Chapter 49

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Hip–Hop Based Education:
A Professional Development Framework in Rap Cypher and Battle to Promote Student Engagement and Academic Achievement

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ABSTRACT

Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) (Paris & Alim, 2014) presents a new lens by which culturally relevant pedagogy can evolve with the ever-evolving youth culture of today. The evolution of hip-hop culture serves as an example of CSP that can be used to increase student engagement and academic achievement through the use of hip-hop based education (HHBE). However, current HHBE research fails to address the professional development needs of those who do not identify with hip-hop culture but want to implement hip-hop pedagogy into their instructional practice. This chapter presents a professional development design for hip-hop based education that is to serve as the beginning of teacher knowledge construction in frameworks of CSP for increased student engagement and academic achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher development is an ongoing and dynamic process that happens across the scope of one's teaching career, throughout pre-service and in-service training alike. What teachers do and how teachers teach is heavily influenced by the social context in which our schools exist; an existence that is sustained within the framework of the historical, economic, and political landscape of our country. Therefore, teacher

training and professional development must cater to the needs of our shifting demographic student population, for "teachers must be able to construct pedagogical practices that have relevance and meaning to students' social and cultural realities" (Howard, 2003, p. 195).

Currently, the cultural incongruence (Delpit, 1995) between the majority White, female teaching force, and the increasingly diverse student population is ever exacerbated as gaps in achievement continue to widen across racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic borders. For this reason, culturally relevant pedagogy has been cited extensively in the extant literature as a theoretical and pedagogical framework for teachers to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population (Brown-Jeffy, & Cooper, 2011; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Osborne, 1996; Seidl, 2007; Young, 2010). However; in recent scholarship, culturally relevant pedagogy has been reduced to nothing more than a checklist or a random tool in a teacher's toolbox that gets dusted off every now and again (Ladson-Billings, 2011), losing the true essence of its original tenets. Consequently, culturally relevant pedagogy like all theories come to a critical juncture when they undergo an evolution.

Shifting Pedagogies: From Culturally *Relevant* to Culturally *Sustaining*

Twenty years after her seminal work *Towards a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995), Gloria Ladson-Billings argues that culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) should evolve as the culture of the present day transforms through changing values, new ideas, and the recognition of new art forms (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Notwithstanding, this evolution of CRP must continue to strive to address the complex structure of social inequality and an ever-changing student population. As a result, pre and in-service teachers who are culturally relevant teachers, must not allow themselves to become stagnate in their understanding of CRP (Ladson-Billings, 2014). As teachers grow and develop their instructional practice, they must not lose sight of the core tenets of CRP. CRP is committed to high levels of student academic achievement, for in classrooms taught by culturally relevant pedagogues, students *choose* to achieve academic excellence; cultural competence- wherein students maintain their cultural integrity; and critical consciousness- a student's ability to understand and critique the existing social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995). To this end, CRP has served as a framework that posits asset-based approaches to teaching and learning for the purposes of collective empowerment. However, the question remains: does teaching and research claiming to be "culturally relevant" truly maintain and expand these foundational tenets?

Paris (2012) asserted that cultural relevance does not necessarily guarantee that heritages, cultural, and linguistic histories are sustained and encouraged in educational spaces in ways that support sharing across difference. Thus he calls for a new term and a new approach that offers teachers a means to "value and maintain the practices of their students in the process of extending their students' repertoires of practice to include dominant language, literacies, and other cultural practice" (p. 95). As present day culture and paradigms shift, culturally *sustaining* pedagogy (CSP) (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014) presents a new lens by which CRP can evolve with the ever-evolving youth culture of today.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Paris and Alim (2014) contend that culturally sustaining pedagogy is a means of pushing the traditional boundaries of culturally relevant pedagogy to incorporate a vast array of identities and cultures that shape today's youth culture:

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