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Connecting Black youth to critical media literacy through hip hop making in the music classroom

ABSTRACT

This article is an ethnographic study of a hip hop-based music education programme for students within elementary school classrooms. Drawing on two years of fieldwork in two urban schools, this case study describes how hip hop song composition encouraged participants to make essential and critical reflections about media's place in their personal lives, peer groups, families and communities. The findings of this study suggest that the social and cultural capital of making hip hop music can contribute to bolstering academic learning for Black youth. Implications from this study also suggest informal interests and social identities rooted in hip hop music can connect youth to pathways for professions in creative labour, high-capacity technological skills, civic-mindedness and critical media literacy that could also transcend the classroom.

KEYWORDS

hip hop
connected learning
ethnography
racial identity
critical media literacy
music education

1. In this article, I use the term 'urban' to refer to an urban space and identities that are most often occupied by Blacks and Latinos that are often characterized by poverty, violence, illegal behaviours and structural decay, and are associated with hip hop identity and behaviour. In using the term, I agree with Forman (2002) when he suggests that, due to its origins, hip hop music and identities must be thought of as conjoined with urban space.

INTRODUCTION

Hip hop-based education (HHBE), or the usage of hip hop, especially rap songs and lyrics, as curricular resources, has been cited by many as helpful for educators seeking to use pedagogy that helps better engage youth with identity formation, prosocial behaviour and critical thinking (Gosa and Fields 2012; Adjapong and Emdin 2015). Until now, researchers in HHBE have generally connected the results of their work to the concept of interest-driven learning and relied on the dialogical process of discussion and concept-exploring based on existing student interests (Petchauer 2009, 2015). Prior HHBE studies have also shown positive academic outcomes for post-secondary youth in informal settings (Brown 2005; Dimitriadis 2009; Love 2015).

Traditionally, HHBE studies have highlighted implementation issues related to a resistance to the culture of hip hop in music education (Kruse 2016; Petchauer 2015; Söderman and Folkestad 2004). In the United States, the non-acceptance of hip hop's artistic practices in music education can likely be traced to the abundance of 'culture of poverty' research that infers that many cultural products and art forms birthed from low-income communities of colour should be purged through formal education (Alim 2011; Paris 2012). This purge can often cause alienation of minority students living in concentrated areas of poverty, frequently stifling their academic and career pursuits (Massey and Denton 1993). Even so, recent developments suggest HHBE can teach media literacy to urban adolescents¹ and provide the means to aid their understanding of the portrayal of race and ethnicity in media, social functions of music as well as its historical context (Alim 2011; Evans 2019; Hill 2009; Kruse 2016). Despite this interest in media literacy in urban education, media literacy programmes within urban school districts are sparse and do not typically connect with hip hop culture (Watkins 2011).

Thus, this article explores the Foundations of Music's Songwriting and Music Production (SWP) programme in Chicago, IL, as a representative case to explore the potential benefits of a standardized hip hop music education programme. This article provides a qualitative analysis of the observed experiences of participants in the SWP programme at Chicago's Shoreline Career Academy and Edwards Community School during the winter and spring of 2018. Using my findings at Shoreline and Edwards as an extended case study, I highlight the ways in which the SWP programme facilitated deep, meaningful learning opportunities for SWP participants.

HHBE RESEARCH: A SNAPSHOT

Over the last twenty years, researchers have argued that social lives of American youth are heavily shaped by hip hop's cultural practices (Petchauer 2009, 2015). Moreover, many emerging scholars of the late 1990s and early 2000s wrote extensively about the cultural capital of hip hop culture among Black youth (Akom 2009; Perry 2004; Rose 1994; Watkins 2001). Since then, the focus of scholarly research on hip hop music has moved beyond fear over the psychosocial effects of lyrical to rich qualitative accounts of the meaning-making processes its youth listeners attached to hip hop culture (Evans 2019).

Hip hop culture has consistently been described as an informational medium that Black youth naturally tune into, one that describes the rage of

African Americans facing growing oppression, declining opportunities for advancement, changing moods on the streets and everyday life as a matter of sheer survival (Hill 2009; Love 2015). Rap music, the most performative and visible product of the culture, is a global phenomenon and a billion-dollar industry that influences the ways in which these youths form their identity, connect with their peers and make meaning of the world around them. In sum, Rap music has become what Michael Eric Dyson (1996) called a 'virus', which circulates hip hop's images, sounds and attitude throughout youth culture. Empirical findings show that examining how young urban learners engage with hip hop communities of practice can be essential to understanding modern urban youths' lifelong developmental processes (Clay 2003; DeCarlo and Hockman 2004; Evans 2019; Tobias 2014).

Drawing on conceptual frameworks from Heath (1983), Street (2003), Gee (2000), Freire and Macedo (2003) and Barton et al. (2000), Belle (2016) was among the first to design and implement a hip hop literacies curriculum that offered a student-centred, critical thinking and culturally relevant approach to media literacy instruction. The results of her study suggested that conceptions of new literacies must evolve to incorporate popular art forms that drive youth culture. These results demonstrate that HHBE can possibly help young people of colour to reflect and act upon their world, but also to find their place in it, and ultimately, transform it. Additionally, they affirm that engaged teachers could be well served to expand the concept of literacy in schools and develop new curricula and pedagogies that involve popular culture.

In this study, I examine youths' developing senses of self in a connected learning² context, in which young people have increased access to a wider ecology of information, technology and interest-driven learning communities (Ito et al. 2013; Watkins et al. 2018). For example, informal learning programmes and online communities provide ways for young people to learn important skills, cultivate relationships and develop their own identities in the process. Theoretically, these capabilities should provide more pathways for young people to develop deeper identification with a personal interest, develop expertise and skill, and connection to career and life goals. However, there is a need to understand how these pathways develop and how learners actually make these connections between interests, learning opportunities and formal academic or career goals.

PROBLEM STATEMENT, STUDY AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Questions regarding why learning equity gaps between racial and ethnic groups exist, particularly among African Americans/Blacks, have largely dominated conversations about equity in media literacy education (Rideout et al. 2016; Watkins et al. 2018). In lessening this disparity, researchers have theorized that HHBE can promote innovative learning among young people of colour (Evans 2019; Peterson 2013; Seidel 2011; Watkins 2019). The overarching aim of this study is to chart major ways in which HHBE might equip Black youth with critical media literacies through inquiry-driven media production and a community of practice. In doing so, I postulate that when engaging students, especially urban students and students of under-represented ethnic groups, music educators must utilize an alternative approach to teaching,

2. Connected learning is a type of learning where a young person has an opportunity to pursue a personal interest and passion with friends and caring adults so that learning in the projects are linked to academic achievements, career success or civic engagement. In addition, connected learning is an approach to educational reform keyed to the abundance of information and social connection brought about by networked and digital media.

3. The standard audio workstation provided to teaching artists contained these items. However, some teaching artists chose to bring their own personal equipment to classroom sessions to expand their ability to teach their students.
4. The Creative Schools Certification (CSC) places the arts on CPS school progress report cards. Based upon school-level arts data collected by Arts Liaisons in the previous year, the CSC rates schools 1–5, with 1 meaning excelling and 5 meaning incomplete data/failing to meet standard. Shoreline and Edwards are at a 3, which means they are seeking to develop programming to meet the goals and priorities of the CPS Arts Education Plan.
5. This rating was based on the CPS School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP) (Chicago Public Schools 2016).

which includes considering the realities and cultural backgrounds of students. Given these concerns, I drafted the following general research questions:

RQ1: What creative labour performed by adolescents participating in the SWP programme aids their critical media literacy?

RQ2: More specifically, which practices, processes and mindsets cultivated by their in-school recording experiences translate to the social development, motivations for academic learning, self-determination and/or discovery of career identities for the learners in the SWP programme?

FOUNDATIONS OF MUSIC'S SWP PROGRAMME

Targeted towards low-income communities of colour, Foundations of Music is an arts-oriented non-profit organization in Chicago that aims to deliver culturally relevant arts education to Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students in elementary and middle schools. Foundations of Music's SWP programme introduces students to both the process of writing original hip hop rap songs and the technology used to produce them in the classroom setting during the official school day. Within the classroom, the SWP creates a music studio experience where trained teaching artists mentor students on creating music. Students are provided with studio equipment, including an Apple MacBook laptop with three audio software programmes: (1) Pro Tools, (2) GarageBand and (3) Logic as well as a MIDI keyboard, studio speakers, USB headphones, USB condenser mics, XLR, RCA and USB cords.³ The programme's final objective is that the class participants will collaborate to write, produce, record and mix (a minimum of) three original songs over ten weeks. Though being piloted in eight schools, the programme is only available to schools whose principals have applied for and been awarded the CPS 'Creative Schools' grant.⁴

METHODOLOGY, PROCEDURE AND ANALYSIS

I observed the participants in this study at two public schools in Chicago: Shoreline Career Academy and Edwards Community School. At Shoreline Academy, 82% of the school's student body comes from low-income homes and 98% of students are Black (Chicago Public Schools 2016). According to the 2016 CPS Annual Report, this school ranked below average in terms of overall student attainment, meaning that the majority of Shoreline students performed worse on standardized tests than the national average (50th percentile) and performed below 65% of schools in the local district. Shoreline is identified by CPS as 'partially organized for improvement', which means that the school's culture and climate have a few strengths, but also have several weaknesses. This school received a level 3 (out of 5) rating on its overall quality,⁵ which is a below-average rating at CPS. This school also, currently, has a 26% mobility rate, meaning about a quarter of its student body changed over the course of the school year. The school is located on Chicago's south side in a neighbourhood that is 99% African American.

Edwards Community School is located on Chicago's west side. The school is 99 per cent African American and 98.9 per cent low-income according to the 2016 CPS Annual Report, a similar demographic to Shoreline Academy. This school also ranked below average in overall student attainment and was deemed 'partially organized for improvement'. This school also received a level 3 rating on its quality.

The participants in this study included 57 Black students aged 10–14 years old (35 male and 22 female) who participated in the SWP programme during the winter and spring of 2017. To be a student in the SWP programme, the principal of the school had to give the student a nomination and then the student self-selected to take the SWP class. Subsequently, I was introduced to the students in the class (with a parent present) and they all agreed to participate in the observational study. Therefore, the sample being observed was non-probability, purposive and homogeneous, intentionally observed to exhibit the exact phenomenon under study. There was no incentive for interviewed or observed participants. Study procedures were approved by the institutional review board at the sponsoring institution. Finally, pseudonyms were assigned to all students and teachers observed unless otherwise noted. Additionally, pseudonyms were given to the name of the schools and any information regarding their exact location.

The data utilized in this article are from my visits to the field site once a week for two hours each time from 13 January 2017 until 1 December 2018, totalling over 80 hours of observation. During these two-hour periods, I observed two classes: one sixth grade and one eighth grade. Throughout the class sessions, I carefully took field notes using the mobile application Evernote. These notes and jottings were focused on documenting observed scenes, events and interactions (Emerson et al. 1995).

At the end of each class session, I immediately converted the field notes into a narrative-based record of observations. Within the narrative, I recorded the notable events of the day, the reactions, informal conversations and comments of each participant as closely as possible. I also communicated with the teaching artists to clarify any follow-up questions that I had after creating these narratives. Once all narratives were complete, I utilized Emerson et al.'s (1995) iterative two-phase practice of coding and memoing ethnographic field notes. Three data sources (song lyrics, participant observations and open-ended interviews) served in my analysis for this study.

As a former professional hip hop performer who now operates with the lens of a media scholar, my practical expertise allowed me the unique ability to critique and assess the compositions of the young people I observed in this study. I relied on my roots as a hip hop musician to make links between media literacy and public voice to assess hip hop composition as a culturally sustaining approach (Paris 2012)⁶ to music education. Since my motivations and inquiries were borne out of subjective experiences, and my research questions were provoked by personal narratives, ethnographic methods supported my inquiry into HHBE as music pedagogy. With that said, while my presence and positionality in the classroom likely impacted these youths' experiences and meaning that they attached to their experiences, I believe my presence enhanced the participant observations by supporting young people's work in the studio environment and deepened the researcher-participant relationship (e.g. Kelly [2017]: 59).

FINDINGS

Building on student interest in hip hop within a school-based community of practice

Facilitation of knowledge in small groups can often foster a sense of belonging and pride in one's place in a community (Granovetter 1986). Similarly, within the SWP's tight-knit and free-flowing learning environment, participants

6. Paris (2012) defines this as teaching that sustains the languages, literacies and cultural practices of students and communities of colour.

were often given opportunities to create, reflect and iterate based on feedback. Jamie, a sixth-grade participant at Shoreline, shared with me:

The great thing about this class is that we are the teachers. No one's in charge like that. KP helps us but he only helps us with what we want to do. He actually listens to us and helps us when most of the other teachers just yell at us or send us to the office when we say stuff.

(Field note, 14 November 2018)

In one instance, Jamie was introspective about how KP, the teaching artist, encouraged interest-driven learning:

When I first got here, I had a bunch of raps that I wanted to record for my mixtape that I was working on outside of school. Usually teachers don't let you do that but he was like trying to help me with my own projects instead of forcing me to rap about something else just for a school grade. Instead of dismissing me or sending me to in-school (suspension), he actually listened to what we wanted to do.

(Field note, 14 November 2018)

The SWP programme allowed participants like Jamie to explore their own interests within the classroom; something that seemed likely could spill over into helping develop long-term career aspirations. For instance, one Shoreline student named Nina found herself not interested in writing songs or making beats but was curious about learning to be an audio engineer. Knowing this, KP allowed Nina to spend her free periods experimenting with the audio recording software programme Pro Tools and gave her individual lessons on sound mixing after school. Eventually, Nina took on the role within the seventh- and eighth-grade class of being the 'class engineer' for those wishing to record a new song. When I asked why he encouraged Nina's endeavours though they did not truly fit within the SWP curriculum, KP said:

My point is not to stop a kid from learning a skill simply because the curriculum lesson may not call for it. The goal is to engage students the aspect of music making that interests them most [sic]. Nina likely has found a career path in learning to engineer.

(Field note, 9 August 2018)

For Nina, KP went above and beyond the curriculum, serving as an institutional agent, informational resource and transmitter of social capital. KP reflected:

Yeah... I generally work with those seen as the 'problem kids' and I have to earn their trust in order to get them to be honest and make authentic musical projects. Once I get past that, they start finding their roles, working on some really cool music as a team. I just coach them through it.

(Field note, 16 August 2018)

Previous research has stated that urban adolescents thrive as a part of a readily available, supportive and dependable structure (Evans 2007), where they feel a sense of membership, influence, fulfilment of needs and a shared emotional

connection (Chavis et al. 2008). To that end, KP further stated why the SWP programme made the participants feel included:

The problem we encounter is that so many of these shorties have issues in school... [pauses] at home [...] and in their neighbourhood [...] it distracts them... [pauses] These little kids have seen some real [bad] things. Some stuff that I wouldn't know about if it wasn't put in a song. Almost every class makes some form of RIP song for someone that has died in their family or community. What other class allows them to cut through those types of emotions with a support group?

(Field note, 2 August 2018)

In many instances, the participants in the SWP programme used their real-life experiences with violence in their musical creations and to process their emotions and think critically about the cause of the conditions in their communities. For example, Edwards sixth graders created a song called 'Change the World' that included the following lyrics:

People can change their mind or their heads/Homies end up dead/They shooting off clips even if they're a little kid/Don't let nothing keep you down/You gotta be tough and stand ground (ay)

Additionally, the creation of these sorts of lyrics fostered a sense of community and active and engaged citizenship amongst the students. After finishing the recording of this song, Darius (age 12, grade six) stated:

Even though it's violence and stuff, I feel like when I'm in this group I want to be something different [...] something big. I just feel like I can be a leader for people in my generation (and my community). I got to like [...] keep telling myself so I can like speak it in existence. We push each other to be leaders.

(Field note, 2 August 2017)

Shoreline student Rodney (age 13, grade eight) expressed similar feelings about battling personal obstacles in the song 'Live Life':

Every day I walk the streets, I hope I don't get killed
Some people might think it's a game, but I know it's real
Blacks are tortured out on the street
But if we stand tall, we cannot be beat
We are powerful, But if we unite, we can be unstoppable.

Rodney's verse is representative of the introspection elicited within the SWP programme. It was within lyrics like these that SWP students created authentic messages about their grief, community distress or true feelings of loss; words that were not only personally reflective but uniquely critical of the historical systematic oppression they experienced as African Americans in the United States.

Connecting to community issues via song production

Everybody talks about how bad it is where we live but they never really hear the voice of people from where we live on the news. I think our

7. Chicago, particularly, has become a cultural hub for hip hop talent through a subgenre of gangsta rap called Drill music. Drill music is seen by many as 'the CNN' of low-income communities of colour in Chicago (Stuart 2019).

songs give the hood a voice [...] not like in a drill⁷ way [...] like just showing we're real people and we go through real stuff.
(Marquis, age 11, Shoreline Academy)

By interrogating their own music creations and comparing them to that of their favourite artists, participants of the Foundations of Music SWP programme frequently examined sociopolitical and economic issues happening to themselves, within their families and their communities. To that end, Edwards student Deandre (age 10, grade five) made a very poignant and introspective verse about his personal struggles on the song 'Always on My Mind':

You only live once/You can't come back twice
Life is really hard and that's a part of life
Sometimes you gotta run, Sometimes you gotta fight
Stress can get you left, Even though you being right
I'm sitting in school not paying attention
Cuz my auntie and my uncle just died yesterday
Ya they always on my mind/Ya they there all the time.

Continually, by allowing the students to convene and talk about their issues affecting their personal lives, they appeared to have a higher understanding of larger social problems impacting them and talked about having a greater commitment to improving their community. For example, during week seven of the class, Edwards student Roland (age 13, grade seven) mentioned the following when speaking about why he included local community politics in his raps:

Everybody sees (Chicago Mayor) Rahm (Emanuel) on TV standing in front of schools giving statements but it ain't like he really care about us or our schools. He just wants to keep his job. The rappers don't make the violence! They just talk about what's going on. If they put more money in the 'hood' then maybe it would be different but right now this is my reality. Why can't I talk about it?

(Field note, 2 August 2018)

Many students expressed angst over the fact that mainstream music was 'a commodity' produced for consumption but also tended to reinforce negative stereotypical assumptions about their neighbourhoods. The SWP class was one of the few chances students had to openly express their feelings about this racial stratification they routinely witnessed or felt in their everyday lives. KP explained:

As you saw, when they first came here they were just trying to make music that sounds like what's popular on the radio. Then when I explained to them that the media is largely controlled by White executives, they started to challenge the narratives that they hear in their favorite music and watch on TV. They also started creating music that was more real to them and more uplifting to their critical consciousness.

(Field note, 1 February 2018)

What KP seemed to be trying to express to me in this quote was that hip hop cultural practices are best taught when culture is introduced through a political lens that does not censor critiques of dominant power structures influencing the students' everyday lives. Julius, an eighth grader at Edwards, echoed that sentiment:

I like drill music still but (because of KP) now I realize that violent music isn't good for Black people if they don't know how to see that it's not real. We need more positive songs for the youth, so they can inspire the new generation that's growing up in the hood. We got to make positive music that also sounds as good as the violent stuff.

(Field note, 7 June 2018)

What Julius seemed to be expressing was what Paulo Freire (1970) called critical consciousness, or the perception of concrete situations and problems, as well as action against oppression. When asked about the role of consciousness in the SWP classroom, KP stated:

We're in an age where media is everywhere for everybody. Hip-Hop heavily influences the way these youth take in their ideas about the world they live in. To say this is just a music class would do it a disservice. This class gets them to think critical about society without it feeling like a chore [...] It's real to them.

(Personal communication, 15 November 2019)

'Finding your truth': Critical dialogue internally and with collaborators

I don't let my shorties talk about shit that they ain't really doing. I just don't. I don't make them say anything that's overly positive either. This isn't a class on local politics or self-esteem. This about them finding their truth and being able to talk about life in a critical way [...] and make dope music. It's a deeper level of expression that I want.

(KP, Teaching artist, Foundations of Music)

SWP participants continually were allowed to interpret their social worlds and weave their own stories into resonating personal narratives. For example, during a week-ten feedback session, Shoreline student Wade (age 14, grade eight) expressed to the rest of the class why their composition 'Life in the Streets' was such a personal song to him:

My brother was shot in front of me 16 times. I literally saw him go into the shakes before he died. I saw the police put a sheet over him. I know the guys who did it and they're still looking for me. This song relates to me because I know this is nothing new. It's the same old stuff for everyone. Maybe songs like this will make people understand how dumb it is (to be on the streets).

Beyond discussing current events and sociopolitical issues, SWP participants used their songwriting experiences to choose and critiqued issues that matter

to them and their communities. They also used their music to study and imagine solutions to those issues. KP articulated that very point:

Finding your voice, thinking critically and forming opinions about your social world is important at any level of schooling, from getting a secondary education all the way to getting a PhD.

(Field note, 2 August 2017)

Along those lines, when creating the song, 'Change the World', the students at Edwards poignantly spoke about their personal journeys, artistic/professional aspirations, frustration with mainstream music and future hopes for their communities. An example of this is in the lyrics below that were made by Patrick (age 12, grade seven):

Things getting complicated
They don't always wanna see you make it
Left the ghetto then people hated
Born alone, destined for greatness
unstoppable, unstoppable
Chi-raq on lots of bull
Don't be no clone, can't be no clone
Gotta stay strong, to make it out on your own.

For students like Patrick, who have difficulty discussing anger, grief or depression in the presence of others, the music-making experience truly benefited him. The lyrics-based activities were especially useful in helping him develop and recording songs that mirrored his real-life experiences in prosocial format. Randall (age 14, grade eight) reflected on this during his final class:

People around this school always look at us as the kids who get sent to the principal's office. Since being in this class now I make better beats and I write songs that are about how I grew up and where I want to be. I don't make that music that everyone expects from Chicago. I want to talk about how to make it out of the hood, not what's going to keep me there.

(Field note, 9 June 2017)

Beyond acquiring wide-ranging abilities and employing critical media literacies in their songs, SWP students used their lyrics that presented counter-narratives that were meant to interrupt and dismantle traditional conceptions of youth in their neighbourhoods as apathetic, underperforming. Kenneth (age 12, grade seven) stated:

Most Chicago Rap is about drugs and reppin' gangs but I make music to try to be more poetic. I use different styles and I experiment like J Cole or Kendrick [Lamar]. I use storytelling and I try to kick something real. Rap isn't as real as it used to be like when Tupac and Biggie was rapping. Migos (a popular Atlanta rap group) is cool but I want to be more positive. Music causes violence around here and I ain't trying to rap about giving kids drugs or shooting at them. That isn't cool. The more violence we hear, the more violence we see [...] I just don't think it's cool. I make to make something that shows what really is cool and positive in my city. Show people why I love it here.

(Field note, 31 May 2017)

For Kenneth, it appeared, the SWP classroom became liberating space that promoted multiple positionalities for 'not only reading the word and world through a dialect lens, but also reimagining epistemologies' (Hall 2011: 17). Overall, the SWP seemed to foster critical media literacy and connected learning, providing students the kinds of opportunities that can spur development of civic imagination, opportunities for agency and industry.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Creating rap songs amplified the civic imagination of those in the SWP programme, allowed them to understand their own social identities and helped them foster a sharper criticality for media production and consumption. In analysing the findings of this study, I cannot confirm nor deny whether cultural relevance truly translates to creating better learning strategies in Black youth. Even so, in seeing the important ways African American students navigated identities through hip hop languages in the SWP programme, my findings suggest that hip hop practices have important implications for reframing music programmes and improving educational practices to make these more youth-oriented. For it is through enacting these youth-oriented changes that educators can better support and inspire youth's passion for the cultural production and pursuit of meaning through popular music.

In this article, I have identified three primary themes of critical media literacy revealed within my observations of the SWP programme: interest-driven learning, critical dialogue and connection to community-based narratives. One limitation of this research is that many of the students observed in the programme admitted to having had previous exposure to music technology in some capacity. Despite this, I still believe the findings of this study suggest hip hop music education programmes could help mitigate some disparities in academic outcomes of African American students. Youth in this study came from communities deeply affected by the digital divide, but thrived when given the opportunity to create a more professional media artefact with professional tools.

Future research needs to examine whether inserting hip hop songwriting and production in formal settings also contributes to skills and dispositions that show up in cognitive measures, to detectable gains in certain spatial and mathematical capacities and/or to skills transferable standard school-age measures of intelligence. This approach could hypothetically lead to a richer understanding of how economically disadvantaged Black youth leverage cultural identity in their access to in-school digital media programmes. In promoting HHBE through the lens of critical media literacy and socio-emotional development, it is my hope that this study will lay the groundwork for future HHBE study through the lens of media literacy and add to discourse on what HHBE can do to empower marginalized youth to develop skills necessary to navigate their social, personal and professional lives.

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