

## ABSTRACT

### Letter to the President: Longitudinal Critical Discourse Analysis of Academic and Hip Hop Genres in a Rap Narrative Program

by

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The objective of this study was to examine an in-school rap narrative workshop through critical discourse theory (Bamberg, 2012; Daiute, 2014). Twelve youth from a public school serving youth in urban Houston, TX were recruited from an in-school and after-school Hip hop/Rap narrative program to participate in a two-year cohort research study. The primary research question guiding the study was “How do young people participating in a school-based Hip hop/Rap program use a wide range of narrative genres for literacy and psycho-social development over two years in the program?”

The data-intensive study involved assessments of literacy and psycho-social development via analyses of oral and written individual and collaborative Hip hop/rap and academic genres, in addition to the Ryff (1995) individual well-being measure. Cohort 1, who participated from February 2013 until September 2013 (8 months), included seven youth aged 13-19 years old in grades 7-12. Cohort 2 was in a second year from June 2014 to mid-March 2015 (9.5 months), when Cohort 1 also continued participating. This dissertation presents an examination of the relationship between Hip hop and academic genres (specifically writing letters addressed to the President of the United States of America), particular to analyze the values expressed across the letter and rap narrative genres and across time.

Major findings include that the value “Hip hop allows for emotional expression” emerges as dominant across cohorts and times, the value hip hop develops relationship skills increased slightly over time and across cohorts which correlated with scores on the Ryff psychological well-being measure. Furthermore the value of hip hop allows for Black aesthetic expressions increased in the letter genre and decreased in the rap genre.

Major findings also include that the Hip hop values allow for emotional expression emerges as dominant across cohorts and times, the value hip hop develops relationship skills increased slightly over time and across cohorts which correlated with scores on the Ryff psychological well-being measure. Furthermore the value of hip hop allows for Black aesthetic expressions increased in the letter genre and decreased in the rap genre.

Results indicated various answers to each research question. For Research Question 1: (1) emotional expression emerged as a consistent dominant value across cohorts and across times (2) as measured with the Ryff scale, relationship skills increased slightly over time and across cohorts to become a dominant value across cohorts and genres in year 2

(3) Increases in valuing Black Aesthetics in the Letter genre corresponded with decreases in Black Aesthetic values in the Rap genre suggesting a cross fertilization, defined as values of one genre moving into another genre over time, of values (4) Cohort 2 valued self-management while Cohort 1 valued self-awareness and self-management did not emerge at all in the rap genre.

Results regarding the cross fertilization of Black Aesthetic values between the Rap and the Letter genre indicate that perhaps the combination of musical/kinesthetic forms of learning can be coupled with traditional academic forms of learning to allow youth to develop social-emotional competencies which cut across genres. Furthermore, value cross fertilization has some

implications with regards to collective practices and individual practices indicating that the values which emerge in one practice can transform into another practice. Indeed, the coupling of Self Awareness values and Social Awareness values, and the dominance of these Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) values suggest that youth are learning about themselves as they are learning about the world around them. This, again, has implications for the role that mental health and education play together in developing healthy minds in youth, which are critically reflective of themselves and the world around them. A potential contribution of this study includes better understanding the connection between Hip hop interventions on social-emotional and literacy development in urban youth. These insights are relevant especially to educational and psychological design and research because they offer empirical, longitudinal design and methods in a systematic attempt to study polycultural art in context and its effects on adolescent development.