimental to the current positive shift Hip Hop has been enjoying over the past 5 years. Therefore, what UMC white males are doing in this study is not just "semantic inversion" but cultural inversion as well. If Bazerman's (1988) belief that rhetoric is "a study of how people use language and other symbols to realize human goals and carry out human activities...ultimately a practical study offering people great control over their symbolic activity" (6) is correct, then the explanations and perceptions evidenced in the following case study interviews is definitely an example of rhetoric as a way to identify oneself through appropriated cultural and linguistic behavior.

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In conjunction with the presentation of original data, this chapter will more robustly discuss the defining characteristics of the rhetoric of appropriation, specifically how symbolization, institutional language, and cultural capital serve as means to construct identities and justify appropriations of various participants in this study. However, before we can understand the rhetoric of appropriation we need to briefly consider the historical forces behind appropriation writ large.

**Appropriation Contextually Considered**

In Chapter 1 I provided a host of scholarly arguments and critiques of culture and language appropriation as it applies to Hip Hop culture and Black Language. But as most linguists, especially sociolinguists, will tell you, words don't mean a thing when uttered out of context. For example, to say the word "blue" evokes a myriad of abstract notions and connotations (color, sky, water, etc.) but to say "I feel blue" constructs a vastly more concrete understanding of personal emotion, mental state, and evocation of feeling. I argue that the same is true of the kind of Hip Hop word appropriation exhibited by the participants in my study; alone it is just a word but considered in context it has extremely powerful connotations and can elicit the strongest emotions connected to culture and language. Narrowly defined, appropriation merely means a seizure or assimilation of concepts, for most people a justified means to a justified ends. To be sure, there are many positive forms of appropriation that have benefited society throughout the ages. However, when it comes to appropriating cultures and languages to such a degree that those appropriations are proliferated to the masses and sold as "authentic" versions of that culture and language is when it becomes highly problematic. It is problematic for both the home culture and language and the community or society that accepts these new

manifestations born out of appropriation as real and legitimate. In the introduction to *The Rap Attack* (1984), Tony Van Der Meer aptly discusses the binaries often encountered in cultural appropriation:

> There is nothing wrong with one community learning the cultural forms produced by another, if it respects their specific shapes and meanings. There is something horribly wrong with a dominant community repeatedly co-opting the cultural forms of oppressed communities, stripping them of their vitality and form, the heritage of their creators and then popularizing them. The result is bleached Pepsi culture masquerading as the real thing. This is what threatens to dilute the real feeling and attitude of Hip Hop preventing its genuine forms the freedom to fully develop. The expression of Black people is transformed when it is repackaged without any evidence remaining of the Black historical experience (4-5).

This is my point exactly. In many ways the UMC white males in this study are celebrating and learning cultural forms, meanings, and shapes from Hip Hop however, they are also prone to co-opting these same aspects, diluting them, and reselling them as the real thing. I believe Gloria Anzaldúa (1990) sums this notion up best stating that "the difference between appropriation and proliferation is that the first steals and harms; the second helps heal breaches of knowledge" (xxi). Of course this begs the question how do we know the difference?

One of the goals of this study to do just that, to clearly show the difference between appropriation that harms and the proliferation of culture and language that heals. The way I achieve this goal is by evidencing appropriation in context, by presenting case studies of real people in the act of appropriating (or discussing acts of appropriating) Hip Hop culture and Black Language and their justifications/explanations of that appropriation. To shine the spotlight on an abstracted example of appropriation is one thing but to be able to analyze and discuss the implications of both the conscious and

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unconscious rhetorical strategies and appeals involved in discussing and supporting that appropriation is what leads to a healing proliferation of knowledge.

For me culture is both nature and nurture, in some ways a culture can be an amalgamation of learned behaviors but there are some aspects of culture that I believe are inherently linked to our DNA, that the color of our skin, our physical features, the tenor of our voice helps determine what culture we adhere to, belong to. That is, culture can be something we are intrinsically born with and also something we learn, are taught, or pursue in order to feel more accepted in our family, clan, group, and/or society. Jacqueline Jones Royster (2000) argues a similar point concerning African America women writers and the "ancestral voice" that culturally binds them all stating, "perhaps African American women have perceived ancestral voice instinctively. Perhaps habits of knowing might actually become so ingrained that such ways of knowing come to be grafted into the socio-bio system and passed along" (88). That is to say both literacies and the rhetoric used in those literacies may be sociobiologically embedded in our psyches, passed down from one generation to the next. Historically, African Americans are culturally rich, sharing oral and literate traditions. On the other hand the UMC white males in this study feel they are culturally barren[9] and in many ways are attracted to the rich culture embedded in Hip Hop and Black Language. In order to claim a piece of that culture and language for themselves they appropriate, and in justifying that appropriation enact a unique rhetoric to appeal both to themselves and society writ large.

Still, I can clearly recognize how white males can effectively code-switch between the Language of Wider Communication (LWC) and Black Language, as I

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[9] It is important to note here that I don't believe white culture is barren, however many of the participants in this study do.

wholeheartedly agree with Delpit (1995, 2002) that discourses can be learned despite economic and racial boundaries. However, I experienced first hand living in Japan that learning about a culture will only take you half way to being part of, belonging to, that culture. No matter how much I know, assimilated to, or appropriated Japanese culture, I will never be a part of that culture because I am not nor ever will be Japanese. So can the same be said for UMC white males, can they ever truly become part of Hip Hop culture if they are not minorities residing in urban areas? The individuals in this study certainly believe they are part of Hip Hop culture and by studying, analyzing, and discussing the varied contexts of their appropriation and the rhetoric used to explain and justify those appropriations I believe we will be able to discover some of the reasons why.

**Rhetoric of Appropriation**

The rhetoric of appropriation is a concept I devised to explain how and why upper middle class white males speak about and justify their involvement/interest in Hip Hop culture and use of Black Language and in doing so are shaping the contemporary face of Hip Hop culture and Black Language. That is, during the two year course of interviewing these 30 individuals I recognized patterns emerging in the way they spoke about Hip Hop and Black Language. Not that they specifically used the same terms but that many of the participants had the same tone and attitude when discussing their interests in Hip Hop music and culture. All of them seemed brutally honest in their beliefs and attitudes about Hip Hop, Black Language, and issues surrounding the two topics (gender, violence, culture, socioeconomic status, etc.) and were eager to divulge them. More interestingly, and perhaps more important for this study, are the rhetorical strategies and moves they performed in justifying their interests and specific appropriations. They all spoke clearly

and persuasively, employing many of the traditional rhetorical appeals (pathos, logos, ethos) to convince me of the truth and validity of their answers. Sometimes these responses bordered on performance and other times some participants were so rhetorically articulate that I was impressed by how reflectively and analytically they responded to questions or carried on conversations. Namely, they were able to clearly explain why they feel drawn to Hip Hop culture and what their use (or perceived non-use) of Black Language means to them and how they think these affinities are perceived by others.

The three most common denominators in the rhetoric of appropriation evidenced by the participants in discussing Hip Hop, Black Language, and their appropriations of both were symbolization, use of institutional language, and pursuit of cultural capital. At some point all the participants in this study used these concepts either consciously or unconsciously to rhetorically appeal to their audience (me and at times each other). To be clear, many of the participant's believe they are doing what's "real" but in fact are engaging in abject appropriation. Ultimately, I believe their appropriations are forms of identity formation. This is what makes them unique and sets them apart from others in UMC society and that these appropriations are conscious decisions. What is sometimes not cognizant for them is the rhetoric of appropriation that is consistent through all of their responses, that they all use these methods to portray their beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and perceptions about Hip Hop culture and Black Language. For consistency, I will continue to analyze and discuss samplings from the data of participant interviews from the previous chapter (Charlie, Adam, Aren, Jeff, and Bryan) to evidence

their rhetoric of appropriation through symbolization, institutional language, and pursuit of cultural capital.

*Symbolization*

Symbolization, both (socio)linguistic and physical, is integral to understanding how and why UMC white males appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language. All of the participants either looked the part or spoke the part of an interloper into the culture of Hip Hop. That is, they used symbols through actions, dress, or linguistic markers to construct their identity through Hip Hop and Black Language. To be sure, their symbols varied. Some participants looked like wiggas, wearing the uniform of baggy jeans, backward cap, and large, flashy jewelry. Others were linguistically savvy in their symbolization, using terms and semantics largely reserved for native speakers of Black Language.

When I discuss symbolization in this section I am relying on previous work done by Eckert (1989) and Cohen (1972) that posited symbolization as part of the process of identity formation. That is, they argue that the way we dress, gesture, and speak can all be considered symbols that are consciously chosen to "perform" or display our identity. The participants in this study are both consciously and unconsciously using symbols to craft an identity based on their perceptions of Hip Hop culture and Black Language. In many ways these forms of symbolization are based upon their veiled appropriations of Blackness. They wear what they consider to be Hip Hop and/or Black clothes, hairstyles, accessories, etc. and appropriate Black Language in order to identify themselves in/with Hip Hop culture and communities. Furthermore, the way in which they explain their

symbolization clearly evidences a rhetoric of appropriation in that they are willing and often persuasive in their responses.

Resting on the belief of language as a sign system (Bahktin, 1929) the words and strategies these participants choose to use in their explanations/responses are telling of much deeper perceptions than can initially be seen on the basic utterance level. That is, there are many times in the course of these interviews that the participants would utter a phrase or word flippantly but for me held great embedded meaning concerning their identity formation through Hip Hop. On the other hand, the participants would carefully choose their language, seemingly mulling and rocking the ideas around in their minds before responding to questions so as to construct the image clearly to their audience.

The following excerpts were taken from my lengthy interviews with Charlie, the white rapper from the previous chapter. I found Charlie's response ripe for analysis of symbolization. He categorizes himself symbolically one way in how he dresses (like a stereotypical wigga) but linguistically and rhetorically is extremely savvy in his responses (unlike stereotypical wiggas), making sure to validate and legitimize his presence in Hip Hop culture at every turn.

> Jill: Would you consider them all of a Hip Hop/rap genre?
>
> Charlie: It's kinda like alternative rap. Sorta, neo-rap. Atmosphere is the prime example sorta like the High and Mighty, Method Man, Red Man, House of Pain Cypress Hill. Early 90's but not like crazy with the violence. Sometimes it's like frat rap, usually it's not usually it's like clean your house music you know what I mean. Oh, I mean we've been compared to the Beastie Boys so many times.

Here we see how Charlie is carefully crafting and categorizing his identity through Hip Hop by dropping the names of various Hip Hop artists that seem to define his position in Hip Hop culture. This can be considered symbolization because each of the artists he

mentions carries a cache of its own and he is using them as signs in his signifying system. The sub-cultural Hip Hop group Atmosphere symbolizes the alternative areas of Hip Hop, a more socially conscious and musically open group. By affiliating with their brand of Hip Hop music Charlie is ostensibly saying that he identifies with their brand of Hip Hop and embraces some of what Atmosphere represents as a symbol of the Hip Hop he feels is "real", i.e. right. By dropping the names of "old school" rappers like Method Man and Red Man of Wu-Tang clan he is representing his knowledge of artists who are highly respected in the field as visionaries, again using these individuals as a way to situate his identity within rap as a visionary himself. Perhaps most telling is his mentioning of famous white and Hispanic Hip Hop artists House of Pain, Beastie Boys, and Cypress Hill, respectively. This shows that he recognizes and embraces the validity of white rappers and feels the need to mention those who have been critically acclaimed and successful in order to construct and legitimize his own identity as a white rapper.

The following excerpt from my interview with Charlie evidences what Eckert (1989) would call categorization through symbolization. In her study in/of a suburban Detroit high school Eckert observed that:

> The simplification of choice within the category system leads to an oversimplification of values, and the overwhelming judgments of "good" and "bad" associated with the categories prevent individuals from recognizing the independence of many of the decisions they are faced with. The close associations of traits with in either category is powerful enough to force individual decisions, not on the merits of the issues at hand, but as simple requirement and expression of category affiliation and participation in adolescent society (71).

For many UMC white males the rhetoric of appropriation is all about the waffle. They tend to view their appropriations as black/white and right/wrong binaries when dealing with others in their own peer group but at the same time prove rhetorically crafty when

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explaining these appropriations to individuals outside their social groups, to members of UMC white society who do not feel any affinity to Hip Hop culture. By assigning categories to their symbolizations of Hip Hop culture and Black Language they are able to make sense of how they view the world, how they identify themselves within the UMC white community that surrounds them. In our discussion about Hip Hop culture, Charlie clearly categorizes Hip Hop as a way of life, something you choose to embrace not something that is culturally embedded in you.

> Jill: What do you think Hip Hop culture is?
>
> Charlie: I think it's just that, I mean it's culture. It's like the way you talk, the way you walk, it's the way you dress, the way you speak, it's the way you hit on girls, it's the way you eat your food. I mean it's really whatever you are trying to be. To me so much of what Hip Hop is, is that whatever you are trying to be it's that. It's not something that someone else tells you it is I mean that's just B.S. I mean how do they
> know.

Here we see how Charlie is providing his broad definition of Hip Hop culture but at the same time he making a strong emotional appeal to those who may question his involvement in Hip Hop. First, he establishes that Hip Hop is a chosen way of life saying, "To me so much of what Hip Hop is, is that whatever you are trying to be it's that" but then becomes mildly agitated by the thought, or perhaps past experience, that some people try to dictate one definition of Hip Hop that could in many ways exclude him stating, "It's not something someone else tells you it is I mean that's just B.S. I mean, how do they know?" In many ways Charlie's obtuse categorization of Hip Hop can be seen as what Eckert believes is an oversimplification of values for many youth in UMC suburban society. Charlie expounds on his beliefs about Hip Hop culture in the following excerpt.

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Jill: So you don't think that Hip Hop is any one culture?

Charlie: Not at all. To me it's like, everyone' got a little bit of style so Hip Hop is like your own personal touch to things like if you're a cook like the way you cook. If you do it a little different from someone else it's like your style. I mean that to me is Hip Hop everyone's got there's so many like sub-genres and stuff but like a guy like Mike Jones or whatever. He's not like dope lyrically or anything but that's his whole style. His whole style is shouting out his number, refraining his lyrics, that's his style. I mean another group like that is like Three Six Mafia. I mean they're not trying, that's their style and then there's guys like ASOP Rock and you don't know what the hell he's talking about he's so like metaphorical and like and then you got guys like Tino Excel who's like straightforward and lyrical it's like his style.

Just whatever you do is...I mean if you're doin' something a little bit different that to me is like your Hip Hop side. I mean you don't have to listen to it to really be involved in that sorta thing but maybe people don't realize that it doesn't affect them because of stupid things they might say or whatever.

Here it appears Charlie is attempting to support his earlier comments concerning Hip Hop culture through symbolic choices of various artists he feels are indicative of the "anything can be Hip Hop" argument. There is no denying that Charlie knows his shit, he is a wide-ranging Hip Hop connoisseur and is performing his knowledge a little bit in this excerpt by showing his expertise. This is a great example of the rhetoric of appropriation because he is manipulating what most would consider the true roots of Hip Hop by establishing his own definition, one that will undoubtedly be proliferated to his peers and spread widely into UMC white society. It is rhetorical strategies like these that can serve to either broaden understandings of Hip Hop culture and Black Language or completely flip the script on the perceptions of others to believe that this is the authentic and original definition of Hip Hop culture. Again, I am not saying that appropriation in all its manifestations is wrong. What I am positing is that these appropriations are changing the way society views Hip Hop culture and Black Language and in many ways replacing it with the appropriated versions at least in particular social spaces.

More evidence of symbolization can be seen in my interviews with Jeff and Bryan. While they too evidence categorization through symbolization in their rhetoric of appropriation their strategies are a bit different. For Jeff and Bryan binaries are clearer, you either are Hip Hop or you're not. Eckert observed similar behavior in her study stating:

> The clear association of any piece of behavior with one category will lead to the adoption of opposing behavior by the other. As more domains and details of behavior are incorporated as category symbols, the oppositions become mutually reinforcing, developing a structured symbolic system with its own impetus (Eckert, 1989: 69)

Therefore, when talking about Hip Hop culture and Black Language Jeff and Bryan feel that because they identify with Hip Hop that they are then placing themselves into one category and by symbolizing behavior in that one category they are ostensibly excluding themselves from being participants in many others. They recognize that their affinity for Hip Hop culture and Black Language sets them apart from other peer groups in UMC white society and they embrace that difference as part of their identity. Furthermore, their not belonging to other peer groups is equally as responsible for crafting their unique identity because it in many ways what excludes them from one group equals inclusion with another.

> Jill: What do you think about kids who are, you know, or your own generation who emulate this culture? Because it's not just about music anymore it is a culture.
>
> Jeff: oh yeah, oh yeah
>
> Jill: There's politics involved, society, way to dress, way to talk....
>
> Jeff: Oh yeah, I totally agree with that. I mean I got hung up with that when I was in high school and I mean I still, in certain cases, dress the same as, look upon the rappers as 'oh, that looks, you know, a dressy fashion'. I mean it's, I don't have to

wear any big chains or anything like that or wear hundred thousand dollars watches or rings....

Jill: Yeah, but you did. You did used to have a really big chain. You did have that kind of stuff.

Jeff: I did yeah, go through a stage like that but now I, uh, I still wear jerseys, and things like that but mostly, you know me, because of the teams that I like but also because I think it looks coordinated. I like to look coordinated. And every rapper you see is always color coordinated.

Bryan: right, right

Jeff: I mean no one's gonna come out there in a plaid shirt and black pants and you know, a uh, you know, orange vest on, it ain't gonna happen.

Bryan: ha, ha

Jill: Well, unless you're Outkast.

Jeff: yeah, unless, you're Outcast or uh, maybe Old Dirty Bastard

Here we see Jeff talking specifically about symbolizing his affinity for Hip Hop culture through the clothes and accessories he wears when he says "I got hung up with that when I was in high school and I mean I still, in certain cases, dress the same as, look upon the rappers". For him, his appropriation is justified because that is his chosen way of life, this is how he symbolizes his identity. The conversation below more clearly posits the use of symbolic categorization to make sense of their appropriations.

Jill: Alright, what about the idea hip-rap as part of black culture do you think hip-hop and rap is black music?

Jeff: I think that's a bunch of shit (Bryan: I know) That's a whole crock right there.

Bryan: You don't think. I mean, for a lot of years it really.....

Bryan: You know what..

Jeff: yeah

Jeff: Rap right now that's making the most money right now is Eminem. He's fuckin' from Detroit and you know he's like influenced many, many white people and I guarantee he's like, not about being black but also like the black people he also, like, brought out the white race saying 'hey, it's not just for black, African Americans, it's not for that'

Jill: OK

Jeff: I mean, people listen to music and they like what they hear. I... you like what you hear then why would you be, you know, looked down upon, looked upon as oh, he's an evil seed 'cause he dresses with matching jerseys and gear and listens to Hip Hop music, some people kick their ass.

Bryan: Oh yeah, it was a big controversy in high school anyway, I mean this was before when Eminem. You speak about Eminem and it was right around when he way you know, starting, you know, making CD's, you know I mean....

Jill: Yeah, but what about people before him? When is was really thought that Hip Hop and rap was...

Bryan: maybe....

Jill: People will argue, scholars will argue, that Hip Hop and rap was born out of oppression, was born out of street culture?

Bryan: mm, hmm.

Jill: So do you think that's true? Do think it's only born out of oppression and street culture?

Jeff: well, I look at it as, rap really, if you take it back to Run DMC and uh, N.W.A. and all that it's a lot of their music. A lot of people were breakers to it, breakdancers, and that's what they used the music for, it had bass and it had a beat to where you could dance to it. So, I don't agree with that, that it's out of oppression or anything. That's um, I don't...I mean I like this music right here and it doesn't matter to me if I'm white, black, Mexican, Asian, it don't matter.

Obviously this excerpt is rife with issues surrounding Hip Hop culture, Black Language and appropriation. First we must discuss both the participants belief that Hip Hop has nothing to do with Black culture, specifically when Jeff states in response to my positing the widely held belief that Hip Hop has to do with Black culture that "That's a bunch of shit...That's a whole crock right there". This is a perfect example of how the rhetoric of

appropriation used by these participants to justify their appropriations can in fact be problematic for Hip Hop culture and Black Language writ large. By stating that Eminem is "fuckin' from Detroit and you know he's like influenced many, many white people and I guarantee he's like, not about being black but also like the black people he also, like, brought out the white race saying 'hey, it's not just for black, African Americans, it's not for that'" Jeff is proliferating rhetoric that is changing the way many people in mainstream society view Hip Hop culture and Black Language. He is echoing a growing suburban white male belief that Hip Hop's past and future need not have anything to do with Blackness. Furthermore, he believes he is firmly supporting his belief that Hip Hop is not inherently linked to Black culture. For him, Eminem is a symbol he invokes to justify his appropriations of Hip Hop culture and Black Language.

To be sure, Eminem may be white but most scholars would argue that he is socialized Black, that he willingly embraces Black culture and African American oral traditions to perform his music as authentically as he knows how. With UMC white males like Jeff and Bryan promoting the belief that Eminem and Hip Hop writ large is divorced from Black culture is misinformed at best and detrimental to the entire culture and language of Hip Hop at worst. Jeff employs an ethos of growing up as a Hip Hopper in an UMC white school to defend and justify his beliefs about Hip Hop by stating that those around him "looked upon as oh, he's an evil seed 'cause he dresses with matching jerseys and gear and listens to Hip Hop music, some people kick their ass." Again this is a clear example of invoking the rhetoric of appropriation through category making by symbolization. Jeff legitimizes his perceptions by saying he knows that dressing a certain way places you in a marked category, which instantly separates one from others in

society, much like what Eckert observed in a suburban Detroit high school. However, it must be noted that this choice of symbolic clothing is conscious as is the fact that by wearing such clothes he knows he will incur some type of negative stigma.

Like Charlie, evidence of oversimplification of values and ideas is evident in Jeff and Bryan's responses concerning the link between Hip Hop music and oppression. For Jeff, Hip Hop is more about beat than the historical struggles and oppression of Black folk which is of course a problematic assumption. Jeff calls upon the symbolization of such rap artists as N.W.A and Run DMC for support as to why he believes Hip Hop is more about sound than Black culture and oppression. This is both an interesting and uninformed choice considering that much of N.W.A. and Run DMC's music was both socially and politically charged and obviously came from a place of feeling marginalized and oppressed. If this kind of rhetoric of appropriation continues to proliferate there is no doubt that many people will be confused as to which version of Hip Hop culture and Black Language is authentic and legitimate, thus mush-faking an appropriated version as real.

Like Jeff and Bryan, Adam and Aren also venture commentary as to the appropriateness of Eminem but go farther in commenting on appropriation as it relates specifically to them. In this excerpt we see again how symbols carry embedded meaning and value for these individuals in structuring their identity.

> Jill: What do you guys think about appropriation? Do you think that Eminem is an appropriator? Do you think that in some way you are appropriating that culture because you listen to Hip Hop music or you feel a connection to Hip Hop music?
>
> Adam: I mean like certain people, like why do they even like Hip Hop artists it's like a particular connection. Uh, Like when Biggie's Juicy came out people could like relate, cause some of us could like not be able to afford fancy clothes and PS2, Nintendo whatever and it's like, most people just like listen and feel 'em

because they go through the same shit like him. Like sharing bowl of cereal with your brother because you don't have enough money

Jill: Do you feel that way? Do you feel on some level that you can relate to that?

Adam: Yeah, I mean yeah.

Aren: Yeah, I mean on some level Hip Hop is about struggle and everyone has their struggle and stuff. I don't really feel like I appropriated anything by listening to the music, I mean I don't go around acting all ganster. So I mean, it's just music it's no different than like listening to like Bob Dylan. I think it's just soul and poetry.

Adam: Hip Hop is just, I would say Hip Hop is like a mixed genre of everything. Hip Hop not like, rap/Hip Hop not just like, .......they're all talking about the same thing, they're all talking about struggle but like Hip Hop's just for like more up-tempo and sticking to the vibe. Hip Hop's like everywhere now.

Unlike Jeff, Aren admits that aspects of Hip Hop are about struggle however he hedges that belief by saying "everyone has their struggle and stuff". He also categorizes himself as not being an appropriator simply because he doesn't act "gangster" which I infer in this case he means "urban" or "ghetto". This is a problematic assumption considering that in the excerpt above both Adam and Aren posit that they identify with the ideas and values of Hip Hop music but yet not enough that someone would consider them appropriators of that culture or language. Therefore, it is fair to say they recognize appropriation but are rhetorically savvy in negotiating their own appropriations to me in a positive light or perhaps on a much lesser scale compared to others in their UMC peer group. As if they are saying "Sure, I like Hip Hop and speak a bit of Black Language, but it's not like I'm Vanilla Ice or anything."

*Institutional Language*

The following section provides case study data and examination of that data concerning how the participants embrace institutional language as a means of entrée into

Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Furthermore, to appeal to my sense of logic in their responses/explanations they would effectively use language that has clearly been institutionalized in them through UMC education. Therefore, my definition of institutional language is similar to Cushman's (1998) in that the oral events described in this chapter are often highly political in nature and through them these individuals have learned to assert themselves in the face of long-standing institutional influences in their daily lives. Many of the participants in this study view themselves as "others" in their UMC white communities and therefore use the literacy and rhetorical tools they've learned in their privileged education and other institutional influences to justify their appropriations. While many would contend that these individuals are in fact purveyors of dominant institutions, they believe that their interest in Hip Hop culture and Black Language sets them apart from mainstream society, that it is emblematic of their uniqueness. However their use of institutional language is not a means of survival like those in Cushman's (1998) work, it is merely a component of their rhetoric of appropriation used to impress upon an interviewer and others in mainstream society their perceptions and beliefs about Hip Hop and Black Language and about their appropriations. In short, they are well versed in the politics of institutional language because it is part of their daily lives and despite their need/want to appear as "Hip Hop" as possible they resort back to the institutional language that surrounds them in order to justify their beliefs and actions.

To clarify this component of the rhetoric of appropriation further it behooves us to look directly at how Cushman qualifies institutional language. She states that:

> ...these language events also offer us an understanding of just how politically strategic institutional language can be. To we well versed in the politics of institutional language, in short, means that a person uses a variety of signs to construct power relations between one's self and others, particularly institutional representatives;....to use language persuasively in trans-institutional contexts, that is, to be linguistically strategic in encounters with many of wider society's institutions (117-118).

In these excerpts we will clearly see how these individuals situate themselves to construct power relations between one another and the interviewer. To them I am still considered an institutional representative with both my graduate school backing and instructor status always looming in the interview. Furthermore, they evidence use of persuasive language through their knowledge of the institutions that surround them in wider society—like schools, churches, etc—to show that they recognize how others view their affinity to Hip Hop culture and Black Language but know how to either deflect that negativity or qualify/justify it is some way.

In the first set of case study data excerpts we will look at Charlie's institutional language as a means of exhibiting how man UMC white males construct and navigate their identity through the rhetoric of appropriation. In this case Charlie is clearly invoking institutional language to more concretely persuade his audience to understand his knowledge of Hip Hop culture. Charlie's educational background is based on experience. While he was not enrolled in higher education courses at the time of the interview he attended one of the premier UMC high schools in Troy, Michigan. His high school is widely known for it's commitment to excellence in scholarship as well as a robust range of extracurricular activities funded by the school. This is important to note because even though Charlie is not likely considered "educated" by mainstream society, he is in fact a product of the top 10% of American schools. Furthermore, Charlie has established

himself in and around the Detroit area as a Hip Hop artist and therefore is hip to the game

of self-promotion and performance. The following excerpt shows how Charlie is using

institutional language in linguistically strategic ways.

> Jill: Do you think that if there was no MTV VH1 and BET that there wouldn't be
> such a spread of Hip Hop?

> Charlie: I think yes and no. I think it'd be a lot less watered down I think it'd be a
> lot better. I mean when there weren't so many outlets for people to hit a lick. Now
> you just hit a lick and sold a whole bunch of records but I mean like it used to be
> about how good you were like lyrically. Just rapping and having an overall talent
> now it's just like, just putting it together and like trendy to talk about and just
> hittin a lick off the fact that you've got something trendy and played on the radio.
> Just because it's on the radio doesn't mean it's good. If it's on the radio it
> probably means it blows.

Here Charlie is embracing both Black Language ("hittin a lick") and the Language of

Wider Communication (LWC) or institutionalized language ("outlets for people", "less

watered down") to convince his audience that Hip Hop has become commercialized but

in many ways that commercialization has blazed a trail for individuals like him in the rap

game. He is negotiating his appropriation with institutional language, invoking both his

native language and Black Language in rhetorically savvy ways to appeal to others sense

of logos. Specifically he logically appeals by saying "just because it's on the radio

doesn't mean it's good." More invocation of institutional language can be seen in the

excerpt below.

> Jill: Do you think Hip Hop's gone mainstream or do you think mainstream's gone
> Hip Hop?

> Charlie: I'd say Hip Hop's gone mainstream just cause people aren't doin, they're
> not doin, what they want to do as much as they as what they're supposed to be
> doin to like get a hit. I mean I know guys who like talk about how they love Hip
> Hop but when they rap they're talking about the same things that other people
> want them to talk about so it's almost like they're not doing what's in their heart
> they're doing whatever they thinks gonna make them a buck. Like, that's kinda
> wrong.

Jill: Do you think that because Hip Hop's gone mainstream it's given you the ability to better exist in this genre or do you think you'd be doing this regardless?

Charlie: I mean I like to think I'd be makin music regardless of what kind it would be. I try to make any sort of music it's just like the only avenues I've approached have been Hip Hop it's like someone who's into folk music. I mean that's just what they're into. I know I could be into that....

Charlie is using institutional language for the purpose of constructing power relations between himself and others, particularly institutional representatives like me and others in UMC white society (Cushman, 1998). By comparing himself with others in his UMC peer group, drawing binaries between their "wrong" ideas about Hip Hop only serves to showcase that his beliefs about Hip Hop are right. You see, Charlie truly believes that he is an original, that his views on Hip Hop and his appropriations of Hip Hop culture and Black Language are progressive and justifiable because he is moral and pure in his pursuits. This can be evidenced by his statement that "the only avenues I've approached have been Hip Hop" clearly invoking an educated, rational ethos to appeal to his audience. Ultimately, it can be said that Charlie knows the game, he knows he is privileged, traditionally institutionally educated and is not afraid to use these rhetorical devices to construct an identity that is more cerebral white rapper than gansta wigga.

Jeff and Bryan on the other hand don't think they belong to the institution; they believe they are raging against the same machine as Black folk and marginalized Hip Hop headz. Like Charlie, these guys were not enrolled in higher education but were also privy to an excellent K-12 education in a highly recognized school district in Sterling Heights. Their sometimes contradicting view and use of institutional language can been seen in the following conversation regarding their views on Hip Hop and later on the topic of violence in Hip Hop.

Jeff: a few of my favorite artists, not in any order would have to be Brother Lynch, Mr. Doc, all the artists from black market.

Jill: Oh really? Who the hell are they?

Jeff: Well, um, Brother Lynch is from Sacramento so is Mr. Doc. They're all uh, from the same area, same hood as all their blocks, they got the garden block, the stuff they talk about. They're just um, very, uh, their lyrics are very gruesome.

Jill: Violent?

Jeff: Very violent, but the beats that go along with that are real smooth and old school beats. Also, that's one of them. Right now I've also been listening to a lot of Cash Money, Little Wayne.

Bryan: Number 2 on his CD is like, his music, the background music and everything it just goes with the flow of his vocals, it just goes perfect with the beat. That's like one of the things .....

Jill: Do you like them too?

Bryan: Yeah, my favorite songs like the most recent albums that came out.

Jeff: And then of course you have to support our Detroit rappers, Big Hurt....

Jill: And that's underground too considering.

Jeff: All the uh, underground rappers, M.O.B...

Bryan: The black Lagoon, that just came out, that's smooth...

In this conversation it becomes apparent that Bryan and Jeff are both invoking

institutional language ("Brother Lynch is from Sacramento"/ "And then of course you

have to support our Detroit rappers, Big Hurt..."), using signs to construct power

relations. They are both citing underground Hip Hop artists as their favorites which I

believe they do to prove their legitimacy in Hip Hop culture and to show the institution

(me) that they know their shit. Their rhetoric of appropriation is even more apparent

when Jeff states "then of course you have to support our Detroit rappers". His use of

"our" is strategic because it explicitly situates him as part of Detroit Hip Hop culture

despite the fact that he predominately exists in UMC white suburbia. I argue that Jeff and Bryan draw the most parallels to the participants in Cushman's ethnography because they are using institutional language in much the same ways as the residents of Quayville, specifically to gain entrée through authentic gatekeepers of Hip Hop culture. For them, the institutional language is not based on their UMC education but on their ghetto-cation, how much they can prove that they are knowledgeable in and part of Hip Hop culture. The following excerpt pushes this concept further by evidencing politically strategic institutional language to more concretely endear them to the Hip Hop cause and community.

> Jill: OK, you said something about the violence. What do you think about that? What do you think about violence and rap music? Do you think Eminem goes overboard sometimes?

> Jeff: I think the way that he puts things…it doesn't make me want to be violent. No if ands or buts or what not. It's just how he flows, how he puts his rhythms together and whatnot. It's just very, uh, it just intrigues me I guess. How he can think of off the wall shit and put it on a record. Like Brother Lynch he's just more underground. Same thing as Tripple Six, Three Six Mafia they are like that a lot too they're very violent and talk about selling weed, selling dope, drugs, trafficking, the whole nine yards, killin' people whatever and then off course all rappers gotta bring in how much money they make.

> Jill: Yeah, of course

> Jill: So what do you think about that? Do you think that violence and rap are related. A lot of people say that rap purports violence, that it's the reason for violence. Do you think that's true?

> Bryan: No

> Jeff: I think that's a bunch of bullshit. Um,…..

> Bryan: You turn on your basic cable and you can see violence in uh, you know, you can actually *see* it and not just hear words *about* it

> Jeff: We're talkin' they blame it on rap music. You got video games, movies, promote violence and sex…..

Bryan: (oh, everything)

Jeff: …..with rappers and everything

Clearly Jeff and Bryan are taking a stand against the predominantly UMC white media view that Hip Hop/Rap begets violence. By aligning themselves with such a rudimentary and essential belief in the Hip Hop community they feel they are further cementing their existence and legitimacy in Hip Hop culture. Their use of institutional language can be seen in the ways they support their claims. When Bryan says "you turn on your basic cable and you can see violence…actually see it and not just hear words about it" he is invoking the ethos and logos of institutional language because he is privy to that objective view. This is to say he can easily take the stance supporting Hip Hop, despite overtones of violence, because he is an UMC white male who has the privilege of seeing both sides of the argument and the ability to decide to identify with Hip Hop and he uses his knowledge of institutional language to do so. This same argument can be heard in many UMC white conversations around the country, without even knowing it Bryan is relying on his institutional savvy to prove his Hip Hop credibility.

Adam and Aren represent the smaller half of the participant pool by being actively enrolled in a higher education institution and their rhetoric of appropriation surely reflects that fact. These individuals have been instructed in the art of rhetoric and understand how to appeal to and persuade others both in and out of their peer group. They knowingly embrace institutional language in their rhetoric of appropriation to justify their likes and dislikes and their overall opinions about Hip Hop culture and Black Language.

Aren: Hip Hop is just whatever you want it to be. You can rap about whatever you want.

Aren: I mean, I think technically you could rap about whatever, I mean you could be like this guy Atmosphere who's like a white rapper from Minneapolis

Adam: Oh, he's good

Aren: Yeah, that's like one of my favorite rappers. He doesn't rap about being ganster it's just about every day struggles and the way he grew up and like a suburb where everybody's just like diggin' his stuff. Just like stuff, like white people grow up, I don't know, it's crazy

Jill : So you don't think it's a race thing?

Aren: I don't think it's a race thing, I mean it's definitely more like an African thing but I think anybody can rap if they decide they want to rap

Adam: It's more accepted among Africans but it's like if you put them in a classroom or whatever, but just like people prejudge. That's how it is with Hip Hop if you're not Black, you have more to prove. It's all about first impressions you can't be telling people like your whole life story, like why you dress like that.

Here we see a perfect example of what Cushman calls "using language persuasively in trans-institutional contexts". To be sure, Aren and Adam are not wholesale appropriators of Hip Hop culture and Black Language. As seen in previous excerpts they are largely more selective in whom, what, and how they choose to appropriate. Also, however, it is important to note that they do not think they are appropriating anything whatsoever. Aren uses logical institutional language persuasively in this trans-institutional context (the interview setting) to explain that he appreciates rap that is not "gangster" but at the same time recognizes the overall theme of "everyday struggles in Hip Hop". What is most interesting is that he is rhetorically savvy enough to hedge that statement by saying these struggles can and are parallel to how "white people grow up." Aren is careful to walk a tight rope between loving Hip Hop and unconsciously appropriating Hip Hop culture and Black Language while also maintaining a defiance that always seems to imply "Sure, I

like Hip Hop but I'm not one of them" which I infer to mean "I know enough institutional language to spin my appropriations any way I want".

When I prompt Adam about race he walks a similar line but is much more rhetorically effective in enacting his institutional language to persuade me than Aren. Adam recognizes that this world is harder to navigate for Black folk stating that, "like people prejudge". Here he is reflecting and using institutional language (the ideas of prejudging based on race, class, etc.) and knowledge (knowing that he has to be politically correct for fear of sounding racist). However, Adam goes one step further and flips the script, inverting the long held truth of Black struggle and prejudgment when he states "That's how it is with Hip Hop, if you're not Black, you have more to prove. It's all abut first impressions, you can't be telling people like your whole life story, like why you dress like that." Adam is using institutional language to persuade his audience that the current assumption in Hip Hop is that it's the white folks who have to struggle to make it, to be recognized as legit. He is using both semantic and cultural inversion in his response, flippin the script on the long held knowledge of Black oppression in America and placing that burden now on white people trying to make it in Hip Hop.

For all of these participants, institutional language is just another rhetorical device that helps them to identify with Hip Hop culture and Black Language and justify their appropriations. What the next section will show is not just another piece of the rhetoric of appropriation pie but also will lend more support as to why these UMC white males do this appropriation thing they do.

*Cultural Capital*

Perhaps the most striking data in this study is the way the participants use Hip Hop culture and Black Language as a way to gain cultural significance, to identify themselves with a culture and language that is historically, racially, and socially removed from them. Seeking acceptance is perhaps one of the most basic human conditions. In spite of ourselves most of us want to belong, to a group, a family, a religion, a culture and in this belonging we build self-worth, confidence. In essence we feel special and unique in our identity by belonging where others don't. This argument stems again from Eckert's notions of when "oppositions become mutually reinforcing". That is you feel more "in" because others are excluded or "out".

But that forces the discussion of how and why these groups or cultures form. For insight into that conundrum I look to Bourdieu's (1977) argument of culture as capital. He posits that our internal *habitus* produces individual and collective practices that often are in accordance with historical generations of similar practices. That is to say that as humans we are internally and intrinsically propelled to do the things we do, to seek identity and ways of defining ourselves within/throughout culture(s). To be sure, the UMC white males in this study are no different. They too are only human and thus in the most simplistic and basic form are also seeking identity but what makes them unique in this seemingly mundane human pursuit is that they do not look to their family and/or clan to produce their individual or collective practices. They appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language to craft an identity that is far different from the "historical generations of similar practices" that Bourdieu speaks of.

The participants in this research all appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language for the simple purpose of gaining cultural capital. For them, their white-

washed, suburban lifestyles do not appeal to them, the homogeneity is at times stifling and they yearn for a belonging that will set them apart, will form a unique identity. Hip Hop has certainly provided that space, place, and culture complete with a language. Furthermore, in mainstream society's growing acceptance to the point of obsession of/with Hip Hop culture, these UMC white males have been given a handbook of sorts, a mass marketed guide on how to be different in UMC white society while at the same time gaining acceptance in/through Hip Hop.

While older generations may view Hip Hop culture as far from their notions of capital and worth as possible, the younger generations (for the purposes of this study ages 18-30) see Hip Hop as the epitome of gaining social, economic, and ethnic capital through Hip Hop culture. My experience interviewing the individuals for this case study analysis fully proves this assertion. During this process I have found cultural capital the most simple but powerful motivation behind the rhetoric of appropriation. Simply, the individuals in this study appropriate to gain culture and by appropriating that culture they gain uniqueness and in turn admiration from those stuck in the UMC white homogenous society that surrounds them. The following excerpts clearly show how the participants in this study are claiming identity in their pursuit and sometimes possession of cultural capital through their use of Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriations.

Jill: Why do you think so many UMC white males follow Hip Hop?

Charlie: I just think sometimes that people like admire people who are just willing to say, just lay it on the line so to speak, just willing to say whatever, however, or how much just because that's where they're from. They don't know how to say it any better than just like this is what I'm gonna say. I think that people are here to remind us of that because you're all goin through the same thing. I mean maybe you're not like goin through the same personal struggle but everyone deals with money, I mean they're all like dealing with love, with family, with their job, with whatever. I mean those are topics that are relatable.

In the above response Charlie is clearly setting up a rhetorical appeal that will serve to justify his identity through Hip Hop. To make others believe his existence and appropriation of this culture and language is justifiable he uses broad and common human unifiers, saying "everyone deals with money…they're all dealing with love, with family, with their job, with whatever". He has to construct Hip Hop as a culture of the people, all people, in order for his argument—and more so his rhetoric of appropriation— to be effective.

> Jill: Do you think a lot of UMC white males try to emulate Hip Hop culture?
>
> Charlie: Oh, for sure. I mean but that's the difference between. I wouldn't say because they're emulating it they're to use that phrase again 'faking the funk' I mean some people are doing because that's just the way they were like what they feel and there's other people doing it because they think that's cool. I mean they get like the SUV with like the 24 inch rims and all that stuff. I mean some people are just really into all that stuff and some people are just doing that because that's what's expected of someone who listens to all that stuff or is trying to play like a character. I mean I like always relate rap to like wrestling. Like I mean people have like a persona. I mean Hulk Hogan is not always Hulk Hogan he's like only hulk Hogan when he's in the ring. I mean when you're rappin you have to affect that personality. I mean I don't think those guys in ICP are like going home with the makeup on like that's just the character. You're gonna do what you gotta do to entertain people. It's all just trying to keep it relatable and real to yourself.

He might as well have said "it's all just keeping it commercial" rather than "relatable and real to yourself". In this way he is painting a new picture of Hip Hop, one that is not born out of marginalized peoples oppression and struggle but one that is based on "persona", that it can be morphed and stretched to fit any person, place, or thing as long as "people are doing because that's just the way they were like what they feel". To be sure, this is exactly how Charlie serves to justify his identity through Hip Hop. He can readily use this argument when his legitimacy and authenticity in Hip Hop is in question. Charlie craves a culture other than mainstream whiteness but to gain access to that culture he has

to do so on his own terms, thus he uses the rhetoric of appropriation to craft a Hip Hop culture that fits for him.

Charlie's musings evidence a pursuit of cultural capital with the mention of "when you're rappin you have to affect that personality" hinting that he may approach his own performance and real life identity in the same way. If Hip Hop is like professional wrestling that means everyone is fake and everyone is participating in the façade for a buck and that inauthenticity is totally acceptable. The problem is that most Hip Hop headz, scholars, and artists would argue that Hip Hop culture thrives on the authentic, was born out of the real. That rap is the music, Hip Hop is the culture (Pough, 2001). For UMC white males like Charlie to define it as fakery in order to more easily fit into a culture for the purposes of gaining social and cultural capital in their peer groups or in greater Hip Hop culture is highly problematic and in many cases offensive. Here again we see an instance of the rhetoric of appropriation serving to flip the script on what Hip Hop culture and Black Language really are and strives to maintain.

It's in Jeff and Bryan's continued discussion about violence in Hip Hop that we see exactly how much cultural capital Hip Hop holds. Unlike Charlie, Jeff and Bryan are not trying to become legitimate in the Hip Hop community because they feel they already are. Their love and interest in Hip Hop culture stems from a much clearer pursuit for cultural capital, that is they are more "hard" and masculine by associating with and appropriating Hip Hop culture and Black Language.

> Jill: Do you think that our generation, that through this music, do you think that they treat women differently? Do you think some men who don't have any other men in their lives, they listen to this music and think it's ok to treat women in that way? Or do you think it's the same as violence?

Jeff: I think that, they uh, they focus just too much on…some guys in rap portray the way they rap as the way they portray how they live, that doesn't mean they don't know how to live. It doesn't mean that anyone who listens to it, hip-hop and rap, are gonna try and portray the same things, the same type of life.

Jill: OK

Jeff: Especially, if things with underground rappers. That's all they know how to do. Run the streets, hustle. That's it.

Jill: Yeah

Jeff: Me, personally being a suburban white kid, I'm not gonna try and go out and run the streets.

Jill: So you don't identify…Do you identify with what they're rapping about? Do you feel that some of it speaks to you directly?

Bryan: Oh, well yeah, I'm sure you know. I know that we've both seen, I mean, things that they do rap about, you know people gettin' killed and, you know, I've seen, you know, people die and I mean, fightin' you know, selling drugs, whatever. I've seen it all, it's just not intertwined with my life style as much as it may be with theirs because they see it everyday, you know, it's a difference between a community and where you live and it's like uh, I guess it's based on where, you know, where you live, where you're brought up and how things were when you were a child, you know.

When Jeff says "That's all they know how to do. Run the streets, hustle. That's it" he is invoking a rhetoric of appropriation to both support his appropriated community despite some negative stereotypes and crafting his own identity by ethically appealing to the audience that he is "hard" enough to know that a hustler's way of life is not a choice but a product of culture. Even more rank with the pursuit of cultural capital is Bryan's belief that his situation and struggles are equitable to those rapped about in Hip Hop music.

By positing that "we've both seen…you know people gettin' killed…and fightin' you know, selling drugs" he is establishing his cultural capital, a culture nor a capital that would be possible if not for his appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Here, Bryan is asserting his masculine/ghetto identity through experiences that are largely

thought to be predominant in urban Hip Hop culture. By observing these things he feels that he has then gained entrée into the culture of Hip Hop. Of course, it has been shown through previous evidence that he has attempted to enter the culture and speak the language largely through appropriation. This is just another example of the rhetoric of appropriation that surrounds the justifications and explanations of UMC white males who are so starved for culture they have to steal another's and when that isn't enough they have to make it theirs, again flippin the cultural script.

It is only fair to counter the overtly obvious appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language with evidence from Adam and Aren our resident college co-eds. They too crave belonging to a more interesting and exotic culture, if only to belong to the growing masses of appropriators everywhere, but they don't think they are part of the culture at all despite their Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriations evidence in earlier excerpts.

> Jill: Alright, would you guys like consider yourselves part of Hip Hop culture or no?
>
> Aren: I mean, I don't really think so, I mean I grew up in Detroit so I've always grown up with this taste for like Bone Thugs N Harmony and like Tupac. I mean that's still like one of my favorite cd's of all time. Like, I mean I've always grown up with Hip Hop and rap but I mean I don't go around like acting like I'm something I'm not, technically
>
> Adam: Yeah, same. It's like, just like by staying true to your culture, like staying true to your Hip Hop culture, it's like trying to express yourself or whatever like if somethin' goes down or something, not like talkin' like your in a rap battle but basically it's just like. I don't feel it necessary to like dress how like I see in the videos today or whatever. I try to like, get real.

The fact that Aren says "I grew up in Detroit" is an excellent example of his rhetoric of appropriation. Detroit proper holds considerable cultural cache for white folk, to be white and from Detroit is incredibly rare and holds a certain amount clout with certain Black

communities. This is because white people who have remained in Detroit after the "white flight" of the 60's and 70's or those who have returned to the city during the early 21st century Renaissance are seen as contributors to the well-being of the city, and the citizens left behind to fight for it. However, Aren did not grow up *in* Detroit, he was born and raised in the northwest suburbs and the fact that he invokes Detroit as his home followed by the symbolization of various Hip Hop artists is indicative of a pursuit for cultural capital. Aren knows that saying you are from Detroit proper and "always grown up with Hip Hop and rap" is synonymous for many Hip Hoppers with being part of Hip Hop culture and being down for the cause—both of which Aren specifically states he is not. This begs the question, why invoke Detroit and Hip Hop artists? I argue Aren chooses this rhetorical strategy as a way to gain cultural capital within his peer group and dominant society without going all the way like Jeff and Bryan. Therefore, Aren is what I would call a neo-wigga, versus Jeff and Bryan who could easily pass as wigga[10].

At first Adam seems to agree with Aren's take on Hip Hop culture but then virtually negates everything Aren posited in his response. Adam's pursuit of cultural capital is clear when he states "It's like staying true to your culture, like staying true to your Hip Hop culture" because he obviously feels he has some part in/of Hip Hop culture by arguing his need to "get real", a common element in Hip Hop. Furthermore, Adam appropriates Black Language in his explanation of Hip Hop culture saying "if somethin goes down" a common Black Language phrase for a negative occurrence or happening. His use of Black Language at this juncture clearly shows his need to stand up and identify himself as legitimate in Hip Hop culture. For all of these individuals appropriating Hip

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[10] Both these terms, and my categorization and analysis of their personifications will be discussed at length in Chapter 5.

Hop culture and Black Language is a way to get culture, to identify oneself outside of UMC suburban-hood.

**Conclusion**

The rhetoric of appropriation of UMC white males is indeed flippin the script on Hip Hop culture and Black Language. The responses of the participants contained in this chapter are much more than vague musings about likes and dislikes. They are powerful portrayals of how the phenomenon of appropriation is seeking, and in many cases succeeding, in changing the way Hip Hop culture and Black Language is viewed by mainstream society. These individuals are crafting identities based on how they view, define, and use Hip Hop culture and Black Language and are thereby negating many of the basic principles and tenets long held in Hip Hop and Black oral tradition and history. Ultimately, they are invoking a rhetoric of appropriation to create and maintain their own versions of Hip Hop culture and Black Language and in doing so are changing the very basic elements of what they seek to appropriate. Whether they are defining themselves and their appropriations through symbolization, invocation of institutional language, and/or a pursuit of cultural capital they are becoming more rhetorically savvy in how to justify and mitigate their appropriations to not only their peer groups but to the larger audience of mainstream society.

True, many of the participants appropriations seem mundane, however much of how they justify and deny aspects of long held beliefs about Hip Hop culture, minority oppression and marginalized struggle is problematic for the future of Hip Hop culture and Black Language. If this small sampling of UMC white males is a foreshadowing of how the commercialization and "mainstreaming" of Hip Hop will affect the overall culture

and language then it is our duty as scholars and teachers to research the rhetoric of appropriation more fully so as to educate ourselves and our students concerning both the positive and negative consequences and outcomes of appropriation.

The next chapter will deal more specifically with the categorization of the 30 participants in this study. Namely, UMC white males who evidence the rhetoric of appropriation can be filed into two complex categories, wiggas and neo-wiggas. This categorization seeks to clearly portray the varying levels of appropriation that occur in UMC white male appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language in order to more fully understand the impetus and catalysts for this phenomenological behavior.

## Chapter 5: Representin the Rhetoric of Appropriation: Wiggas and Neo-Wiggas

*Yeah, I mean on some level Hip Hop is about struggle and everyone has their struggle and stuff. I don't really feel like I appropriated anything by listening to the music, I mean I don't go around acting all gangster. So I mean it's just music, it's no different than like listening to like Bob Dylan. I think it's just soul and poetry.*

*--Aren (2005)*

*It was not long before similarly marginalized black and Hispanic communities in other cities picked up on the tenor and energy in New York Hip Hop. Within a decade, Los Angeles County (especially Compton), Oakland, Detroit, Chicago, Houston, Atlanta, Miami, Newark, and Trenton, Roxbury, and Philadelphia, have developed local Hip Hop scenes that link various regional postindustrial urban experiences of alienation, unemployment, police harassment, social, and economic isolation to their local and specific experience via Hip Hop's language, style and attitude…In every region, Hip Hop articulates a sense of entitlement and takes pleasure in aggressive insubordination.*

-- Tricia Rose (1994)

*It's why we sing for these kids that don't have a thing*
*Except for a dream and a fucking rap magazine*
*Who post pinup pictures on their walls all day long*
*Idolize their favorite rappers and know all they songs*
*Or for anyone who's ever been through shit in they lives*
*So they sit and they cry at night, wishing they die*
*Till they throw on a rap record, and they sit and they vibe*
*We're nothing to you, but we're the fuckin' shit in their eyes*

--Eminem, "Sing" (2004)

There is no doubt that Hip Hop and Black Language at their best are empowering, poetry that fills and fires the soul. At their worst they can be watered down, commercialized, virtually unrecognizable by the most advanced Hip Hop head or sociolinguistic scholar. Aren, Tricia Rose, and Eminem are arguing that positive notion of Hip Hop music is indeed about struggle, that in many ways gives fuel to the artistry, the soul of Hip Hop culture. What perhaps is most notable is Rose's (1994) argument that "In every region, Hip Hop articulates a sense of entitlement and takes pleasure in aggressive

insubordination" (60). This single statement best sums up the allure, promise, and in some ways curse, of Hip Hop. While it may have started and been celebrated in urban centers, Hip Hop and Black Language is irrefutably present in "every region" and that sense of entitlement and taking pleasure in hard core insubordination is not just relegated to marginalized Black and Hispanic communities any more. Eminem further articulates this belief and justifies it in positing that Hip Hop is "for anyone who's ever been through shit in their lives" regardless of race, religion, culture, and language.

The purpose of this chapter is to categorize the participants of this study as a heuristic to more fully understand and examine the impetus and justifications of UMC white male appropriation. To place the participants in the neo-wigga or wigga camp is to begin to develop methods to more clearly define the phenomenon of Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation. As Boyd (2002) posits "In a world where the authentic is consistently problematized, it is often hard to distinguish where this appropriation takes place" (123), a problem this chapter seeks to mitigate. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to evidence the variance of the participant's appropriations. This means that although the preceding chapters served to show the common elements in their rhetoric of appropriation this chapter serves as a more critical analysis within the phenomenon that proves how UMC white males who appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language do so to different degrees. While I am aware that my methodology is limited in assuming too much about these individuals from mere case study interviews, I feel strongly that how they responded in our particular rhetorical situation can be used as a solid beginning to understanding the commonalities and the differences in this particular group of appropriators.

To frame this discussion I am relying on the methodological implications of rhetoric as a heuristic/construct (Lindquist, 2002) established in Chapter 3 in order to examine identity formation through appropriation. That is, I will continue to see argumentation and conversation as a means to critically and rhetorically analyze the responses of the participants for the rhetoric of appropriation (symbolization, institutional language, and pursuit of cultural capital). Furthermore, I am working with notions about white male appropriation of Hip Hop provided by scholars such as Kitwana (2005), Smitherman (2006), and Boyd (2002) to aid in framing my own interpretations and conclusions about how and why these UMC white males appropriate not just Hip Hop but Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Specifically this chapter will delve deeper into the reasons why UMC white males like Hip Hop as a way of detailing their appropriations. While many people may argue that work like this has been done before, namely Kitwana's *Why White Kids Love Hip Hop*, it is important to note that I am building off some of these same theories and methodologies used in this text and others like it. For example, I find the following discussion from Kitwana's text about the complexity of the individual imperative to situating the work that I am doing:

> Why do white kids love Hip Hop? The answers are endless. But the further you dig into individual lives, the more layers of complexity you're likely to find. Race in America is complicated by many factors. Old racial politics and new racial politics collide with regional differences, personal experience, family history, pop culture, and individual experience. Each person has a unique story that brought him or her to Hip Hop. Looking at the micro-reasons as well as the macro ones help us make sense of a contemporary Hip Hop scene in which a new generation is affected by America's racial history and in the process is constructing new politics...Instead Hip Hop is framework, a culture that has brought young people together and provides a public space that they can communicate within unrestricted by the old obstacles. Simultaneously, young whites are engaging with Black youth culture just as corporate culture has become a tool for marketing everything, even Blackness, via popular culture. In short, America has changed (78-79).

To be sure, to contemplate the big picture of UMC white male appropriation we must look at these individuals more closely and recognize the unique contextual situations and idiosyncrasies of the participants. These unique stories help us to draw macro conclusions about this phenomenon and in this chapter I will seek to do so by showing how these idiosyncrasies can be categorized in order to more clearly see both the variances in UMC white male appropriation as well as the bigger picture of Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation in society writ large. Therefore, what is unique about my work is that unlike Kitwana and others like him, I am not speculating based on a handful of casual interactions and observations over the years concerning white people who love Hip Hop. I am looking both at the rhetoric and language contained in the participant responses and the context/background that made them eligible for this kind of study, how they came to love and embrace Hip Hop. These findings will undoubtedly present implications concerning how and why UMC white males appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language and the impact these appropriations have on our academic, public, and private spaces.

The following sections use detailed case study analysis of 4 study participants (Chet, Dallas, Greg, and Cory) to clearly construct the variances evidenced in their responses to show how they can be categorized by their rhetoric of appropriation into either wiggas or neo-wiggas and more importantly what these variations can teach us about the growing phenomenon of UMC white male appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language.

**Wiggas**

*And I just do not got the patience*

*To deal with these cocky Caucasians*
*Who think I'm some wigger who just tries to be black*
*Cause I talk with an accent, and grab on my balls,*
*So they always keep askin the same fuckin questions*
*What school did I go to, what hood I grew up in*

<div align="right">

*--Eminem, "The Way I am"*

</div>

Ah, Eminem. On one hand the consummate wigga, fighting the good fight for all the misunderstood white boys out there in suburbia. On the other, a legitimately talented rapper who, while white, can be considered socialized black. This is to say that despite his skin color his language and identifying culture is predominately and authentically black. Therein lies the rage. Eminem, like most wigga's growing up, does not want to be considered a wigga, he wants to be considered black. I firmly agree with Boyd (2002) who contends that "we cannot question his authenticity, nor can we question his right to rap, considering that Hip Hop culture has been out in the open and ready to be appropriated for so long" (128). Like many white males (UMC, LMC, MC, etc.) who identify strongly with Hip Hop culture and Black Language, Eminem knows that a wigga is on many levels considered a fake by society, as Charlie in Chapter 4 would say "fakin the funk". For these individuals that is the last thing they want to be aligned with, they so vehemently crave acceptance into and through Hip Hop culture and Black Language, it is so much a part of the identity they've crafted for themselves, that they will do anything to appropriate all that they feel is authentic and legitimate in the culture and language to be considered more "real" themselves. In support of this argument Boyd (2002) states:

> If a Black person appropriates Whiteness, he or she is seen as a sellout, yet when a White person appropriates Blackness, he or she is seen as cool. White acceptance of and White participation in a Black form confers something like a legitimacy, and in a world defined by White supremacy, this sort of hegemonic relationship is almost endemic to the production of culture (137).

<div align="center">

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Unfortunately for these individuals, their efforts only serve to more firmly establish them as wiggas. The harder they try to be black the easier it is for them to be labeled as a wigga. Their pursuit for legitimacy and belonging in Hip Hop culture almost certainly warrants their exclusion from mainstream white society and thus stigmatizes them as cultural wannabes.

Before I get too far ahead of myself, it is important to clearly define what I mean by wigga. To do so we must first begin with the various definitions presented by Hip Hop studies scholars concerning the word "wigger". Of course, as earlier stated wigger is considered a culmination of the words white and nigger. Offensive, yes. Readily used by everyone trying to wrap their brains around white kids involvement in Hip Hop, to be sure. Bakari Kitwana posits that the term wigger defies and exaggerates reality (2005) and he defines a wigger as "a young white who wants desperately to be down with Hip Hop, who identifies more strongly with Black culture than white" (113). While I agree with Kitwana's definition I would like to both elaborate upon it and offer my own interpretation and definition of a wigga versus a wigger. The difference is this: a wigger is a primarily outdated term because it exemplifies a young white male who wants to be down with Hip Hop, a wigga (white nigga) is someone who has in many ways become or evolved into being down with Hip Hop.

The best way to explain the difference is similar to the way many people evidence the difference between nigger and nigga. Nigger in 2007 America is now largely considered by black, white, and Hispanic communities to be offensive and is predominately used as a highly negative and offensive racial slur against black folk. Even Webster's Dictionary changed it's entry on nigger to reflect this, transcribing their first

definition of the term as "offensive". Nigga, on the other hand, best summarized by

Smitherman (2006) is:

> used to *address* another African American, as a *greeting*, or to *refer*, to a Brotha or Sista. So it's semantically inaccurate when the everyday, conversational use of nigga is critiqued by saying "They call each other nigga all the time"... Nigga is a versatile, complex term that serves many purposes (52-53).

Another definition is offered by Kelley (1994) stating that "nigga does not mean black as

much as it means being of product of the post-industrial ghetto" (210). So it's safe to say

that "nigger" is a predominately derogatory term whereas nigga has much more complex

meanings within the Hip Hop community but is mostly used in amiable ways.

Furthermore, it can be posited that "nigga" is not exclusive to black folk, that it can and is

used for individuals who may have been socialized black (like Eminem) or those who are

marginalized as part of urban communities.

I posit a clear distinction between the terms wigger and wigga because even

though both are considered to carry negative connotations for both white and black folk,

wigger's roots are too close to nigger for my liking. That is, the UMC white males in this

study are in no way trying to be offensive or to appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black

Language out of malicious intent or desire to be oppressed and degraded. To me, that is

what wigger represents, too much of a connection to a deeper pain and history that is lost

on most white folk. Wigga however evokes the familiarity and amiability of the black

communities use of nigga. That is to say that while most of these participants would not

want to be considered wiggers or wiggas, the term wigga infers a connection with Hip

Hop culture and Black Language. Wigger breeds disenfranchisement from Hip Hop

culture, wigga connotates the longing but also the mild acceptance and full commitment

to Hip Hop.

Overall it is my belief that wiggas do indeed crave Blackness through appropriating Hip Hop culture and Black Language but in doing so they have also made themselves part of Hip Hop culture due to their involvement in creating a new, appropriated version of Hip Hop culture and Black Language. To be sure, they are not fully accepted into the Black community, but in many social circles they are considered to have appropriated so much of Hip Hop culture and Black Language that while others may consider them wannabes or wiggers their knowledge and rhetoric of appropriation is savvy enough to hold a space for them in the culture and language they so crave, and in many cases this is true, that they do indeed belong to Hip Hop even if it is the appropriated version.

To be as explicit as possible the following are what I deem to be common wigga traits and characteristics:

- Wiggas walk the walk and talk the talk. They emulate Black dress and speech and if their skin privilege was not there to impede them, could easily pass as your average Brotha.

- Wiggas identify with Hip Hop, they feel that the oppression and degradation rapped about in the lyrics literally speaks to them and that it is their struggle as well.

- Wiggas know that they are knowingly bringing a negative stereotype and stigma onto themselves and they do not care, this is what makes them seem hard, more street, further authenticating their stature and uniqueness in mainstream white society.

- Wiggas are appropriating Blackness, not just Hip Hop culture and Black Language. They use "acting" black as a process of identity formation and feel connected to Hip Hop because it is still largely considered black music.

With these characteristics firmly established I will support my argument and categorization concerning wiggas with more detailed original case study data of two participants, Greg and Cory. By closely examining my conversations with these

participants it is my goal to make evident that even though the rhetoric of appropriation varies depending on the individual, it can be categorized specifically between two groups: the wiggas and the neo-wiggas. Dividing the participants into these two categories serves primarily as a way to show more clearly how UMC white males appropriate culture and language.

Spradely (1979) suggests that culture is "the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior" (5), which is largely what is occurring in the Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation phenomenon. For me these variances can be qualified through defining and analyzing wiggas and neo-wiggas. Greg and Cory are the two participants in this study who I felt evidenced the most wigga qualities in their rhetoric and lifestyle.

*Greg*

Of all my participants Greg is the most socialized "black". By that I mean if it weren't for the fact that his light skin and eyes give him away, everything else about him could be considered stereotypically black. Greg has a static wigga wardrobe consisting of white T-shirt's, baggy dark denim jeans, white Adidas or Zoo York sneakers, and a white New York Yankees baseball cap with dark blue stitching worn crooked to the right side of his head. This is his uniform and in the two years I've known him during the course of this study he wears nothing else.

His voice is a low, steady drawl. If I had my eyes closed when he talks I swear I could be listening to Jay-Z. His language is always peppered with Black Language lexicon and varying degrees of tonal semantics. Though he is not always articulate in representing himself he proliferates an air of confidence and self-assuredness.

Greg is from an UMC family in Sterling Heights and never excelled at school, to say the least. He actually dropped out of the traditional public high school in the area to attend an "alternative" trade focused high school in the neighboring city of Warren. Though Greg had always considered himself a devoted fan of Hip Hop it wasn't until he entered the alternative high school that he really found kinship in his appropriations. It was there that he met other like minded individuals that undoubtedly had an effect on his socialization and thus became part of the catalyst for more flagrant appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Safe in the confines of his peers Greg cultivated a clear wigga identity, one that he still holds to today. The following is an excerpt from our 4 hour long conversation:

Jill: So, why do you like Hip Hop?

Greg: Uh, I guess cause I always liked the way it sounded and uh, that a lot of it really was part of my life. I don't know....I just love Hip Hop.. it's like part of me or something

Jill: So do you feel that what rappers are talking about in their songs relates to you? Do you identify with what they're rapping about?

Greg: Hell yeah! I mean, I had it rough. I hated school and all the jocks and preps thought I was some kind of loser cause of the way I dress and act. I'm not real smart neither so I was all failing my classes and shit. The only thing I liked was like drafting and drawing so I figured all my friends went to Niles [the alternative high school] so maybe I'd just be better off there. Man, was my moms pissed! Anyways though, yeah, I mean Hip Hop is all about struggling and yo, I've struggled.

Jill: So what specific rap artist or song do you think is really reflective of how you feel, of your life?

Greg: Um, uh....that's a tough one...Definitely DMX and oh, probably Tupac...

Jill: Why DMX and Tupac?

Greg: Well, I guess it's like, uh...DMX was what I was listenin too a lot when I switched schools and he was all talking about how he's been through tough times

and is better for it. I guess, I like DMX because he gets real angry and his lyrics and lets it all out, and I needed to let it all out ya, know?

Jill: What did you need to let out?

Greg: That I was like all pissed off and all about people judging me and shit and like telling me I can't be on the teams and thinking I'm some sort of loser cause I like Hip Hop so much, I guess....

Jill: Do you think these people considered you or maybe still consider you a wigga?

Greg: Oh, for sho! Like now that Eminems famous and shit it's like everyone thinks I'm trying to be like him but I was like into wearin what I wear and listenin to Hip Hop and all that waaay before Eminem.

Jill: So do you think you're a wigga?

Greg: Ha-ha...no...I'm just a white kid that likes Hip Hop. I mean, I just like, I guess I just like the fashion and the music and so much that I guess I start to sound like rappers and shit. I don't know, I don't like to be called a wigga cause wiggas are fake and I'm not fake. I've seen shit, ya know? I've had tough shit in my life and most wiggas are just frontin'

Greg portrays many wigga qualities in this interview excerpt. First, he relies on his belief that Hip Hop is something akin to him, to his life and therefore that is why he likes it. When he states "it's like part of me or something" he is situating himself as part of Hip Hop culture. Furthermore, he solidifies his persona as a wigga when he connects his life struggles with those rapped about in Hip Hop. He repeatedly states "I had it rough" or "I struggled" in essence to appeal to his audience that he has legitimacy, that he is part of Hip Hop because his life obstacles parallel those of the minority urban youth whose voices dominate Hip Hop. Perhaps most pertinent to this study is his insistence and repetition of his hard times to establish himself rhetorically as an authentic member of the Hip Hop community. Though I cannot deny that his life has at times been tough it is interesting to note that he equates his struggles with the long history of degradation and

oppression that occurred to those who created Hip Hop and that those struggles are at the core of the culture. To Greg, there is no difference between the struggles of black and minority folk and his own.

For Greg the strongest evidence that posits him as a wigga is his appropriation of Black Language. Greg talks very "hard". That is, he invokes a wide range of tonal semantics to emphasize his points. When he says "Hip Hop is all about struggling and yo, I've struggled" his tone and inflection is that of a native Black Language speaker placing emphasis on the "yo". He even performs a brief suck teeth (Rickford, 1996) noise before the "yo", a common practice in Black Language to show emphasis and disgust or annoyance with what the speaker is saying. By invoking these Black Language traits in such a way he is clearly positioning himself as one who is knowledgeable about how Black folk speak and act and has appropriated these gestures, lexical items, and semantics to strengthen his own argumentation and rhetoric.

Greg further evidences Black Language appropriation with his frequent g-deletion (wearin, listenin) and lexicon (frontin, yo, fo sho!). Like his use of "yo", his utterance of "fo sho" is classic Black Language appropriation wigga behavior because he is using it to agree with the fact that people may view him negatively as a wigga but more importantly he says it to prove that he talks the talk and because "wiggas are fake and I'm not fake". Greg's use of authentic Black Language is meant to undoubtedly prove that he is in fact "real" to his audience. Though he may or may not be cognizant of this rhetorical appeal he is in fact appropriating Black Language to appear more authentically black, despite that he is white and upper middle class.

We can further see his pursuit of authenticity in our discussion of whether or not he is a wigga. Like Eminem, Greg views the concept of label of a wigga to be negative, in his words "fake". Unlike Eminem, Greg was NOT socialized black, he grew up surrounded by white people doing culturally white things. Greg is clear that he believes himself to be "just a white kid that likes Hip Hop" and this clarity of conviction is what leads me to argue that he is in fact a wigga. As earlier stated a wigga's goal is achieving an authentic persona of blackness and therefore they refuse to believe that they are a wigga, the epitome of fake blackness.

To connect Greg's wigga categorization to the broader discussion of the rhetoric of appropriation I argue that these interview responses are rooted firmly in the pursuit for cultural capital and symbolization. Greg is adamant that his audience understand that he has had a life different from that of his UMC white male peers, that his experiences are unique. In turn these experiences posit a certain amount of cultural capital. That is not to say that Greg sought out to struggle in order to achieve cultural capital but that he is using these negative experiences to "flip the script" into something positive, an entrée into Hip Hop culture. His struggles are his badge of honor, something that makes him more "Hip Hop" and more legitimate in that culture.

Greg's clothing, language, and invocation of Eminem as binary to himself can be seen as signing or symbolization of his identity through Hip Hop. As earlier stated he clearly dresses as a stereotypical wigga, and clothing is perhaps the most overt form of symbolization in the process of identity formation (Eckert, 1989). By dressing the way he does Greg is positing himself as part of something, part of the social and habitual practices of those active and visible in Hip Hop culture. If one were to merely glance at

him on the street it would be obvious that at the least he has an affinity for Hip Hop and at the most is a full-blown wigga. His appropriation of Black Language can be seen as his way of linguistically positing his membership in Hip Hop culture. He states that, "I guess I just like the fashion and the music and so much that I guess I start to sound like rappers and shit". Here he is affirming the assumption that many people consider him to talk and act like Hip Hop artists and that is because he is an avid and vehement fan.

What I find most interesting about Greg's rhetoric of appropriation through symbolization is his construction of a binary between himself and Eminem. He wants to make it clear that his identity was not constructed post Eminem's success stating "Like now that Eminem's famous and shit it's like everyone thinks I'm trying to be like him but I was like into wearin what I wear and listenin to Hip Hop and all that waaay before Eminem". I find this binary telling because it shows that Greg is aware of how others view him as a wigga but that he believes his language, thoughts, actions are less "wigga" because he spoke, thought, and acted this way before Eminem made it cool to do so. This can be interpreted to mean that he feels more legitimate and justified in his position in Hip Hop culture because he showed interest and commitment before the rest of mainstream society.

*Cory*

Like Greg, Cory had the whole wigga appearance down, unlike Greg however Cory was much more soft spoken. Cory wore the baggy jeans, white T, and baseball cap but was much less chatty or forthcoming than Greg, and seemed to just want to stick to what I felt were mildly cursory answers to my queries. Perhaps, this is because Cory is supremely pre-occupied with his day to day responsibilities as a young father and factory

line worker. Though Cory was raised in an UMC household and suburb he was quickly beginning to blur the line into middle class. Despite this factor I've included him in this study because I think he is a great example of a true wigga, an individual who is not conscious of his identity choices as being predominately due to Hip Hop but just lives his life in the only way he knows how. For Cory, Hip Hop is just about beats and music but his language and dress communicate a completely different story.

I met Cory through Jeff and Bryan. At first, I was unsure of whether Cory would be a good candidate for this study because he was so incredibly quiet. Even though he didn't say much in our first few casual meetings I was sure I could detect an air of introspection about him, that he had plenty to say but was waiting for the opportune moment. That being said Cory didn't give me a whole lot to work with but the fact that he had quite a bit of responsibility for his age (22), I thought it would be interesting to hear what he had to say about Hip Hop, namely why someone so seemingly quiet and reserved like him would like such a loud, brash genre of music and flashy, gritty culture. The following in an excerpt from our interview session together:

> Jill: Let me ask you something, since you have a daughter, would you want her listening to rap? What do you think of how women are portrayed in rap music? Do you have any problem with that? Do you think that's ok? Would you want Jordan to listen to that music? If they were rappin' about your daughter, how would that make you feel?

> Cory: Well, you know, First off she can, you know, listen to anything she cares, it's pretty much music, and to her ears it's good music, then you know. I'll listen to anything I think is good, Good music is good music....

> Jill: So, it doesn't bother you

> Cory: I mean, no it doesn't, no. If she wants to listen to it or you know , maybe she'll like country music you know. If she did like rap music that would be fine with me.

Jill: Do you like hip/hop rap why?

Cory: Yes, obviously

Jill: Why?

Cory: Hip Hop it has like....because, I like beats, beats that goes with hip-hop the whole theme of hip-hop.....it's just, it's good music. For me um, I also like the beats....a very big fan of the beats, considering I uh... dancing and what not more like the lyrics, the lyrics crack me up. More like when you go to a club, when you go to a club to don't hang out to heavy metal unlike you're in that sort of club and most clubs aren't like that so uh, dance music. Can't really get any better.

Jill: So who's your favorite hip/hop rap artists?

Cory: Wow. Ha-ha

Jill: Top three?

Jill: It's hard huh?

Cory: Yeah, there's so many good ones.

Overall this excerpt shows that Cory is a great example of a wigga because he both dresses and acts the part and is simplistic in his belief about why he does so. For Cory his identity is basically established around the fact that he likes Hip Hop for it's musical qualities. He wears clothes that are indicative of the Hip Hop culture and community because that is what he sees in the popular culture media portrayal of Hip Hop music, he listens to the music, likes the beats and lyrics and therefore is comfortable in emulating that style and outlook in his own life. While this observation may seem overtly simplistic this rationalization is truly indicative of UMC white male wiggas. They feel as though they have enough going on in their lives, for Cory dealing with the stresses of parenthood, work, and the expectations and confines of an UMC existence, and

therefore seek out Hip Hop as a way to escape these seemingly mundane issues in their lives.

Though I am aware my case study methodology is limited in its ability to determine transparency through my brief interaction with Cory, I am led to infer that he does not seem to be consciously ignorant of Hip Hop history and struggle but more so cognizant of what he likes recreationally and that plays out in his formation of identity. Hip Hop does not define him, it is merely a music he loves, listens to, dances to. It is a form of release that he creates for himself everyday in his conscious choice to put on the wigga uniform. Cory cannot be bothered with linguistic or cultural implications of his appropriation. He is what he is and because of that attitude he is situated firmly in the wigga camp.

## Neo-wiggas

Ladies and gentlemen it is my pleasure to introduce to you the neo-wigga. He is largely a construct of uniquely American design, based on the changing face of race in this country. He is native to UMC white communities, is educated, and has a good, well paying job. He has emerged rhetorically savvier than his wigga counterpart due to paying close attention to the linguistic and cultural tutorial that is played out daily on our national media outlets and in the entertainment industry. If not for the mass consumption and appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language in mainstream society the neo-wigga would not exist. He has taken all the most pertinent parts of this appropriation and flipped it just so to craft an identity that is leaner, smarter, and more renaissance than your average wigga. Kitwana (2005) posits that young preppy white kids "want one foot in their comfort zone—white elite circles—a few toes dabbling in white youth cool and a

few others in their interaction with a handful of Black friends" (123). I find this to be an excellent definition for neo-wigga's. They only appropriate carefully selected Black traits and daily expertly traverse the line between easily recognizable appropriator and guy who just likes Hip Hop. To be more specific here are their most noticeable common characteristics and traits of a neo-wigga:

- Neo-wiggas are extremely adept at code switching. They know when to invoke Black Language and when to seamlessly transition into the LWC. They are aware of their audience. They also use Black Language much less often than wiggas.

- Neo-wiggas dress sharply. That is they appropriate the finer things in Hip Hop culture and style. Think the clothing styles of Diddy, Kanye and Common rather than Snoop Dogg, Eminem, and/or Lil John.

- Neo-wiggas predominately know the history of Hip Hop. Unlike wiggas, they are aware of the roots and the struggle, how Hip Hop came to be.

- Neo-wiggas are educated past high school.

- Neo-wiggas have higher paying jobs than wiggas.

- Neo-wiggas are Hip Hop connoisseurs and consumers. Because they have some money they spend it on the latest Hip Hop trends and fads. This is reflected in either how they dress, what they drive, and/or how they speak.

- For neo-wiggas Hip Hop is not considered an identity or way of life, it is a music and culture they identify with but it does not define them.

Like all individuals, neo-wiggas still have their idiosyncrasies. This is to say that they don't all embody each and every one of the above traits and characteristics but they do display a majority of them. The best way to evidence these traits is of course to look at those in this study who most closely resemble them. In my research, Dallas and Chet are the most notable and distinguishable neo-wiggas.

*Dallas*

As far as neo-wiggas go Dallas is the archetype. He grew up in an UMC home, attends university, has a steady job, and moonlights as a mix-tape DJ/artist on the nights and weekends. He is a perfect blend of wigga and UMC prep, never displaying one category fully, always straddling the line between the two. For example, if he is wearing a throwback cap, crooked slightly to the side, the rest of his ensemble is full-on UMC white boy, khaki pants, polo shirt, Steve Madden dress shoes or designer sneakers. If he is wearing a large throwback jersey he won't be wearing baggy pants or jeans and certainly will be without baseball cap. To be sure, Dallas would never be confused for a wigga and his dress does not necessarily reflect a person who is a devout Hip Hop fan or part of Hip Hop culture. However, to the trained Hip Hop eye there are a few give-aways, the crooked hat or the fact that you think you may have just seen Diddy or Jay-Z in that exact throwback but you can't be sure....

When he speaks he uses some Black lexical terms but his tone is devoid of Black oral tradition characteristics. Dallas speaks quickly and articulately, as if he is always at the ready to spout off on a myriad of topics. Almost as if his brain is one big rolodex filled with points and theories ready to divulge. If the particular topic is offered he simply flips to that cue card and he's off and running.

Dallas knows everything about Hip Hop: past, present, and future. If he were a Hip Hop scholar he'd be Jeff Chang, *the* encyclopedia of Hip Hop facts and figures. Perhaps this is why he is successful at mixing new artists' work onto "tapes" (now compilation CD's but they are still called mix tapes). He has a deep portfolio of Hip Hop artists and beats to choose from and is pretty successful shopping these tapes to late night

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independent radio stations in the area and a fare amount of clubs both in Detroit proper and the suburbs.

I have to admit that interviewing Dallas is what prompted me to coin the term neo-wigga. The rhetoric he invokes when talking about Hip Hop is well crafted and clearly presented and he is firmly rooted in his beliefs about the superiority of Hip Hop over all other musical genres and cultures. Because he is so well-spoken, so knowledgeable about his opinions and assumptions he is probably the most dangerous to those who value old school Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Dallas is the personification of appropriation and is persuasive enough to get others to believe his version is authentic and legitimate.

Jill: So why do you like Hip Hop?

Dallas: It's got everything you need. You need to start the party, Hip Hop. You need get angry, listen to Hip Hop. You need some new gear, check out the latest Hip Hop magazine or video. You need to make money, Hip Hop is it.

Jill: So it's all about what you need? (smiles)

Dallas: Damn, right! (laughs) No seriously, I always like Hip Hop and I like other music too but Hip Hop is the only thing I felt I could do to. I don't play any instruments and I for sure wasn't gonna join the marching band in high school. Hip Hop just fit for me.

Jill: Why, though? Did you relate to what they were talking about in the lyrics or was it the beat.....

Dallas: Both, and honestly I like the whole lifestyle. I don't want to shoot people or sell drugs are nothing but Hip Hop is all about the bling, all about gettin what's yours, trying to get as much money and power as you can.

Jill: And you relate to that?

Dallas: Yeah, I mean, I had a pretty good life but I want more ya know? I don't see why I can't have all that bling too. It's like I got something to say, I know a lot about Hip Hop. I mean there were times that I was like obsessed, couldn't get enough. Watchin MTV, BET, reading all the magazines, knowin all the shit about

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all the rappers and their past and their baby mommas (laughs). Let's just say I know my shit.

Jill: So you consider yourself a Hip Hop head then?

Dallas: Shit, I'm the definition of Hip Hop head! (laughs) I bet I know more about Hip Hop than any of those so called battle rappers down in Detroit.

Jill: That's a pretty bold statement my friend...

Dallas: Yeah, but I know. I mean, I like am around a bunch of those people in the game, in the rap game, and it's like 'you better check yourself' cause some white boy from the burbs knows your shit better than you. Basically I make money off my mix tapes cause I got more knowledge than the rest of them. I know how to download all the hottest shit from the internet and mix it up tight!

Jill: Do you think Hip Hop is a culture and if so are you a part of it?

Dallas: Man, this is like school or something (laughs). I don't think it's a culture I think it's a game. I mean, uh, it's like a way to speak your mind and make money doin it. Even though I don't rap I'm makin money doin Hip Hop ya know, I'm part of the game, part of the "culture" I guess.

The first neo-wigga trait that Dallas displays is the positing of liking Hip Hop, knowing a lot about it but not fully embracing it as a way of life. When he says "its got everything you need" and "I'm the definition of a Hip Hop head" I argue that he is establishing himself as a adept connoisseur of both the music and culture but simultaneously is drawing a line between preference and being an appropriator. For Dallas, he is simply using his knowledge to make money, turning an interest into something profitable. This mantra is undeniably Hip Hop, it's the "make a dollar outta fifteen cents" work ethic that Dallas is appropriating for his own good.

Dallas recognizes and embraces his whiteness, "cause I'm a white boy from the burbs", which is something a wigga would never do. By drawing attention to the fact that he is white Dallas is showing pride in both his adeptness at existing in both the UMC white world and the urban Black community as a mix-tape artist. He also straddles this

line in his choice of when to invoke Black Language. He uses words like "bling" and "baby momma" flippantly, almost jokingly. I believe that this is his rhetoric of appropriation to evidence to his audience that he is aware of the cultural capital these words hold but that he can invoke them both ways: to pursue entrée into that culture and to show that he knows about that culture but is not really part of it.

Furthermore, when striving to show his legitimacy and skill as a mix-tape DJ/artist he tends to appropriate more Black Language than when he is discussing Hip Hop as culture. He uses Black lexical phrases such as "you better check yourself" and Black verb tense when he says "cause I got more knowledge than the rest of them" to illustrate to his audience that he is "down" but not so down that he can't fit easily into UMC white society when he needs to. To be sure, Dallas is flippin the script on Hip Hop culture and Black Language. He fully admits that he is using, or as I would say appropriating, what he can and "making money doin it".

*Chet*

The best way to describe Chet would probably be as a reformed neo-wigga. That is, he's old school, one of the original neo-wiggas. By day Chet is a financial consultant for a major firm in Troy, Michigan. That is, he works a 9 to 5 job making over $50,000 a year, wears a suit and tie, and owns his own home. Chet is a fairly attractive guy. He is clean shaven, has dark, slightly long on top, curly hair and is athletically built, a hangover from his days as college football quarterback. This is weekday Chet and he plays the part to a tee.

But like Clark Kent, Chet has a remarkable alter ego. Come weekend it's all Hip Hop, all the time. At closer inspection of his pristine Chrysler 300 (a car that Snoop Dogg advertised for) will reveal an MP3 player chock full of every piece of Hip Hop ever

recorded. He admits that old school rappers like Tupac and Biggie and R&B crooners like R. Kelly and Jodeci are his favorites but he's getting really into the new Dirty South craze and has downloaded everything from Outkast and Ludacris to Lil Wayne, Lil John and Mike Jones. One would also notice that the person behind the wheel is dressed not like a corporate cog, but more like Snoop Dogg himself: Backward cap, throwback jersey or wife beater tee, baggy pants and designer sneakers, very expensive designer sneakers. Chet is a Hip Hop head but he's one with money, a disposable cash flow that fuels his passion for the culture and has only increased his craving for all things Hip Hop. Chet is too educated, too UMC, too 9 to 5 working stiff to be a wigga, but he is too deeply involved in the culture and language of Hip Hop to be considered a marginalized hobbyist.

Chet is clear that Hip Hop is a way of life for him—a weekend warrior way of life—but a way of life nonetheless. It is obvious in the way he dresses and talks that he is supremely influenced by Hip Hop culture and Black Language and is candid in talking about why this is so. While Chet was raised predominately in an UMC white suburb of Detroit he did spend his junior high years in a middle class neighborhood bordering Detroit proper. For him, these few years are all the entrée that he needs to feel justified and legitimized in his appropriations. That, and as he said "I'm giving them my money, so I should get to use their lyrics and way of life in my daily life as much as I want, right?" He may have a point, but it's imperative to look at the highlights of our conversation to be sure.

Jill: Why do you love Hip Hop so much?

Chet: Honestly, it was the only music I was drawn to when I was younger. That, and when I really started listening to music I was living in East Pointe and there

was a lot of Black kids who went to my school and they were my friend because we were all on the [basketball] team together so that was the music we listened to to get pumped up for the games and during practice and stuff.

Jill: But what is it about Hip Hop that appeals to you?

Chet: What, you mean like the lyrics or beats or whatever?

Jill: Sure.

Chet: Yeah, that (laughs). Seriously though, it is about the beats and when I guy needs to get pumped up there's nothing better than Hip Hop, holla! (laughs) Lots of guys listened to heavy metal and stuff in the locker room but that all just sounded like crazy, screamin noise to me. Hip Hop had flava, had a story, something I could relate to.

Jill: Exactly what was it that you could relate to?

Chet: Being a guy, an athlete, a kid trying to figure out who he is. If you didn't fit with the crazy head bangers, and you didn't like the Dave Matthews Band or Phish, you had to fit somewhere. Hip Hop is where I fit, it's just a matter of likes and dislikes I guess.

Jill: So you identify with Hip Hop?

Chet: Well I don't think I'm black if that's what you mean…(laughs) but yeah I identify with the need to better myself, be a better athlete, be a harder worker, get all the bitches and money (laughs). I mean I'm not oppressed or nothing, I know I'm white and I'm certainly not a wigger, my dad would kill me if I talked like that.

Jill: Why?

Chet: Cause wigger's are ignorant and want to be black. I don't want to be black I just like Hip Hop music, clothes, style you know?

Jill: Do you talk differently around your Black friends?

Chet: I don't know, you'd have to ask them. But, uh, yeah, probably. When we're playing ball there's a lot of shit talking and I guess "black" talking.

Jill: Do you think other people who see you on the weekends consider you a wigger or an appropriator?

Chet: Never a wigger, cause of how I talk and frankly the car I drive. The wiggers I know all have beat down cars and shitty jobs. I don't think I'm taking anything

from Hip Hop that isn't meant for me anyways, I mean who buys all the rap records now? White guys like me. I'm given them my money, so I should get to use their lyrics and way of life in my daily life as much as I want, right?.

Interpreting Chet's data is especially exciting because he is aware of his appropriation but is also clear in his justification. From my perspective he is most aware of what the temperature in mainstream society is concerning white appropriation of Hip Hop through commercialization and is aware that he is benefiting greatly from this because it is making the music and style he loves more easily accessible to weekend warrior Hip Hop heads like him. Chet knows the score, he knows that Hip Hop has become increasingly popular in mainstream culture to the point of saturation and therefore, it is imperative to him to make clear to his audience that he was down long before the rest of America.

Chet can rely on invoking a short stint living with/near Black folk and credits that as his reason for being into Hip Hop. He mentions his Black friends and living in close proximity to Detroit proper as a way of legitimizing his authenticity in appropriating. That is, his rhetoric of appropriation is played out through his pursuit of cultural capital. Chet got a taste of Hip Hop culture through his experiences and it has stuck with him long enough that he still goes back to that space in his head when needing to justify his interest in Hip Hop.

This lack of Black Language appropriation in this interview excerpt is actually indicative of the entire 3 hour long interview itself. The only time Chet appropriates Black Language is in jest (holla!). This shows that he is aware of the fact that his audience is predominately native LWC speakers. He does, however, admit to "talking Black" while engaging in sports with his Black friends. Looking back I wish I had asked

him if he used Black Language while not in the presence of Black folks to see if his code-switching was as adept in his life outside of sports.

Ultimately, Chet can be considered a good example of a neo-wigga because he loves and embraces all the things that a wigga does but without the whole wigga image. Chet does not feel the need to dress or act Black all the time to evidence his love for Hip Hop. He does however identify with Hip Hop on his own terms, invoking wigga-ish tendencies when it suits him or the social situations he is engaging in at the time. Chet is a neo-wigga because he can see the big picture, the hype surrounding Hip Hop culture and Black Language and even so still chooses to appropriate a fair amount of it himself. Even though his rhetoric of appropriation is more subtle than the others, it is still recognizable in his responses juxtaposing himself against wiggers. He views wiggers as being ignorant and uneducated and feels he is obviously exempt from those categories.

**Conclusion**

By showcasing the rhetoric of appropriation of both wiggas and neo-wiggas we can see the variance of UMC white male appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language. These variances illustrate that first, there are varying degrees of appropriation and second, that these differences display the vastness and growing phenomenon of cultural and linguistic appropriation going on in American society today. By placing participants of this study in the neo-wigga or wigga camp we can begin to more robustly define and discuss the meaning of how and why UMC white males appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language, to show that there are patterns to this behavior. I am confident that how these particular participants responded in the rhetorical situation of the interview coupled with more in-depth background knowledge of the individual can be

used as a solid beginning to understanding the commonalities and the differences in these particular groups of appropriators. This categorical knowledge will undoubtedly have implications for how we discuss Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriations in the classroom, which will be covered more concretely in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6: The Rhetoric of Appropriation in the Rhet/Comp Classroom

*I wrote these words for everyone who struggles in their youth*

---Lauryn Hill, "Everything is Everything" (1999)

*That is, after all, why we do this scholarly thing we do—isn't it? To change the world? To learn how to solve contemporary problems in productive and generous ways? Not to publish article after article in pursuit of individual acclaim? If we engage in this work, as Susan La Flesche did, in order to work for our people, our community, our discipline, then maybe we should begin our negotiations toward alliance with a wholesale and meaningful questioning of criteria by which we 'judge' one another's contributions to that community as significant, rather than simply assuming the same long-practiced and dominant critical, theoretical, and pedagogical frameworks.*

--Malea Powell from "Down by the River" (2004)

*To be able to name one's experience is part of what it means to "read the world" and to begin to understand the political nature of the limits and possibilities of life within larger society. To be literate is not to be free; it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future.*

--Jabari Mahiri (2004)

Discovering and claiming your own identity is no easy feat. For some, it comes on naturally, something indescribable you can always feel prickling at the back of your neck pushing you to make certain choices. For others, identity formation is much more complex, they struggle to first discover who they are by looking at who they were and only then can claim the identity that they feel has been designed, or they have designed, for them. If nothing else, I want the students in my rhetoric and composition classes to learn to use their varying identities in constructive and meaningful ways, to bridge gaps to make new knowledge through invoking their previous cultural and linguistic beliefs and blending and fusing them with new and critical ways of approaching and challenging those beliefs and ideas. I want for both them and myself as a teacher to "be able to name one's experience...and begin to understand the political nature of the limits and

possibilities of life within larger society" as Mahiri posits above. The best way I know how to do this, to "do this scholarly thing we do" (Powell, 2004) is to use a cultural studies pedagogy via Hip Hop culture and Black Language to discuss the growing phenomenon of the rhetoric of appropriation. For me cultural studies pedagogy allows for connection to the non-canonical in both traditional and non-traditional ways. These particular heuristics and strategies become even more productive when conjoined with the infusion of Hip Hop culture and Black Language as a topic of critical reading, writing, and performance as well as the ability to analyze material and cultural artifacts (advertisements, videos, websites, clothing, etc.). What is unique about the pedagogy I am crafting is the addition of a forum for discussion of new rhetorics, specifically the rhetoric of appropriation. To comprehensively study how the rhetoric of appropriation is evidence of a wider pursuit of identity, to seek cultural capital, to symbolize legitimacy and worth, to embrace institutional language as a means to appeal to a greater audience. In focusing on these topics critically and analytically I believe the comp/rhet classroom can become a place where all identities, all struggles, all languages, all cultures are heard and valued. To be sure, "We don't have to believe one another's beliefs, but we do have to acknowledge their importance, understand them as real, and respect/honor them in our dealings with one another" (Powell, 2004:42). In acknowledging the reality of Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation in mainstream society we can begin to understand the complex ways that culture and language is manifested in our daily lives and to respect and honor the variances that surround us in modern day America.

Hip Hop culture and Black Language are indeed being appropriated by a growing number of UMC white males. The previous chapters have not only illustrated this fact but

more importantly have showed how their rhetoric of appropriation is unique to this group of individuals. However, Chapter 5 also shows that within this group patterns have emerged to prove the participants beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and arguments concerning Hip Hop culture and Black Language may ostensibly shift the mainstream society's perceptions of the culture and language writ large. What this chapter seeks to achieve is to connect this research to the broader scope and space of the composition and rhetoric classroom. Namely, how teaching the rhetoric of appropriation will serve to establish new rhetorics and in turn new knowledge and meaning concerning popular culture and language issues.

Honestly, I see no point in writing an entire dissertation or conducting two years of research that will not in some way proliferate new knowledge in meaningful ways to students of rhet/comp. More importantly, infusing a cultural studies pedagogy via Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation will not only bring the topic to the forefront of writing classrooms, it will also provide an open and honest forum for students to discuss appropriation—their own, others, mainstream media—so as to better make sense of how that appropriation is impacting their lives as citizens of this country, students of these institutions, and participants of culture and language writ large.

Currently, many writing instructors are citing cultural studies as their pedagogy of choice. I would argue that most instructors invoke cultural studies in order to connect students to their work/writing in more innovative and engaging ways. In other words, give students a topic they are familiar with and they will write, bore students with rhetorical analysis of canonical literature and they will not.

I too believe that students will only be vested in their writing and research if they are actually engaged/interested with/in the material being discussed in the composition classroom and that cultural studies pedagogy in the rhet/comp classroom presents such material and teaching strategies in innovative and interesting ways.

The result of my original research in this dissertation will provide for the designing of a course focusing on the rhetoric of appropriation concerning Hip Hop culture and Black Language. There is a growing body of praxis that is further establishing the merits of cultural studies pedagogy in the rhet/comp classroom (Dimitriadis, Mahiri, Morrel, etc.) and I plan to build off this previously conducted work to create a more robust pedagogy of my own. I feel that in an effective and interesting composition and rhetoric course it is imperative to embrace theories and pedagogies that support and compliment the connections between language, culture, and society in ways that will prove relevant to student's academic, personal, and professional lives.

**Established Cultural Studies Pedagogy**

Composition classrooms need cultural studies to engage students more fully in material. Within the cultural studies framework, students are encouraged to become critical readers of a culture and its popular productions, and to see all texts as culturally anchored (George and Shoos, 1992:202). It allows students the ability to work with concepts and artifacts that are familiar and interesting to them. Furthermore, cultural studies pedagogy allows me to borrow from Hip Hop studies, African American studies, sociolinguistics and classical rhetoric to teach critical thinking and rhetorical analysis. In these chapters of my dissertation I seek to provide new and innovative ways that Hip Hop culture and Black Language as well as their appropriations can be integrated into the

composition classroom to better engage students with the material as well as to draw critical and close reflections and analysis on language and culture writ large. While there has been a fair amount of research conducted using Hip Hop culture and Black Language as catalysts and topics for critical discussion and rhetorical inquiry, there have been few who have attempted to discuss how the rhetoric of the appropriators can be used to spark similar critical thought. Studying the rhetoric of appropriation proves that those who appropriate are not just pirates but actually evidence rhetorical and literacy strategies an moves that can be used as tools to teach our students how to become more rhetorically savvy and critically minded themselves by teaching Hip Hop rhetoric in conjunction with how that rhetoric is appropriated and used through varied means for varied ends.

The following is a review of the research previously conducted that I have based part of my original pedagogical approach concerning appropriation. Examining the language and literacy practices of upper middle class white males as they appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language will aid those of us in the field in understanding how cultures and communities morph and stretch when appropriated and what that means for the students in classrooms, homes, and the civic space.

James Berlin is perhaps the most prominent scholar that comes to mind when trying to situate cultural studies in the composition classroom. Berlin has directly addressed the project of cultural studies pedagogy stating, "students must come to see that the languages they are expected to speak, write, and embrace as ways of thinking and acting are never disinterested, always bringing with them strictures on the existent, the good, the possible, and regimes of power" (1992:24). In this way Berlin situates all aspects of classroom activity and interaction in the broader scope of culture. For him it is

imperative that students and instructors understand that all of their moves within the classroom are culturally engendered and loaded in some way. Berlin further suggests that there is a connection between the major points of contention in composition studies—deciding how best to respond as teachers and researchers to the language and societal demands made on students by the dominant culture (Bruch & Marback, 1996).

This notion is broadened by Bruch and Marback as they contend that the popular practices students devise as literacies are situated within and shaped by the political, economic, and physical geographies of their everyday lives (161). Cultural studies in the composition classroom is therefore not just related to the experiences within that room but also encompasses those lived experiences of life in the "real" world, life that involves economic, social, and political traditions and subsequent conflicts.

As earlier posited Geneva Smitherman states that, "Hip Hop refers to urban youth culture in America" (1999:268) and students are the largest discourse community that represents this culture. For many students, Hip Hop is the embodiment of the "real" world, its language, culture, and music speaks to them on a level that is difficult and sometimes even impossible for many teachers to reach. It is imperative to understand that Hip Hop is no longer just relegated to "the streets". S. Craig Watkins (2005) makes this point clear:

> "What began in basements, on street corners, in public parks, and throughout the still of the night would furnish young people fertile spaces for crafting new identities, explosive art forms, and later, whole industries" (9).

No, Hip Hop cannot be ignored. Like or not, love it or hate it, male and female students of all races, creeds, and cultures, as young as kindergarten and as high as doctoral candidates, know Hip Hop—even if they don't know they know it. Hip Hop is

everywhere, in the clothes we wear (Sean John, Baby Phat, Fetish), in the voting booth (P.Diddy's Citizen Change and Rap the Vote campaigns), even the new drinks at the local bar (Crunk Juice, Alize). The influence of Hip Hop culture has indeed morphed and stretched to fit all levels of society.

So, if cultural studies "is no doubt most closely associated with bringing a more deliberate use of popular culture and media studies into the composition course" (George & Trimbur, 2001:81) then how can we as teachers and scholars of composition ignore the widespread culture of Hip Hop in our classrooms? For this generation—and I would posit many to come—Hip Hop will only become more intertwined with popular culture and the media. Therefore, it is no surprise that Hip Hop music and culture has made a striking and successful appearance in many composition classrooms.

Using Hip Hop in the classroom has proven and will continue to prove that these varied discourse communities may be reached and better yet, understood, by teachers and students in the attempt to achieve higher knowledge and greater meaning. Taking a page from cultural studies pedagogies that encourages the writing of the popular, Rice (2003) examined the way Hip Hop constructs discourse, the way it produces rhetorical meaning through its complex method of digital sampling, and how such a rhetoric functions within the scope of argumentation (454). Rice argues that Hip Hop pedagogies challenge the dominant power structures of academic argumentation in the classroom.

For example, it is obvious that the rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" is persuasive and powerful, in both its past context and the present day. Hip Hop pedagogy would build off of the rhetoric of the Civil Rights era by looking at Hip Hop lyrics and music through the same rhetorical lens. This pedagogy

would juxtapose the rhetorical moves of such canonized work as King's against the lyrics of Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" to illustrate how current forms of composition are not so different from the past. This type of rhetorical analysis is likely to resonate more deeply with students, as it is something they are more closely related to and can more aptly query and examine. In this way, Hip Hop pedagogy is a place to begin such questioning regarding our ability to resist dominant/traditional modes of thinking in the academy (Rice, 2003).

In addition to using Hip Hop pedagogy as a way to conduct rhetorical analysis, it has been used to embrace the narrative in student writing. By looking at popular topics writing teachers are enabled to broaden commonplace practices: (1) to begin student writing with a topic "close to the self," close to student experiences, and (2) to teach close reading and interpretation of texts, as in Rice's case, by substituting popular culture or media for literary texts (George & Trimbur, 2001:82).

Dimitriadis (2004) was able to engage students in the writing of personal narratives by prompting them to write their thoughts about Tupac, both his life and death, and what he meant to them as individuals. What he found was that in their understanding of Tupac's life, these young people cobbled together a story, co-creating a narrative that fore-grounded a kind of superhuman invulnerability that had crucial social currency at this site and in their lives (118). These students of all races were able to respond knowledgeably and with ease to this prompt due to the fact that Tupac is a figure they knew and could identify with and thus tap into their own personal beliefs on a wide range of subjects that became apparent in their authentic narratives. Through a Hip Hop pedagogy, these narratives, or stories, are becoming the tools by which we can better

understand our relationships with ourselves and with others. They bring both educators and students "close to the self" in order to better examine and make meaning about cultural and personal phenomenon.

Another heuristic in the cultural studies composition classroom that has been conducted is using a Hip Hop pedagogy as a means to examine canonical poetry. Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2004:252) operated on Mahiri's (1998) argument that elements of youth popular culture such as Hip Hop music potentially could act as unifying and equalizing forces in culturally diverse classrooms, and that certain elements could also provide motivation for learning traditional subject matter. This only reiterates the earlier point that Hip Hop pedagogy need not be relegated only to the urban classroom but to any classroom that is in need of connecting diverse students to one another and their curriculum.

Morrell and Duncan-Andrade's students were able to make connections between canonical poetry like Eliot, Whitman, and Shakespeare and more contemporary forms of poetry written and performed by Hip Hop artists like Grand Master Flash, Public Enemy, and Nas. Overall, the students engaged in both critical, intellectual work, and work that has currency in the academy and will help them navigate the gate keeping mechanisms that often preclude them from access to higher education and economic empowerment (266). Hip Hop pedagogy takes what may seem to students as inaccessible and largely uninteresting texts and makes them accessible and interesting enough to critically analyze, to learn skills that will be expected of them as they venture into future academic and professional endeavors. Though, I agree with Morrell and Duncan-Andrade's belief that "Hip Hop music should be able to stand on its own as a worthy subject of study in

the academy rather than just being a bridge to something more 'acceptable' like canonical texts" (266), I understand that engaging in cultural studies through Hip Hop pedagogy is a relatively new academic pursuit and is just beginning its reign on the composition classroom, one that is sure to grow and flourish.

Infusing Hip Hop in the composition classroom is one way to engage students in writing, in another way it can be used to invoke civic mindedness in their communities. To be sure, Hip Hop is embraced most commonly by those who relate on some level to the lyrical messages of oppression, disenfranchisement, and urban street culture. For many it is the soundtrack of the streets and inextricably their lives. This then points to the varied messages about civic duty and citizenship that are available in Hip Hop culture and music. On some levels Hip Hop simply portrays the notion that "living large" is the only viable form of citizenship (Bruch & Marback, 1996). This portrayal in many ways brings hope and meaning to those in urban spaces whose lives are currently void of these beliefs.

As Walser (1995) suggests, "dialogue and other aspects of rhythmic rhetoric demand social explanations, for notes produce meaning only as they unfold in communities" (206). As Bakhtin has previously posited, all utterances are socially organized, no one utterance is original (Bizzelll & Herzberg, 2001: 1215). Therefore, to fully weigh the impact that Hip Hop music and culture create in the civic mindedness of those living in an urban space, one must understand those lyrics are socially constructed from that space. Jon Yasin (1999) recognizes this social construction stating:

> Rap music interprets primarily experience or existing situations. It is important to stress that the performance (or recitation for one's own enjoyment) of rap is not limited to paid performers. Rap is an integral part of the culture of urban areas where it flourishes…Stated differently, rap is organic in its cultural context. Rapping skills

are developed throughout the full social fabric of people's lives. Many if not most, young people are rappers at some moment, and they recite raps for all the reasons that anyone anywhere engages in stylized communicative behavior 'free of charge' (213).

To position Hip Hop in this way means to accept the connectivity of music to culture and lived situations, that not so unlike the war and social injustice protest rockers of the 1960's and 1970's, Hip Hop provides a space and place for dissonance in it's lyrical content. Yasin further purports that:

> It is important to remember that rap is used not just for entertainment and critique, but also for education and the spread of information. Over the last thirty years, it is the messages of rap, as well as other forms of popular music, that young people have listened to, as opposed to messages emanating from mass media, books, public speeches, and so forth (221).

What Yasin is saying might seem obvious to many cultural studies scholars but for many individuals Hip Hop is just another untapped potential resource in both teaching critical thinking, reading, and writing as well as, and perhaps more importantly, fostering civic engagement. The civic messages and rhetorical strategies evidenced in Hip Hop lyrics are sometimes the only "education" youths will accept. I argue that one way to encourage students in both urban and suburban spaces to become more civic minded is to appeal to their sense of comfort and familiarity, which is where the intersections of cultural studies and rhetorics of Hip Hop come in. Using Hip Hop in the composition classroom to relate to the youth sparks interest and understanding about citizenship that may have been unattainable when working with the "old" canons of literature.

To more fully prove the legitimacy of my pedagogical approach of blending old and new, I recognize it would behoove me to invoke some rhetorical heavy hitters to help support my point. Ultimately, I am arguing that as the power of Hip Hop and its appropriations grows and strengthens so does the connection between these modern day rappers and classical rhetors. Aristotle, Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian were the

classical examples of men with great power and wealth. Their followers/students envisioned them as the learned, the educated, *the* truth. For students today, Hip Hop artists are the personification of the truth. They may not be classically educated, but these artists definitely have the power and the wealth to impact civil discourse. A glaring issue that needs to be addressed in using Hip Hop culture, Black Language, and appropriation in the composition classroom is how to address such topics in a diverse space. That is, how do we as teachers approach Black language, culture, and appropriations by white folk in a critical and objective way?

Trainor (2002) speaks directly to that problem and provides varied approaches to dealing with those students and perhaps more importantly examines ways to contradict traditional representations of whiteness in literature through critical pedagogy. Trainor posits that as teachers we are caught in the dichotomy of encouraging students to be themselves while also trying to change their sometimes narrow views. She suggests that we confront this contradiction and the ways it delimits how we see mainstream students, in order to represent and understand encounters with resistant students in less politicized and essentialized terms (634). To examine this idea she analyzes case studies of particular students within the basic writing curriculum, specifically how students read and write race. What she found was that students need help to articulate antiessentialist identities as whites and to work through the paradoxes of constructing an antiracist white identity and that we as teachers need to be more aware of the rhetorical frames our pedagogies provide for students as they structure identity. For the purposes of my research, using this approach to teaching Black Language and Hip Hop culture, especially the appropriation aspect, will help me to be more aware of the need to find a balance between villainizing

traditional works and themes in writing/literature and sparking awareness of the

suppression and oppression of many marginalized voices within that work.

I would like to build off the previous author's notions of culture, language, and

cultural studies and examine how others have argued for cultural studies in the

composition classroom, specifically through a focus on Hip Hop culture and Black

Language, and their appropriations. More specifically, I wish to use the research of those

before to build upon a study of the rhetoric of appropriation. Namely, how UMC white

male's rhetoric of appropriating Hip Hop culture and Black Language can be discussed

and critically examined in the rhet/comp classroom. I believe that such appropriations

and their justifications are an untapped source of rhetoric that remains unstudied and will

be useful in teaching our students about non-traditional rhetorics, helping us and them to

navigate the complex intersections of language and culture more clearly.

**The Rhetoric of Appropriation in the Composition Classroom**

Don't get it twisted like those fools out in Oakland all in a tizzy 10 years ago over

the "Ebonics" issue. The Ebonics case, which I fully support and embrace in the teaching

of writing, was about valuing varied discourse and languages in American school systems

and "stressing Ebonics as a bridge to teaching literacy to African American students. It's

emphasis is on teaching students Standard English speaking skills, on teaching the

teachers about the Ebonics speakers' language and culture..."(Hoover, 1998:73).

Therefore, when I reference teaching the rhetoric of appropriation, that does not mean I

expect my students to become more savvy appropriators through work done in my

writing class. It's imperative that I quell the fear that Ebonics held, namely the perception

that teachers would be instructing students on how to "talk black" when in actuality the

movement was meant to educate teachers in order to better understand and work within and with the vernacular of their students to positive educational ends. It also does not mean I will be instructing them as to how to enact rhetorics of appropriation. What it does mean is that a comp/rhet course that discusses the rhetoric of appropriation will deal mainly with educating the students on the existence of this rhetoric, what it means for them within the larger scope of rhetoric, society, education, Hip Hop culture, and Black Language. Overall, teaching the rhetoric of appropriation will serve to identify these complex moves and strategies invoked by UMC white males and others in mainstream society and how these appropriations are shifting perceptions both positively and negatively concerning Hip Hop culture and Black Language.

As evidenced earlier in this chapter their have been many scholars (Pough, Dimitriadis, Campbell, Mahiri) who have invoked Hip Hop in the composition classroom as a way to bridge gaps, embrace student interests, and engage student's more critically in reading, writing, and speaking. However, I have yet to read a piece of teacher research that engages in talking critically about appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language or specifically about white appropriation in their composition classrooms. Of course, I do not purport that such work is not being done but I do think my research is original in that I am striving to teach my students both how to become effective rhetors (writers, readers, speakers) and more analytical viewers of the culture and society that surrounds them. I wholeheartedly agree with Campbell's (2005) argument that:

> Given rap's oral and literate modes, its riveting narrative of life in America's urban ghettos, its caustic critiques of American racism, classism, and sexism, and its broad appeal amount youth of all races, genders and classes, I argue that Hip Hop music an culture should figure into literacy studies and composition pedagogy for (that's right *all* students)...For Hip Hop has turned oral street-corner rapping into literate art. (Campbell, 2005:127)

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Now more than ever, it is imperative to get our students thinking about and critiquing

dominant power structures, to question the "traditional" and "mainstream" American

ideals of class, sex, and race. Hip Hop lyrics and culture have been doing this critiquing

for some time and is ripe for adaptation in composition pedagogy. However, I would add

that we need not only look at and use Hip Hop in our classrooms but also discuss how the

growing trend of UMC white male appropriation of both the culture and Black Language

is affecting this "literate art". Discussing how and why this phenomenon of appropriation

is growing and really begin to examine what the "mainstreaming" of Hip Hop is doing to

the culture and language.

To further my argument as to why we should be teaching the rhetoric of

appropriation in our composition and rhetoric courses I invoke James Gee (1986) for

support:

> Language and literacy acquisition are forms of socialization, in this case
> socialization into mainstream ways of using language and speech and print,
> mainstream ways of making meaning, of making sense of experience. Discourse
> practices are always embedded in the particular world view of a particular social
> group; they are tied to a set of values and norms. In learning new discourse
> practices, a student takes of this set of values and norms, this world view (742).

I argue that appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language is a type of acquisition

as a form of socialization. UMC white males have pillaged all that they could from the

mainstream media and other sources to craft an identity that would aid them in navigating

the world in unique ways. As earlier established, UMC white males are indeed

appropriating Hip Hop culture and Black Language as part of their process of identity

formation. They have acquired a language and literacy as a way of forming social groups,

a "mainstream way of making meaning." The discourse practices of UMC white males

who appropriate the culture of Hip Hop and the language of black folk are indeed viewing the world from the same place and space. Their values and norms are surely tied up with Hip Hop evidenced by their pursuit of learning this new discourse that would normally be set apart from them economically, regionally, and racially. With this growing hunger for new discourses in youth culture comes the responsibility for teachers of composition and rhetoric to recognize this new phenomenon of discourse appropriation and consumption, to talk about it openly in our classrooms, and to encourage our students to do the same. At the same time we must be cognizant of the varying identities that exist in our classrooms. As Gilyard (1991) states, "A pedagogy is successful only if it makes knowledge or skill achievable while at the same time allowing students to maintain their own sense of identity" (11). That is, through critically studying and reading Hip Hop culture and Black Language artifacts via a cultural studies pedagogy teachers can clearly enhance writing as an achievable, tangible deliverable that is even (gasp) enjoyable. However, as instructors we must also be aware that by studying such contemporary issues students will come to the scholarly table with much more to say, and perhaps much more conflicting and heated ideas and discussions that we may have previously encountered in the composition classroom. In order to mediate these discussions and conflicting identities, teachers must teach the value of varied voices, a Sophistic approach to seeing all views and even though not all agree, seeing the purpose and motives behind these identity constructions.

By tapping into the potential of student experiences, narratives, and musings on/about appropriation we can begin to challenge the media mill in its often inauthentic

portrayal of Hip Hop culture and Black Language that is proliferating to the masses at an astounding rate. Campbell (2005) echoes this call:

> Clearly, student writing about such kind of lived experience will likely challenge, even threaten, the values the academy seeks to inculcate in its charges. But, hey, that ain't necessarily a bad thing. After all, many of the values academic institutions promote can also be deeply hegemonic and psychologically damaging to some of the constituents they claim to serve. (137)

Not only does Campbell resonate the need for valuing student narratives in the composition classroom, he further calls for the recognition of the overwhelming hegemony that exists in higher institutions and education writ large. Even though our writing classrooms are becoming more and more diverse, the way in which institutions engender hegemonic ideals of whiteness remains embedded in the bedrock of most colleges and universities. Therefore, it would be irresponsible to conduct a class dealing with issues of race, culture, and language as they relate to Hip Hop and appropriation without first examining the long standing manifestations of whiteness in academia.

*Whiteness in the Composition Classroom*

I am a firm believer of institutional transparency. That is, students in my classes are always made aware and informed about my motives and methods behind my pedagogy. I not only invite them behind the curtain but I give them the grand tour. I think it is important to be honest and open with them about the hoops they have to jump through as students, citizens, individuals, and/or employees and that the reality is much of the experiences they encounter in institutional spaces will likely be engendered with a history of white, secular, male, straight rhetoric. Thus, in teaching the rhetoric of appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language it is important to build on the theories presented by Trainor above and further examine classical and contemporary

ideas and notions about whiteness that are inherent in our culture, community, language, and society as Americans.

Furthermore, I would be completely remiss, and borderline delusional, if I did not address the fact of my own whiteness in the classroom. My students are made aware that while I feel no pangs of "white guilt", I am fully aware of what my being white engenders in a classroom full of diverse faces geared up to learn about subjects dealing predominately with people and language of color. I recognize that some of the best scholars in the field conduct amazing teaching and scholarship while still maintaining a veil of ignorance surrounding their race, religion, and/or social class, etc. However, I fully believe for my classroom to be a successful, safe, and comfortable space for learning and for my scholarship to hold any legitimacy in the field of Hip Hop studies that it is my duty to be transparent to all audiences concerning my views on whiteness.

I hold true to an absence of "white guilt" in my teaching and scholarship first because I feel as if extending a mea culpa before I even begin is counter productive. This field does not need a white scholar writing and teaching about blackness and Hip Hop under the umbrella-ed assertion that she/he feels to blame about the state of society's cultural and linguistic shortcomings. Furthermore, I do not feel guilty in my whiteness because I have always known my path in life has been made smoother just for being white, and instead of dwelling on that fact and constantly apologizing for it, I embrace it. This is what I call "using my whiteness for good not evil". That is, by coming to terms with and embracing my whiteness and "getting on with it" I am able to do more objective work, to put my full attention and dedication behind my pedagogy and academic scholarship. I am always aware I am white but I refuse to apologize for it because I can

honestly say I'm doing my best to make transparent in my work and classroom all the deep, dark, embedded evils of not just hegemony in America, but the overwhelming structure of patriarchy as well. Kennedy, Middleton, and Ratcliffe, et al (2005) refer to the counterproductive and often debilitating nature of white guilt stating:

> Obsessing on white people's guilt—or lack of guilt—shifts the focus from the issue at hand (whether the issue is how whiteness informs rhetorical history of how whiteness informs high school students' actions). No one living today is individually to blame for the origins of the US's racialized social structure, which affirms the privilege of whiteness; however, within this inherited historical and social structure, everyone is accountable for his/her actions and for recognizing that simply championing a color blind identity does not e-race the powerful effects of racism. Such accountability is very different from guilt (367-368).

In this way I am recognizing and being accountable for my whiteness and all it engenders without being bogged down in guilt for something I cannot change. Overall, my goal is to talk openly about what it means to be our embodied identities in an institutional space of learning, that if I expect them to share their stories on/about their identity then I surely plan to do the same.

The first step in discussing whiteness is of course coming to some semblance of an agreed upon definition of what studying whiteness means for students of writing about culture and language. Kennedy, Middleton, and Ratcliffe, et al. maintain that:

> So when the CCCC panelists referred to the matter of whiteness in terms of theory, pedagogy, and technology, they were invoking all three significations: the value of bodies, the materiality of bodies, and the troping of bodies…Whiteness studies is not about individual white people per se; rather, it is about how whiteness as a cultural and racial category functions within US language use and haunts US people, literature and institutions (360).

Working from this definition of both whiteness and whiteness studies illustrates the extreme importance of recognizing the complexity of the issue. That we must examine whiteness not just as race, or white people, but as a signifier of encoded cultural and

racial functions within our personal and public spaces. The purpose of studying whiteness in our classrooms is articulated again by Kennedy, et al.

> For those of us who work in rhetoric, composition, and cultural language use, whiteness, studies helps us understand how whiteness is reproduced as a neutral category—in other words, universal, invisible, normal and unmarked...A huge benefit to white students, in particular, and to all student, in general, is the opportunity to explore and affirm their own individuality and diversity within—and without—the norms of whiteness (367).

Thus, by being transparent and critically aware of whiteness and what it engenders we are offering our students a more objective and less institutionalize picture of what it means to exist in a troped society. This knowledge is empowering and can/will be reflected in their coursework, hopefully ultimately leading to the dismantling of often oppressive colonizing traditional rhetoric that abounds in our higher education institutions.

In a course about the rhetoric of appropriation we must also discuss the complex intersections of whiteness and appropriation, namely that white appropriation of blackness is in no way a new concept. As previously stated in Chapter 2, Eric Lott (1993) diligently examines the roots of appropriation through his study of Blackface minstrelsy and its connections to America's predominately white working class in the mid to late 19$^{th}$ century. Here he discusses the early conflicts between appropriation and whiteness:

> The blackface male is after all a figure for the audience's looking, however ridiculous he is made to appear; the 'wench' encompasses in her person male and female both; and the relationship between the two figures is fore grounded. The singer's most ridiculous impulse is indeed to proclaim his love for such an unworthy object as "blackness". The familiar (and familial) irony is that the act derided white America for its fascinations with blacks while at the same time it marked that fascination. Surely this structure of feeling evidences again the precariousness or dissonance or conflictedness that marked white people's sense of their own whiteness (166).

In this excerpt we begin to see the impetus for such blatant appropriation of black culture through Blackface minstrelsy that may indeed be inextricably linked to the conflict many

white individuals internalize concerning their own whiteness. This is to say because whiteness is historically envisioned as race-less and culture-less leads to an intrinsic pursuit for culture and race in one's identity. America's, and specifically white mainstream America's, fascination with black culture Lott would argue. stems from a large portion of the population being "uncomfortable" or conflicted with their sense of whiteness. This argument of course holds true when held up to the UMC white males in this study. To quell this discomfort many white Americans continue to look to other cultures, in this case black culture, to act as a either a binary to their own identity or as an exotic ideal they wish to appropriate, both strategies are indeed part of identity formation and creation.

This argument from Lott can easily be juxtaposed against a Hip Hop studies scholar like Campbell (2007) who posits:

> Although whiteness has of late been a rather contested topic of discussion among our ranks...I suspect that many of our students learn more about what it means to be white and middle class from someone like Eminem than from anything we can teach them (330).

While I completely agree with Campbell's notion of invoking tangible examples of Hip Hop in the classroom to connect students to the issues surrounding whiteness I believe that studying the rhetoric of appropriation in conjunction with Hip Hop artifacts and whiteness can indeed begin to teach students what it means to be white. Here it must be noted that teaching the rhetoric of appropriation is in no way a class for white students. As discuss earlier, I belief studying new rhetorics, any rhetorics, is imperative for students of all races and classes. That "students (of all racial and social backgrounds) also need to recognize the power of language, of rhetoric through the manipulation of linguistic codes, conventions, and styles" (Campbell, 2007: 333) and that transparency on

the part of the instructor about whiteness combined with close consideration of appropriation of Black Language and Hip Hop culture is key to that recognition.

In teaching the rhetoric of appropriation, clearly evidencing the link between appropriation and whiteness is key. Using portions of those who study whiteness (Middleton, Trainor, Lott, Hebdige) combined with work of Hip Hop studies scholars (Cambell, Pough, Mahiri, Kitwana) teachers can clearly illustrate both the impetus for appropriation and the larger importance of recognizing whiteness, what it is, what it means, and what it does in our society. Students must understand that whiteness matters, not just in looking at the rhetoric of appropriation but in seeing the world, that they must employ a critical lens in any study of culture and language. Furthermore, it is important to note that in no way does this coursework vilianize whiteness or appropriation, its purpose is simply to get students thinking and writing more critically about the world around them through engaging and cultural significant topics. Regarding teaching freshman writing courses focusing on Hip Hop Campbell (2007) aptly states:

> In the end, though, the point is not to piss off students (our customers), or even to criticize them per se. It is to engage them in honest and forthright dialogue, to prompt them to question social constructs and their vested interests in them so that they can truly think freely and independently (336).

If we can embrace this ideology, teaching the rhetoric of appropriation through Hip Hop studies can surely bring about more fruitful socially and racially conscious work and mindsets from our students. The question I'm sure you're all wondering now is how exactly do we do this?

## Pedagogical Case Study, or How I Teach the Rhetoric of Appropriation

Indeed, I would not be able to approach teaching appropriation if I had not done work on this dissertation. Only now, after infinite pages of interview transcriptions,

contextual analysis of the rhetorical situations of those interviews, and an informed

analysis and discussion of those results am I able to fully attempt to integrate the rhetoric

of appropriation into my composition classroom.  I echo Campbell's (2007) belief that

"Hip Hop and its ghettocentric worldview are ever pitted against the American

mainstream or middle class, it makes sense to draw from it to counteract white middle

class hegemony in composition" (338). In order to combat and make clear "white middle

class hegemony in the classroom" there are a myriad of factors to consider when

broaching the teaching the rhetoric of appropriation in a writing class. Issues of

whiteness, appropriation, culture and language all have to be addressed in a clear and

thorough manner in order to engage in dissecting and critically analyzing the rhetoric

involved. Discussing rhetoric, of course, is the first step in engaging with the rhetoric of

appropriation. Instructing students that the traditional rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos,

and logos are at play and firmly enacted in non-traditional artifacts (websites,

advertisement, music video, etc.) is the cornerstone of establishing a critical lens through

which to view the world.

To tackle all of these issues through writing I devised and am currently teaching a

class called "The Rhetoric of Hip Hop". Though this course is not concerned wholly on

the subject of UMC white male appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language, it

does deal specifically with the rhetoric embedded and evidenced in Hip Hop in which

studying appropriation is a large part of a five week unit on the visual rhetoric of Hip

Hop. The first 10 weeks are spent reading and discussing both traditional and non-

traditional "texts" predominately from Neal and Foreman's (2004) *Hip Hop Studies*

*Reader*. We concentrate on broad issues within and throughout Hip Hop specifically,

history, culture, language, gender, politics and space/place. More critical and specific discussion is fostered in the writing assignments tasking students to draw from class themes and texts to craft complex rhetorical analysis of Hip Hop lyrics (See Appendix C). This assignment, and the one's leading up to it, is designed to lay the foundation of rhetoric and the rhetoric appeals as a heuristic to critical thinking, reading, analysis and writing. These concepts act a springboard to engaging in discussion and writing on various topics to follow, thus preparing them for more robust assignments like the research paper (See Appendix D). An excellent and concrete example of the connective and critical possibilities in teaching the rhetoric of appropriation was evident in the following excerpt from a student in my Rhetoric of Hip Hop course this semester. He chose to write his research paper in part narrative style, to place himself as a white guy who likes Hip Hop in the analytical mind frame of questioning his own motives in conjunction with other sources (Kitwana) who speak on the topic of the commercialization and appropriation of Hip Hop by white society. Mike writes:

> So then the question is, are white people *stealing* rap? Again I think the answer is yes. We are taking rap from African-American's by consumer power. We are changing it, controlling it, and influencing it to the point where rap culture reflects less on black urban life realities, and more on the pre-packaged unreal black urban life that whites desire to be a part of. Rap is becoming a cheap thrill, and not the real deal. At some point the messages get lost and the corporations take over. Rap in the future may not be a "black" art form, because it is in the process of being painted white.

I must say that while reading this I was overcome with a sense of pride and accomplishment. First, I am proud of Mike for being not only critical and analytical with the course material but doing so in both a creative and conclusive form. His writing smacks of reality while he draws important conclusions about the future of Hip Hop culture, including attention to the issue of race throughout. Second, I feel

accomplishment in knowing that Mike gets it, he sees the big picture of Hip Hop culture and Black Language appropriation by white mainstream society and isn't afraid to call it as he sees it despite, or perhaps in spite, of his own whiteness, i.e. recognizing that he is part of this UMC white male phenomenon. Overall this paper, and others like it, showed me that my students have progressed in critically examining the issues surrounding/on Hip Hop and are ready to enter into more controversial and problematic waters concerning commercialization and appropriation of culture and language.

It is in the final five weeks that we begin discussing mass media and society appropriation of Hip Hop culture and Black Language more specifically through visual rhetoric. This is when we begin to come to conclusions as a class concerning what may be problematic about these appropriations and what may be positive outcomes of this commercialization. For example, when placing the following quote from Tricia Rose (1994) on the white board, "In every region, Hip Hop articulates a sense of entitlement and takes pleasure in aggressive insubordination" (60), and asking them to refine, refute, or agree with that statement as it relates to commercialization and appropriation in/of Hip Hop culture and Black Language, students were eager to point out both the importance of race and class in defining what it means to be entitled and the different forms of "aggressive insubordination" that stem from those categories. They were drawing connections between Hip Hop, culture, language, race, and class to make sense of the impact and aftermath commercialization and appropriation has/will have on Hip Hop culture and Black Language. Furthermore, what discussions like these breed is a larger consideration of whether Hip Hop has gone mainstream or whether mainstream white

society has gone Hip Hop, which deals directly with the evolution of the rhetoric of appropriation as it influences society.

Whatever the conclusions may be is not the point, the point is to get students thinking more critically about the changing face of Hip Hop culture and Black Language and what appropriation, whiteness, and commercialization have to do with that change. Much of what I've examined in this dissertation forms and posits implications and analysis on how UMC white male appropriation's cyclical nature is proliferating appropriated versions of Hip Hop culture and Black language to mainstream society as the authentic or legitimate versions. While students in my class have evidenced a keen interest in Hip Hop and know a fair amount about its history either from the course or previous knowledge, they are still tasked to view Hip Hop cultural artifacts and Black Language through the lens of the less qualified consumer, the everyman who is not as educated on/about Hip Hop as them. By making this juxtaposition transparent they begin to critically examine how either Hip Hop has gone mainstream or the mainstream has gone Hip Hop and more importantly what this means for Hip Hop culture and Black Language writ large. Like Powell (2004) I am ostensibly saying to my students "I want you to stop and puzzle through the various connective possibilities, to stumble and question and work at making meaning with them" (40). My hope is that the final assignment (See Appendix E) helps them to evidence the culmination of these critiques and analysis on/about Hip Hop and teaches them to be more critical viewers of the rhetoric of appropriation surrounding them and to take that knowledge with them wherever they go.

**Conclusion**

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There is so much more being written on Hip Hop and being constructed on the study of Black Language (H. Samy Alim's (2007) *Rock the Mic Right* is just one of the many I wish I had access to before crafting this dissertation as well as Elaine Richardson's (2006) newly published *Hip Hop Literacies*) that I know this work is not complete. However, what I do know for sure is that I have, to the best of my ability, made a case for the importance of recognizing and valuing new rhetorics through my research on how and why UMC white males appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language by showcasing a number of individuals doing just that and discussing their reasoning behind these appropriations as well. While idiosyncratic in many ways, the individuals in this study all evidence the main characteristics of the rhetoric of appropriation— symbolization, institutional language, and the pursuit of cultural capital—as ways to form more concrete and cultured identities through Hip Hop. Furthermore, I have shown that two concrete categories are evident in their appropriation—wiggas and neo-wiggas— which leads to a more robust and thorough account of why these UMC white males do that appropriation thing they do.

This work is important for our field because as rhet/comp scholars we are meta-scholars by nature. The best of us don't just "do" one thing. What this research does is apply on multiple levels. To those who are interested in case study, my work evidences a way of interpreting interview data in context, taking a little bit from ethnography and narrative inquiry to learn more about why these participants respond in the ways they do. For rhet/comp-ers who are also Hip Hop studies scholars, this research evidences a growing phenomenon in Hip Hop culture and Black Language, that UMC white male appropriations are in many ways becoming mainstream America's preferred

interpretation and personification of Hip Hop. Perhaps, even that Black Language is being forced to change in response to these appropriations less it risk linguistic legitimacy. The straight up rhetoric scholar will recognize old rhetorical strategies appropriated to form a rhetoric of appropriation, one that is sure to continue seeping into our institutions via our students and through the study of which we can make new connective knowledge and meanings about the nature and scope of culture and language in our society. For the composition pedagogy people, this final chapter illustrates issues and subjects that need to be discussed in conjunction with the rhetoric of appropriation in order to fully understand where this rhetoric comes from and where it is going.

For me, I want this dissertation to *work*, for students, for teachers, for researchers, that the issues and theories discussed here do what Hip Hop has done for decades—to flip the script and make it your own. Or as Tricia Rose (1994) much more articulately states, my research strives to help students, teachers, researchers, and communities in:

> Developing a style nobody can deal with—a style that cannot be easily understood or erased, a style that has the reflexivity to create counter dominant narratives against a mobile and shifting enemy—may be one of the most effective ways to fortify communities of resistance and simultaneously reserve the right to communal pleasure (11).

There is a distinct rhetoric to how UMC white males appropriate Hip Hop culture and Black Language and this topic needs to be researched and discussed more widely to fully understand the phenomenon in order to preserve new and engaging scholarship while also adding new flava and knowledge to our field.

# Appendix A

## Tentative Interview prompts/questions

**Key words: black language/talk, black culture, white culture, Hip-Hop/Rap, violence, oppression, struggle, perceptions, attitudes, assumptions**

1.  Why do you like hip hop?

2.  What is it that draws you to hip hop?

3.  How did you become involved in the hip hop scene/culture?

4.  How would you define hip hop culture?

5.  Who's your favorite Hip-Hop/Rap artist? Why do you like him/her?

6.  What is your favorite Hip-Hop/Rap song? What specifically do you like about it?

7.  Do you identify with these artists and songs? Do you feel like they speak/represent to you? Why?

8.  Do you think Hip-Hop/Rap culture is violent?

9.  Why do you think Hip-Hop/Rap artists rap about violence? How about women? How do Hip-Hop/Rap artists portray women in their songs? What do you think about this?

10. Do you think Hip-Hop/Rap is a black thing? Why/why not?

11. What do you know about black history? What about black culture?

12. Why do you think so many UMC white males listen to Hip-Hop/Rap?

13. Why do you think so many UMC white males try to emulate/act like Hip-Hop/Rap artists?

14. Do you consider the way you look/dress/music you listen to to be reflective of black culture?

15. How about the way you talk?

## Appendix B

*Project Title: UMC White Male Appropriation of Hip-Hop/Rap Culture and Black Language*

CONSENT FORM

You are being asked to participate in my research on upper middle class white male appropriation of hip-hop/rap culture and black language. The goal of this study will be to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon by interviewing you on your perception, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes concerning hip-hop/rap culture/music and black language.

I would like to ask you to participate in this research by allowing me to interview you for approximately one hour on the subjects of hip-hop/rap culture/music and black language. Any and/or all of your perceptions, assumption, beliefs and attitudes may be used in my research. Your participation is completely voluntary and has no bearing whatsoever on your current political, social, or economic status. You may refuse to answer certain questions or choose to discontinue your participation at any time. All results will be treated with strict confidence and your identity will remain confidential through the use of pseudonyms, which you may choose, in any report of my research findings. Only Dr. Geneva Smitherman (my supervising investigator) and I will have access to the data, and your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Results will be made available to you upon request.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study and furthermore your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of the growing proliferation and subsequent appropriation of hip hop culture and black language. If you agree to participate in this research, please **sign** and **date** below. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the project, please contact me. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Jill M. McKay, Ph.D. Student
Critical Studies in Literacy and Pedagogy
Dept. of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures
Michigan State University
3D Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824
Phone: 517-353-1613 (office); 248-361-2829 (cell)
E-mail: mckayji1@msu.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Director of the Human Subject Protection Programs at Michigan State University: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, email: irb@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

**Project Title:** *UMC White Male Appropriation of Hip-Hop/Rap Culture and Black Language* **CONSENT FORM**

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.


Name: _____          Date:

⸱

      (Please print)
      (month/day/year)


_____

                            (*Signature*)

## Appendix C

### Assignment #1: Rhetorical Analysis of Hip Hop Lyrics
### ENG 106
### Spring 2007
### Due: Friday February 2

For this assignment choose a Hip Hop song (lyrics can easily be found on the Internet) and perform a rhetorical analysis. Papers must examine the lyrics in order to identify the three rhetorical appeals: pathos, ethos, and logos. The paper will also require some background research be conducted about the author/artist of these lyrics in order to more fully portray the author/artist's rhetorical moves and your interpretation of them. Below are questions that should be addressed in this assignment:

- What is the overall purpose/message of this song?
- Who is/are the audience (s)?
- How does this song appeal ethically, logically, and/or emotionally to the audience(s)? This means you must use concrete examples from the lyrics to justify/prove your argument.
- Does your knowledge of the artists background shape the way you interpret this song? How?
- Is the rhetoric invoked in these lyrics effective? Why or why not?

The following are formatting requirements for this assignment:

- 3 to 4 pages long (3 ½ is acceptable, 2 ¾ is not!)
- Double-spaced
- 12 point times new roman or 11 point Verdana or Tahoma
- Name and Section number at the top
- Stapled!!!

The final paper is **due Friday February 2**. However, you must bring in a rough draft for writing workshop on **Monday January 29** and a polished draft for peer review on **Wednesday January 31**.

## Appendix D

## Assignment #3: Issues in Hip Hop Research Paper
### ENG 106
### Spring 2007
### Due: Monday March 26

This assignment asks you to dig deeper into the issues surrounding Hip Hop using the rhetorical appeals discussed in class. You must choose one chapter from the course text that has NOT been assigned in the syllabus and **build/craft an original argument** based on the issue discussed in the article (gender, politics, language, space/place, commercialization/appropriation, etc.). To fully support your argument you must use at least 2 outside sources (books, articles, etc.). The following points should serve as guidelines for this assignment:

- What is the overall argument/purpose of the article you chose from the course text? Do you agree/disagree with the author?
- Why do you agree with the author, how does the author effectively prove his/her point? What effective rhetoric do they employ? Use concrete examples from the article to support your claims.
- If you disagree with the author, what are the holes in their argument? How is their rhetoric ineffective? Again, you must use concrete examples to support your claims.
- How do the two outside sources you chose serve to support your argument? What are those author's stances on the issue?

The following are formatting requirements for this assignment:

- 5 full pages to 6 full pages long (5 ½ is acceptable 4 ¾ is not!)
- Double-spaced
- 12 point times new roman or 11 point Verdana or Tahoma
- Name and Section number at the top
- Stapled!!!

The final paper is **due Monday March 26**. However, you must bring a rough draft for writing workshop on **Monday March 19** and a polished draft for peer review on **Wednesday March 21.**

**Assignment #4: Visual Analysis Project and Presentation**
**ENG 106: The Rhetoric of Hip Hop**
**Spring 2007**
**Due: Friday April 27**

This project will act as the final assignment for the course. The purpose of this assignment is to engage you in thinking critically and analytically about the visual rhetoric of Hip Hop culture. As we've discussed time and again, we live in an increasingly visual culture, saturated with images that evoke a wide range of emotions, ideas, and opinions and in many ways Hip Hop culture is a product of this "culture of the image". To complete this project you must use not only your knowledge of visual rhetoric but your knowledge of images in Hip Hop culture, what they portray, what they evoke, etc. For this project you may work individually, in pairs, or in a groups of 3-4. Following are the directions:

1.) Choose a Hip Hop culture artifact: song lyrics, CD case, advertisement, music video, website, article of clothing, etc. and analyze it from a visual rhetoric standpoint, paying close attention to the following questions:

- What is the first thing you notice when looking at this artifact?
- What does the creator/artist's choice of color say about the artifact?
- What feelings does this image evoke from the audience? Does it make you sad, angry, happy, curious, etc.?
- Who do you think the intended audience is? Why?
- What do you think the intended message is? Why?
- Is there evidence of cultural appropriation? Explain.
- Does the creator/artist invoke the CRAP heuristic? Explain.
- Discuss any other pertinent information you feel about this image
- Finally, and most importantly, does this image work? Does it succeed in doing what it is intended to do?

2.) When you have finished your write up (4-5 pages), prepare an in-class presentation of your materials. This means you must bring the artifact to class and discuss the highlights of your visual analysis paper.

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