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# Black African and Caribbean Youth Inclusion Practices: The Role of Hip-hop

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Black African and Caribbean Youth Inclusion Practices: The Role of Hip-hop

by

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A THESIS

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## **Abstract**

In this thesis I explore the ways in which Black African and Caribbean immigrant youth in Calgary, Alberta, use Hip-hop culture to foster feelings of inclusion in Canadian society. It is projected that by 2016, 25% of the youth population in Canada was immigrant. While some immigrant youth are on par socio-economically with their Canadian-born counterparts, others face barriers that make inclusion strenuous. First and second generation Black African and Caribbean immigrant youth in particular face social and economic barriers in Alberta. I argue that in addressing the problems faced by these youth, the potential of Hip-hop culture as a strategy to counter these barriers has been historically under-explored. Based on this data, my thesis identifies the racial and cultural barriers that these youth encounter in contemporary Canadian society, as well as the role that Hip-hop plays in shaping their inclusion process.

## **Acknowledgements**

First, I wholeheartedly would love to thank God for holding me tight and never letting me go throughout every step of my life. Thank you for air, faith, love, and melody. Had it not been for your beats, rhymes, and life, I would not have stayed on a path to fulfill your purpose. Second, I owe my deepest appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Amal Madibbo, who not only supported me through every step of this research, but helped me comprehend my identity in a world where I often felt I did not belong. Thank you for your revisions, input, knowledge, and wisdom. Third, I thank my community. Although I may not be around from time to time, I owe you huge chunks of my existence. You are my brothers and sisters. Thank you for turntables, cyphers, dancers, and unity. Had it not been for you, this study could never have been possible. Fourth, I am most grateful to CJSW 90.9 FM for their support throughout my university education. You are the reason I enrolled at the University of Calgary. Thank you for the unbreakable bonds I have made over the last few years. Finally, I want to acknowledge all of the authors and respondents who are cited in this thesis. You are the heartbeat of this thesis. Thank you for your quotes and knowledge. Thank you for your existence.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this Master's thesis to my mother, Gemma Mignon, for her love, and support for what feels like an eternity of existence. Thank you.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the study**

It was projected that by 2016, 25% of the youth population in Canada will be immigrant (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2006) and the realities facing these young people today are complex. While some immigrant youth are on par with their Canadian-born counterparts socio-economically, others face poor educational outcomes, social isolation and exclusion (Ibrahim, 2011a). These barriers make smooth integration into society strenuous. Existing scholarship highlights racial inequalities in Canada (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000; Tator & Henry, 2006). Although Canada is celebrated domestically and internationally for its multicultural policies, and our efforts to include peoples from all walks of life in Canadian society, there still exists pervasive racism amongst ethnic groups, specifically Blacks. Through published studies we can begin to understand the experiences Black people share.

It is easy for some to claim that “Blacks are disenfranchised because they do not work as hard,” but this outlook fails to acknowledge the deeper - latent - structures that oppress Black peoples from reaching their full potential. Today, Blacks in Canada experience language barriers, hold more disadvantaged economic positions, are less likely to attain a university education, face negative media portrayals, and occupy less political positions relative to their counterparts in dominant society (Das Gupta et al., 2007; Dei, 2012; James, 2003; Mensah, 2010). These inequalities are also experienced by Black youth in various realms of social life.

Madibbo (2008) states that some of the systemic barriers that Black youth endure are associated with their immigration status. For example, refugees are often more concerned than other newcomers with their uncertain status, the trauma of war, or their reliance on public

housing and shelters. Black youth who are first-generation immigrants (born outside Canada) encounter obstacles related to their lack of proficiency in the English language, and the systemic lack of recognition for the work and educational experience they have gained in their countries of origin. However, Madibbo (2015) contends that Black youth of other immigrant generations also experience challenges, such as racial profiling by Canadian law enforcement.

Madibbo (2008) perceives the police harassment of Black youth based on racial profiling to be structural and institutional racism that targets Black communities. According to Madibbo “Racial profiling means that Black youth, especially young Black men, are often stopped, arrested, searched, questioned or beaten by the police” (p. 46). She elaborates on the systemic nature of racial profiling: “I consider the police harassment of these people as a form of violence and racism existing in the police force” (p. 46). Tator and Henry (2006) posit that racial profiling mirrors the perceptions of the dominant white society’s beliefs and prejudice about minorities such as Blacks and First Nations. Commenting on Tator and Henry’s (2006) assertions, Madibbo (2008) states that racial profiling is fueled by negative stereotypes constructed about specific racialized groups, and that these stereotypes are “products of the dominant culture which perceives these groups as more violent than others” (p. 46). Madibbo believes that these presumptions place Black youth in constant scrutiny and constitute a major factor that instigates their experiences of police harassment and exclusion in Canadian society.

In addition, Black youth encounter discriminatory practices within the education system, such as the under-representation of material pertaining to Black history and culture in the school curriculum, high suspension and drop-out rates, paucity of Black teachers, enrollment of racial

minority students in the Basic and General (as opposed to the advanced or accelerated) levels, and teachers' low expectations of Black students, (Ibrahim, 2011a; Madibbo, 2008). In addition, according to Henderson and Mapp (2002), "Among the impediments to immigrant children and youth's [including Blacks] integration are language barriers ... low levels of parental involvement, and isolation... [many perceive] these students as challenging for educators, especially at the high school level, as they do not have enough time to develop language skills and social bond in school" (p. 29).

Black youth also encounter disadvantages with Canada's labor market. Black African youth in particular experience difficulties while entering the workforce because of language barriers, lack of accreditation of educational qualifications, and lack of Canadian credentials (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). When Black youth finally obtain employment, they also face barriers in their work environment compared to whites (Rudder, 2008). For example, Black youth suffer from racial jokes, and have their views overlooked and more challenged compared to their coworkers (Access Alliance, 2015). Furthermore, Black youth's labor is treated as expendable, decreasing opportunities for workplace promotions compared to their white counterparts (Livingston & Weinfeld, 2015).

These aforementioned difficulties have a negative impact on Black youth. Many feel that they are not considered genuine Canadians because their identities do not meet Canada's white European norms (Berns-McGown, 2013). As such, these youths feel alienated and like they do not belong in Canada (Madibbo, 2015; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005). Due to the types of racism and systemic barriers mentioned in this section, some (i.e., Morgan, 2015) have suggested that

Black youth suffocate in Canadian society because they adopt a racial burden that hounds their identities. This burden contains a feeling of otherness, which denies young Black people from achieving a full sense of purpose for their existence. What is unfortunate is that as Black youth continue to feel alienated, some become involved in gangs, which are closely associated with drugs, organized crime, and gun violence. Luckily, some strategies can be used to counteract feelings of otherness, discrimination and suffocation.

Scholars have documented the ways that Black youth develop strategies of inclusion to counter the racism and marginalization that they face in Canadian society. These strategies include redefining their identities in inclusive ways and creating groups and organizations that assist youth in employment and help with their integration in the school system (Madibbo, 2015), and occupying cultural platforms that serve as sites of resistance, creativity and solidarity. These cultural forms notably include Hip-hop (Ibrahim, 2011b; Walcott, 2005). Therefore, this thesis explores the role of Hip-hop as a means of social inclusion against the backdrop of the barriers that first and second generation Black African and Caribbean youth are subjected to in Calgary, Canada.

### **What is Hip-hop?**

Although Hip-hop has typically been recognized as a culture that consists of rapping, poetry, DJing, graffiti and breakdancing, it transcends this manifest realm. To understand its latent meaning, the nonprofit organization *Global Awareness through Hip-hop* (2015) asserts that:

At its core, Hip Hop is so much more than mere art and entertainment. *Hip Hop is the constantly evolving spirit and consciousness of urban youth that keeps recreating itself in a never-ending cycle.* It is joy, sorrow, pleasure, pain, victory, defeat, anger, happiness, confusion, clarity, humor, intensity, dreams, nightmares, life, death and everything else in between. It is the spirit that connects the past to the present and lays a path towards the future.

In this thesis, I particularly focus on self-identified rappers and poets inasmuch as most, if not all, rappers are poets, and rely on both Hip-hop's manifest and latent meanings. Through the above-stated definitions we see that Hip-hop is less a musical genre and can be seen as more of a culture that impacts the core identities of those who participate in it. I argue that Black youth use this culture to create spaces of existence, where they can cope with issues such as racism and discrimination, and also challenge their marginalized status and enhance their social inclusion in society.

### **What is Social Inclusion?**

Richmond and Saloojee (2005) posit that social inclusion is the proactive response to social exclusion. They believe that social inclusion is “the realization of full and equal participation in economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of life in a new country” (p. 20). Furthermore, it is the “increased representation and participation of marginalized groups and encouraging the development of skills, talents and capacities of all” (p. 24). Social inclusion is the idea that one should be treated like everyone else regardless of whether they are physically challenged, poor, Black, female or uneducated. Social inclusion is to be recognized in the face of difference and to secure “equal recognition and dignity in society” (p. 14). Richmond and

Saloojee believe that for social inclusion to arise it is essential for groups to be able to express themselves equally, foster belonging that is free of marginalization, and create and sustain warm relationships with others and their community. From these ideas we see that social inclusion is not passive. Rather, social groups and agents must engage in collective social action that is anti-discriminatory and seeks to transform areas of life where exclusion and marginalization exist.

The contentions of Richmond and Saloojee echo the hypothesis presented in this thesis. Social inclusion consists of social agents who take action to achieve recognition, and liberate themselves and others from exclusion and marginalization. For this process to be enforced, social agents must engage in social action that eradicates the forces that other groups and collectives. Historically, social inclusion has been synonymous with assimilation, where one group must shed their identity markers and adopt characteristics of what is considered mainstream. However, through Richmond and Saloojee's lens, social inclusion is not only groups immersing themselves into a country's mainstream, but also finding recognition, peace, and love within their own interethnic networks. This idea is invaluable to the research presented here, because it helps understand why Black African and Caribbean immigrant youth use Hip-hop to foster inclusion.

### **Hip-hop and Social Inclusion**

Most of the research that has explored youth and Hip-hop has arisen from the United States. There is evidence that youth participate in Hip-hop because it stands as a mechanism for political truth telling (Perry, 2004). Hip-hop generates feelings of belonging because it creates spaces where youth can envision their human potential (Dyson, 2010). As a result, it helps youth

deal with perceived adversities, and ignites vital democratic energies amongst those who wouldn't otherwise have a suitable platform for cultural expression (West, 2006). Unfortunately, there are only a handful of studies that have been conducted within Canada. Warner (2006) finds that Black youth use Hip-hop to communicate cultural sentiments, and "existential predicaments" (p. 33). He argues that Hip-hop provides them a means for articulation. More importantly, the genre has helped immigrant youth gain autonomy over their socio-cultural makings. Ibrahim (2011b) adds that Hip-hop enables youth to create educational spaces that have positive influence on culture and how they learn English within ESL classrooms. Walcott (2005) compliments Ibrahim's research by contending that Hip-hop creates a space for "identity making" where youth use Hip-hop to express their culture. These studies ascertain that Hip-hop is deployed for identity making, learning, and cultural expression.

Although there are studies that have focused on youth and Hip-hop culture, there are substantive contributions that can be made to the existing literature. The aforementioned works do not reveal the potential for Hip-hop to be used by Black youth both as a means of social inclusion into their own communities and Canada's broader social fabric. In addition, the studies that are derived from Canada are from Toronto, and do not consider the social experiences of Black populations in Western Canada, who also face significant barriers. Historically, Hip-hop culture has acted as a therapy for youth on the margins of society (Chang, 2005), yet it remains unclear how Hip-hop enables marginalized groups to foster feelings of belonging within Western Canadian society, until now. Many contributions can be made to further understand these barriers, and how Hip-hop can be appropriated to contest exclusion and cultivate inclusion in Calgary, Alberta.

## **Purpose of the Study**

This study examines the forms of discrimination that Black African and Caribbean youth Hip-hop artists (rappers and poets) in Calgary encounter, and how the youth use Hip-hop culture to foster feelings of inclusion. The two research questions of this study are:

- What are the contemporary difficulties that Black African and Caribbean youth residing in Calgary face?
- How does Hip-hop culture promote social inclusion among Black African and Caribbean immigrant youth?

This thesis is relevant for a number of reasons, mainly because it constitutes the first study of its kind in Western Canada. This current lack of research results in part from the fact that immigrant youth subcultures have been difficult for academics to access (Ibrahim, 1999). Additional research is crucial; as Hip-hop culture is one of the globe's leading art forms for youth expression (Stoute, 2012).

The theoretical framework that drives this research consists of race, culture, and intersectionality theories. Race theory (Du Bois, 1903; Memmi, 2000) helps us understand the racial difficulties Black African and Caribbean youth experience. In addition, this theory facilitates the understanding of how Hip-hop is used as a means of inclusion to challenge racism, and express youth's racial identities, which are frequently neglected in Canadian society. Culture theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Hooks, 1993) allows us to understand how immigrant youth and their culture are marginalized. Furthermore, culture theory explains how youth foster inclusion when they cultivate capital, self-distinction and self-recognition through artistic resources such as Hip-hop. Lastly, intersectionality theory helps us to discern how race and culture intersect with one another to shape the lives of the respondents in this study. In one realm, race and culture create a

*Matrix of Domination* (Collins, 2004) that has a negative influence on youth's lives. In another, race and culture converge to create a system of inclusion where youth contest their marginalized status (Hooks 1991).

A qualitative research methodology was used to conduct this study. In particular, this methodology is useful for studying difficult-to-reach subcultures, such as the immigrant youth population, and for exploring new areas of academic inquiry, such as Hip-hop and urban arts (Stovall, 2006). The qualitative methods used in this study include face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Through interviews, African and Caribbean youth revealed in their own words how they envision their social world, by describing their experiences and perceptions (Berg & Lune, 2012). Snowball sampling was used, to understand the lived experiences of immigrant youth who use Hip-hop via poetry and rapping. Interviews were conducted with 16 participants, and coding techniques were applied to reach sociological themes (Bryman, 2012). In particular, thematic coding techniques provided by Attride-Stirling (2000), and Bowen (2009), were applied to unearth themes from the raw dataset. Themes were analyzed by comparing and contrasting them to one another, then relating them back to previous literature and theory. The methodology developed for this thesis, therefore, supports the aim of understanding how immigrant youth appropriate Hip-hop to foster their inclusion process into Canadian society.

### **Organization of the Study**

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which highlights: the background and purpose of the study, the primary research questions, the relevance of the research, and the theoretical and methodological framework for this thesis.

The second chapter focuses on the existing literature on Hip-hop and societal inclusion amongst marginalized youth. The section focuses on the various ways that youth have utilized Hip-hop culture to foster a sense of inclusion.

The third chapter provides the theoretical foundation for the study, exploring a number of paradigms that include: race, culture, and intersectionality theories. A number of theorists' ideas are debunked to understand how they relate to youth, Hip-hop culture, marginalization, and inclusion.

The fourth chapter sheds light on the methodological foundation, specifically: methodological orientation, data collection techniques, population sampling procedures, ethical considerations, and data analysis.

In the fifth chapter, the research findings are presented with a discussion of their relation to the previous theory and literature on Hip-hop and social inclusion, emphasizing how these new findings contribute to existing theory and literature. This chapter presents the themes that were derived from coding techniques on the raw data set of interviews, which directly relate to the research questions. This chapter examines the difficulties Black African and Caribbean youths face when they are immersed within Canadian society, and how this affects their inclusion process. Finally, this chapter presents a discussion of how Hip-hop culture has acted as a means to help respondents foster a sense of inclusion amidst these difficulties.

Lastly, the sixth chapter concludes this thesis with a direct answer to the research questions, and identifies new findings, makes policy recommendations, and highlights areas for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter we first look at studies that have found that youth appropriate Hip-hop as an inclusionary resource because they can foster personal development, and spaces of belonging. Second, we dedicate our attention to research that has found that youth use this culture to resist forms of discrimination, and foster their own inclusive networks.

### **Inclusion through Youth Development**

Youth development occurs when young people are able to use resources to foster a positive sense of self, and confront challenges in their social lives (Lerner, 2005). Youth development requires positive environments, healthy outlets, and peer support. It helps develop one's capacities, create quality experiences, and cherish strengths in a world where people feel they do not belong (Marybeth, 2008). As we shall see, these ideas relate heavily to Hip-hop culture.

To understand the relationship between Hip-hop and youth development, we rely on the writings of Perry (2004), Dyson (2010), Asante (2009), West (2006), Ibrahim (2011b), and Walcott (2005). Together, they discuss Hip-hop and its positive developmental effects amongst youth in the United States and Canada.

For Perry (2004), Hip-hop fosters positive youth development because it helps them cultivate a voice through which they can express themselves. She feels that the art is the most popular form of Black youth expression. Not only do youth use this music to express the cores of their hearts, but they also attain "prophet" statuses amongst their peers. In addition, Hip-hop

helps youth develop their identities because it provides them with a stage that they can use to advocate their cultural and racial struggles to those who otherwise would not hear them.

For Dyson (2010), Hip-hop is beneficial to youth development because it allows them to envision their potential, to comprehend their surroundings, and to create self-worth in their social world. Furthermore, Hip-hop is a developmental mechanism because it enables youth to find a way out of situations of neglect, and creates spaces where youth can envision their human potential. Dyson contends that Hip-hop culture, “can help alter the mindset of the masses; it can help create awareness of the need for social change; it can contribute to dramatize injustice, and it can help articulate the disenchantment of significant segments of citizenry” (p. 67). He finds that youth listen and rhyme for intellectual stimulation because they can “shed light on contemporary politics, history and race” (p. 6). For Dyson, youth employ Hip-hop to enhance their self-confidence because they are able to reach their higher self.

Asante (2009) shows that Hip-hop helps youth develop positive identities, because it enables them to transmit their voices and struggles with one another. When this happens, youth realize their social worth. Also, Asante (2009) argues that youth appropriate Hip-hop culture to assert their agency. Beats and rhymes allow youths to articulate their social world and transmit cultural knowledge between each other’s identities. Youth participate in this culture as an “exercise in liberation by which young women and men create, imagine, and participate in the transformation of their world” (p. 33). Moreover, Hip-hop acts as a source of freedom and expression because it offers youth the opportunity “to shape, develop, and define public personas and personal identities” (p.33). Youth rely on this culture for development purposes to connect or reconnect with those who are estranged from them.

West (2009) also stresses the connection between Hip-hop, inclusion, and youth development. For West, Hip-hop is used as a developmental resource because it permits youth to gain self-knowledge. West argues that Black youth encounter social structures that alter their sense of history, which leaves them with no decent idea of their potential. Hip-hop helps youth reconnect with their “true” self, full of love and self-confidence. Youth become captivated with this art form because it is used to cope with their internal suffering. West finds that this culture helps youth cope and live in a world with those who give little attention to Black voices. Furthermore, he contends that: “Hip-hop has told painful truths about their [Blacks’] internal struggles and... the decrepit schools, inadequate health care, unemployment and drug markets of the urban centers” (p. 156). Through Hip-hop youth grasp their history and develop ideas about what shapes their lives.

The above studies were conducted in the United States, however, there is evidence that suggests that Black African youth are able to use Hip-hop to develop a positive sense of self within educational environments in Canada. This evidence particularly arises from Ibrahim (2011b), who asserts that Hip-hop is a developmental force, because it helps students attain knowledge that allows them to cope in Canadian educational institutions. Ibrahim’s studies focus particularly on how Black, French-speaking, East African immigrant youth in Toronto appropriate Hip-hop culture via rapping to learn English in ESL classrooms. He proposes that, “Hip-hop acts as curriculum site where learning takes place and where identities are invested” (p. 366). These youths enter a Hip-hop classroom space where they imagine, create, and recreate their identities with rap lyrics. As a result, the youth employ Hip-hop as a form of cultural

expression, one that allows them to become more invested in learning English and raise awareness through vital narratives that reflect their immigrant identities.

Walcott (2005) also discusses how Black youth in Canada appropriate Hip-hop as a developmental force because it permits them to culturally express themselves. He maintains that these youths utilize Hip-hop via rapping to express their cultural backgrounds, communities, and neighborhoods. Through this art form, youth are able to tell their stories, and share knowledge that they feel is frequently discredited. In addition, Walcott holds that through this art form, youth “come to knowledge,” because the practices of writing and rhyming give birth to critical thinking. As a result, Hip-hop represents “knowledge production that seeks to remake humankind” (Walcott, 2005, p. 4), and ignites one’s cultural imagination.

To sum up, Hip-hop can be used as a mechanism of youth development. Youth engage in Hip-hop because it stands as a tool for political truth telling and encourages peace, love, and self-confidence. As a result, it helps them deal with perceived adversities and ignites vital democratic energies amongst those who wouldn’t otherwise have a suitable platform for cultural expression. Through the work of the scholars cited previously in this chapter, we know that Hip-hop is a means for youth to find their sense of self, and permits them to take ownership of their identity. These ideas relate extensively to social inclusion.

Hip-hop fosters inclusion because it creates spaces where youth envision their human potential. Hip-hop is a resource that helps youth confront the challenges of the world. It allows them to cherish their strengths and develop their capacity to immerse themselves into societies’ social fabric. Within this fabric, they can create quality experiences, a sense of worth, and reach

their full potential in a world where they experience multiple barriers to becoming their true selves.

### **Hip-hop and Inclusion through Belonging**

Hip-hop is used as an inclusionary device because it helps youth create and sustain spaces of belonging where they can express themselves collectively. Some studies detail how youth use this culture to immerse themselves into not only their Hip-hop networks but also their country's social fabric. These studies are divided into two realms. In the first we learn that youth use Hip-hop to foster healthy environments, and in the second, we learn that Hip-hop is deployed to create platforms of expression where youth can express themselves unequivocally. Overall, this section orchestrates how marginalized youth use Hip-hop to include themselves into various sectors of society while maintaining a true sense of self.

### ***Hip-hop and Healthy Environments***

Hall and Jefferson (1993) define healthy environments as spaces that are safe, and act as sites where youth can envision their human potential. Brake (2013) believes that healthy environments are social settings where youth are able to create and sustain healthy artistic connections. At this moment we will now turn to research that is derived from Uganda.

Schneiderman (2014), explores how youth in Kampala, Uganda, create a "Hip-hop nation" that is used to immerse themselves into their countries public consciousness. He finds that various ethnic groups, including Batuuze, Ndugu, and Loadstart youth, use this culture to create a "moral economy" that enables them to negotiate, exchange, and trade connections with

wider social networks. For Schneiderman, “these networks act as moral economies in which survival is contingent on the performance and practice of belonging” (p. 90). Youth use Hip-hop via rapping as a resource that enables them to interact with other rappers, and peoples of mainstream Ugandan culture.

For Schneiderman (2014), Uganda’s Hip-hop nation has a deeply rooted history. He holds that the Hip-hop nation was inspired by Black American Hip-hop, which has historically provided a voice for marginalized youth of colour. Schneiderman shows that it was created to “inspire young people to create social change and to honor their African cultural heritage, by rapping in their mother tongue” (p. 90). Today, youth in the Hip-hop nation utilize Hip-hop culture to build relationships with other youth, elders, tribal leaders, and politicians. In addition, they also use social media such as Facebook to create and sustain global networks with other youth in Africa, and the United States. By using a microphone, or dancing on a floor, youth not only build connections, but also create a space of possibility that helps them cultivate feelings of self-determination, and belonging. With this regard, Hip-hop becomes a way for youth to grow networks that enable them to share fondness and love with their nation’s public consciousness, global networks, and themselves. As a result, Kampala youth utilize Hip-hop to sustain healthy environments, where they forge a source of belonging through their artistic connections.

### *Platforms of Expression*

This section examines studies that derive from Africa and North America, which suggest that Hip-hop provides youth with a platform to voice their concerns, share their struggles, and foster belonging.

Marsh and Petty (2011) investigate how youth in Kenya appropriate Hip-hop culture as a platform of expression by forming a “Hip-hop Parliament” in order to immerse themselves into Kenya’s mainstream society. Youth established the *Hip-hop Parliament* after the 2007 Kenyan elections, which resulted in the deaths of 1,400 citizens, and displaced 350,000 Kenyans. During this time, Kenyan youth believed that they could use cultural resources to foster greater inclusion amongst their peoples. Youth amassed from various ethnic backgrounds, languages, and tribes to create the *Hip-hop Parliament*, which consists of rappers and break-dancers. They created a collective movement, with its own declaration:

*We, the Hip Hop Parliament, believe that through our talent as Artists, and using the mic as our main tool, we shall disseminate a positive message to our country in our efforts to resolving issues. Together, we stand united (p. 137).*

This parliament acts as a platform where youth project their voices to a Kenyan audience who wouldn’t otherwise hear what they had to say. Marsh and Petty (2011) maintain that this parliament offers “youth a voice and a place from which to participate in the social, political, and cultural processes of Kenya” (p. 132). Through their rhymes Kenyan youth evolve into activists and demand a voice in mainstream society. They spread awareness on issues that include: ethnicity, gender, love, reconciliation, domestic violence, youth justice, and culture.

The *Hip-hop Parliament* uses Hip-hop culture to not only strive for peace and unity but to foster a sense of belonging to mainstream Kenyan society. Kenyan youth create a platform of expression, which helps them ease political tensions in mainstream society, and spread societal awareness. As a result, youth can find a sense of belonging within dominant Kenyan Society.

Interestingly, there is a study that finds that Black youth use Hip-hop to create platforms of expression within Canadian society. Warner (2006) finds that Black immigrant youth in Toronto appropriate Hip-hop to create their platforms of expression, which then helps them foster a sense of belonging. In his study, Warner argues that Black youth are met with major disadvantages when they immerse themselves into Canadian society. Many feel they have an outsider status, which makes inclusion into society strenuous. However, although they feel this way, they are able to rely on music to redefine and creatively express themselves.

For Warner (2006), Hip-hop helps Black youth express, create, and sustain an inclusive form of Canadian identity. Warner calls this a “Northern Touch” identity, which comprises both their Black identity, whether it is African and/or Caribbean; and their Canadian identity, that consists of their dominant mainstream ideals. Through Hip-hop, this identity helps Black youth gain autonomy over their socio cultural makings. Warner argues that “hip hop, as artistic practice and cultural repertoire, provided my interviewees and many more Black Canadian youth like them with a requisite and welcome new means of crafting and articulating ever-evolving, Black diasporic-Canadian subjectivities and sensibilities” (p. 60). As a result, Hip-hop culture is used to help them celebrate being Canadian *and* Black.

Furthermore, a number of studies (Kellerer, 2015; Morgan and Warren, 2011; and Sheffield, 2011) reveal that Aboriginal youth appropriate Hip-hop to express and contest their marginalized status and include themselves into their own inclusive networks. But why? Scholars argue that these youths are discriminated extensively by dominant social structures. Through rapping, the youth use their lyrics and performance to contest the social order, and the structures that marginalize their identities. Rather than include their messages to fit mainstream

ideals, they use their rhymes to create their own style of inclusion amongst their ethnic Hip-hop networks, and voice their disdain for state oppression, and dominant ideologies. Not only do they use a microphone to preach their antipathy for reservations, sterilization, Indian schools, cultural genocide, tribal warfare, and the spread of European disease, but they have adapted this musical art form to speak against contemporary issues like the War in Iraq, and the Bush administration. As a result, they seek to find their own platforms of expression.

For example, Manzo and Potts (2011) finds that “Aboriginal rap [in Canada] reflects themes of oppositional resistance by raising awareness of political and otherwise social issues among its listeners” (p. 186). Through Hip-hop Aboriginal youth spread awareness and find their own spaces of acceptance. They use this culture to “express themes of political resistance, and themes that delineate many of the deleterious consequences of Aboriginal Canadian experiences following European colonization” (p. 170).

Aboriginal youth appropriate Hip-hop to contest Canadian society in order to cope with what they feel has been taken from them - land and culture. Through Hip-hop, youth vocalize that they are unable to “practice elements of traditional life,” because of their colonial history with land in Canada. Hip-hop permits youth to further understand how the “destruction of resources, injustice, and death are attributed to white settlers... and being forced from their lands onto reserves” (p. 171). Through Hip-hop culture, youth create and recreate their own stories that are in heavy contrast to dominant social institutions. Aboriginal youth spread political messages to attempt to transform the social order, and find their own spaces of acceptance. Rather than rely on dominant Canadian society, they rely on each other. As a result, Manzo and Potts show us that Aboriginal youth form Hip-hop collectives that act as a platform of expression in their own

ethnic Hip-hop networks. Having outlined the studies that examine the relationship between Hip-hop and social inclusion, we now turn to the theoretical framework that structures this study.

## CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that supports this study is constructed from race, culture, and intersectionality theories. Ideas on race theory include: Satzewich and Liodakis (2013), Omi and Winant (1993), Memmi (2000), Dei (2012), and Du Bois (1903). Through their concepts this thesis will operationalize race and racism, and identify racial inequalities Black African and Caribbean youth face, and the mechanisms they use to contest them. With regard to culture theory, the works of Bell Hooks (1992) and Pierre Bourdieu (1986) illuminate how racial minority youth and their culture are marginalized, and how they are able to cultivate recognition through artistic resources. Lastly, intersectionality theories help to discern how race and culture intersect, specifically, Patricia Hill Collins (2004) theory of the *Matrix of Domination*, and the thoughts of Bell Hooks (1991) explain how social agents use various identity markers to contest this *Matrix* in order to enhance their inclusion in society.

The first section focuses on race. First, we operationalize race. Second, we explore racism, its complexities, and how it shapes identities and perspectives today. Lastly, we discuss how social agents are able to contest forms of racial discrimination and foster inclusion.

### **Race**

To talk about race, we must first lay the essential theoretical groundwork. Madibbo (2006) argues that, “the definition of concepts and their meanings provides an understanding of how to use them to analyze, discuss and understand topics we study” (p. 38). For Satzewich and Liodakis (2013), how we define race varies based on a sociological time and space. Historically race has been used to create and sustain real and imagined social groups and communities.

Throughout time, race has been viewed as an agent's physical - ascriptive - characteristics. However, Satzewich and Liodakis contest this idea, and argue that race is a "socially constructed category for classifying humans, with no real biological referent" (p. 13). But if race is socially constructed, why are we prone to view people as "Black", or "white"? For Satzewich and Liodakis, there are numerous answers to this question that notably include: colonization and power. Through European colonization, groups came into contact with others who were physically 'different' from them. As a result, the European colonizers overlooked and often undervalued the culture, customs, and traditions of those who they colonized. Through power, the colonizers ranked the colonized into various tiers based on their skin color and morphology. This in turn, created a hierarchal system of privilege, where whites were viewed as precious, and racialized minorities as atrocious. For these reasons, "the concept of race is increasingly used to explain physical, social, moral, and intellectual variation among peoples" (p. 15). Today, issues regarding race are more intricate, and now it has become a function in our social relations.

Omi and Winant (1993) argue that there are complexities that arise when we attempt to conceptualize race in our modern world. Although the concept of race is difficult to define, they contend that "we are inserted in a comprehensively racialized social structure... [where]... race becomes a common sense - a way of comprehending, explaining and acting in the world" (p. 319). Omi and Winant view race as a concept that is complex, with broad social meanings, and subject to political struggles and social change. As a result, they argue that "race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (p. 321).

Omi and Winant (1993) claim that there is a tendency in society to view race in two realms. In the first, race is perceived as ascribed, fixed, concrete, and objective; and in the second it is an illusion and an ideological construct that is created and manipulated by social agents. Since these perspectives diverge, does this mean we can do without race? Well, not entirely for Omi and Winant. They believe that race now contributes to beliefs that we find central to our identity. As a result, it would be counter-intuitive to banish it, because race now plays a fundamental role in structuring our social world. They state, “we should think of race as an element of the social structure rather than as an irregularity within it; we should see race as a dimension of human representation rather than an illusion” (p. 323).

Race is relevant, if not crucial to this thesis. The concepts and perspectives that are provided by scholars help us to understand the sociological world our study participants occupy. Through Satzewich and Liodakis, and Omi and Winant, we grasp how and why participants - who are Black - are pushed to the margins of society. Furthermore, we comprehend the racial inequalities they face on a daily basis, and recognize why they occupy certain tiers in society.

### ***Racism***

Racism is rooted in power. Those in power construct their racial identities as normal, which provides them privilege; and enables them to socially exclude those who deviate. At this moment we must turn to scholars who have theorized on racism.

An important conceptualization of racism is provided by Du Bois, who is known as one of the first scholars to comprehend the nature of race relations. In his most prominent work, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois offers us a theory of racism. He argues that “the problem of

the twentieth century is the problem of the color line” (p.1). For Du Bois, societies are infected when social groups, such as Blacks, are suppressed by predominantly white cultural institutions. He contends that “any socially-aware, present day African-American has had at least two life-altering experiences - the moment he/she realized they were Black, and the moment he/she realized that it was a problem” (p. 30). To clearly theorize race and racism, he deploys the concept of *The Veil*.

Du Bois (1903) argues that a veil divides those who are othered, from those that represent dominant cultural ideologies. *The Veil* can either be thick or thin. As Blacks are on the outside looking in, whites are on the inside looking out. In the first instance, Blacks experience a veil that is thin, and considered transparent. As a result, Blacks reflect on their own disadvantages, while viewing the advantages of whites. In the second instance, those that represent dominant cultural ideologies, live behind a veil that is thick, and considered translucent. This thickness makes whites blind in two realms. Whites are unable to see the privilege they have in their social lives. At the same time, they are blind to the voices and struggles of those whom they oppress. As a result, it is difficult for them to understand the Black experience.

Interestingly, Memmi also takes a critical approach to understanding racism. His book *Racism* (2000) is one of the most Socratic, if not prophetic, works that analyzes racism. He begins his work by arguing that racism is not natural. Rather, it is social. Racism acts as a disease because it disables certain group’s ability to express themselves, and denies them of human freedom.

Memmi reflects on his own racial background and explores how broader structures impact him in society. He finds that racism acts like a disease because it allows for one group to

have power over another. For Memmi, the structure of racism comprises three integrative moments: the insistence on difference; the negative valuation imposed on those who differ; and the generalization of this negative valuation to an entire group. He concludes that we should be appalled by racism's social and political context, rather than the content that it takes.

Omi and Winant (1993) contend that racism arises from *racial formation*, a historical process where groups categorize one another based on their racial identities. They argue that "racial formation is a process of historically situated projects in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized" (p. 323). For Omi and Winant, race is a byproduct of historical struggles, social structures and the organization and redistribution of resources. They argue that "Racial projects connect what race means in particular discursive practices and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized based upon that meaning" (p. 324).

Racial Formation comes in two forms. The first are the macro level social processes. Omi and Winant (1993) hold that to interpret race, we need to look at it as the product of the social structure. Governments continually redefine what race is. The second is the racial formation of everyday experiences, which is considered the micro level. They argue that, "Racial projects operate at the level of everyday life, we have only examined the many ways in which, often unconsciously we 'notice' race" (p. 325). Through this lens, we gain insight into who a person is by their racial identity. They argue that, "our ability to interpret racial meanings depends on preconceived notions of racialized social structure" (p. 325). Through these ideas we learn how racial stereotypes are created: Blacks eat chicken, white girls like dogs, Asians are good at math, and Jews are cheap. These ideas are by-products from the dominant social structures that shape

our racial experiences, conditions and meanings. However, our micro level interpretations of each other develop the institutions and organizations that become embedded in the social structures.

In a Canadian context, Dei (2012) maintains that racial inequalities are still prevalent. Although racial inequalities persist, Dei contends that we are in a time where there is a “silence” that is associated with race. This “silence of race”, ironically, reinforces racial inequality, because white supremacy becomes the norm. As a result, people embody these white - dominant cultural ideologies, rather than celebrate their racial identities. He argues that by denying racial difference, we fail to acknowledge racism, insofar as mis-recognizing racial identities leads to mis-recognizing our own identities.

Theories of racism are crucial to this thesis. Racism is something that is difficult for Black African and Caribbean immigrant youth to escape, which makes it hard to foster any sense of belonging. Du Bois helps us realize that society is infected when groups are treated illegitimately because of their race. Through his lens, we are better able to understand why a veil divides study participants and whites based on skin color. In addition, Memmi’s work shows how respondents live in a world where racism takes hold of their identities like a disease. Lastly, Dei helps us understand that although respondents live in Canada, they continue to experience a form of racism that is omnipresent, but difficult to recognize.

In this section we learned how racism has been interpreted and theorized by various scholars. Throughout history, and up until today, racism has been used to classify groups and collectivities into various social tiers. Although race and racism are social constructs, scholars argue that these constructs have been used by those in power to strategically subordinate and

other groups of people for political ends. But how do groups struggle against racism? Although racism has had unimaginable consequences on social groups, there is evidence that claims that it can be fought.

### ***The Struggle against Racism***

Although Memmi's (2000) insight on racism is invaluable, his theorizing on the struggle against it is equally priceless. Memmi argues that although minorities experience marginalization, they continue to be active agents in the pursuit of power when they create and recreate a sense of identity. He calls this "swinging of the pendulum back", which consists of social agents celebrating their racial identities in the midst of their oppressors. An example of this is when Tommie Smith raised his fist to celebrate Black liberation after he won the gold medal in sprinting during the 1968 Olympics. Memmi holds that historically, "the dominant affirmed their differences over and against those they oppressed... [however]... the oppressed reclaim their differences against the dominant" (p. 49). As a result, to contest racism, social agents take what makes them deviate (i.e., their skin color) and fight to be different against the ideals of their oppressors. Therefore "to affirm one's difference becomes the condition for self-affirmation; the banner for the individual, or collective re-appropriation of oneself" (p. 49).

Dei (2012) expands these ideas to fit contemporary Canada. Similar to Memmi, Dei considers the social practices of racial groups when they are othered. Dei finds that the solution to the "silence of race" is action, specifically, anti-racist action. He argues that critical anti-racism, which is to attack racism at its roots, seeks action that is necessary to solve forms of oppression. Therefore, to address racial problems, we need an anti-racist perspective. Anti-

Racism should not be limited to awareness, but should also consist of being politically active. We need to decolonize our colonized identities. He concludes, “Resistances are the hope for future racial justice in Canada and the end of the legitimacy of race to deny people their rights and, fundamentally, their respect and dignity” (p. 60).

Dei and Memmi provide essential knowledge on the fight against racism. Through their knowledge we learn that there is a propensity for social groups to enter into the struggle against racism. With their ideas, we realize that although Black African and Caribbean immigrant youth encounter racism in Canada, they can use Hip-hop culture as a form of inclusion. In addition, the struggle against racism helps youth express their racial identities that are unrecognized, and “silent” throughout Canadian society. Unfortunately, this problem with race and racism is not the only difficulty that respondents encounter. For this reason, I will now turn to scholars who have written on how culture can be used as a means to exclude peoples.

## **Culture**

For Satzewich and Liodakis (2013), culture is a set of dynamic social processes and practices, as well as a collective response of socially constituted individuals to their ever-changing external conditions. Culture is a way of life for collectives in society (Hall, 1997), because it contains the beliefs and values that are shared and accepted by particular groups (Madibbo, 2015). For culture to arise, groups organize and utilize the resources that they feel best represent them (Hall, 1997). Culture affects how we position ourselves in the world, and how we look at one another. As a result, culture is the foundation upon which our identities are built, because it is the collective expression of our souls.

In our exploration of culture and discrimination, we will first consider how Hooks (1991) illustrates the way groups are marginalized based on their culture. Second, we will use the work of Bourdieu (1986) to understand how marginalized groups are able to utilize their culture to gain power, and to foster a sense of social inclusion.

### ***Culture and Discrimination***

Hooks (1991) provides invaluable knowledge to answering the research questions of this thesis, because she theorizes how Blacks are culturally discriminated against in a society where whites hold power. For Hooks, we occupy a time where we rely on our culture to comprehend our world. We internalize the messages culture gives us, which then influences our social actions. Hooks focuses her energy on how white privilege affects culture. She argues that white supremacy shapes our cultural landscapes because white male privilege has huge influences in creating and sustaining cultural norms that others marginalized populations. As a result, white supremacy is a system that hurts, marginalizes, and excludes populations. These forms of suppression have become embedded in our culture. Unfortunately, white supremacy has created and sustained cultural stereotypes against Black peoples, which has resulted in their identities being continually defined through whiteness.

To fully understand cultural discrimination, Hooks (1991) focuses on how Blacks are represented through mainstream cultural discourse, and uses popular (pop) culture as her case study. Hooks argues that pop culture is an “ideological medium, providing pockets of consciousness” (p. 73) that influence our political awareness. She believes that we occupy a time where popular culture reinforces stereotypical images of Blackness, and “Black people are

bearing the brunt of more overt and blatant racist assaults” (p. 60). In addition, she contends that Black youth are increasingly disenfranchised, not only because their voices are repressed, but because they are projected as rapists, overly promiscuous, lazy and violent. Ironically, white liberals create these images for white audiences who fear and are fascinated by them. As a result, these harmful stereotypes set up and recreate racial and cultural differences between racialized minorities and whites. Hooks challenges readers to understand that these negative portrayals have roots in slavery, because they reflect a time where Black bodies were horribly objectified for white consumption.

The process of discrimination outlined by Hooks (1991) clearly extends to the experience of the study participants interviewed for this thesis. Through Hooks’ lens, participants not only experience problems with race, but with their culture, which is Hip-hop. Historically, Hip-hop has been misappropriated by dominant institutions to exploit marginalized peoples’ culture and racial identity. In music videos, Black men seem to only care for cars and women; while Black women are only seen for their body. As a result, youth in this study may be seen as hoodlums, and gangsters by those who are not a part of the culture and unaware of its true beauty. Although culture can be used to exclude, agents can also mobilize it to include themselves in social arenas, a practice that this thesis explores through the use of Bourdieu’s concept of capital.

### ***Culture and Inclusion***

The Bourdieuan school of thought offers vital knowledge on culture. This school of thought contains not only works of Bourdieu but also scholars that have followed in his footsteps. Bourdieu contends that, “capital can be understood as the ‘energy’ that drives the

development of a field through time” (cited in Moore, 2008, p. 105). Although capital “takes time to accumulate,” it enables social agents to produce and reproduce forms of profit (Bourdieu, 1986). Through capital, agents forge their power (Bourdieu, 1984).

For Bourdieu, capital can be divided into four realms: economic, symbolic, social and cultural. Economic capital is any type of capital that can be converted into something monetary. This includes stocks, bonds or derivatives, or property rights. Symbolic capital refers to the resources that social agents accumulate because of their status, group recognition, and importance. This type of capital arises when social agents fulfill their expected social roles and duties. For Bourdieu, social capital is a form of capital that agents have through social networks, intimate communities, and valuable relationships. Cultural capital consists of cultural tools that social agents use to equip their identities. For Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital is the “accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status” (p. 244). This includes qualifications, skills, and knowledge. Although capital can be economic, or symbolic, this thesis emphasizes Bourdieu’s concept of social and cultural capital.

Bourdieu (1986) finds that social capital consists of networks that create and sustain values and norms amongst social agents. He argues that social capital is “linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to membership in a group” (p.248). Bourdieu believes that social agents rely on these group memberships, networks, and relationships as a source of security, because often times they become unbreakable (Moore, 2008). For Bourdieu (1987), when a group thinks and acts alike, collective authority is produced because members provide support for each other’s existence. But how do Bourdieu’s ideas of social capital relate to this thesis?

Rather than excelling through social networks such as fraternities, guilds, and boards of directors, for African and Caribbean youths, social capital comprises their “*sistahs*”, “*brothas*”, *break dance crews*, *DJ followers*, *fellow rappers*, and *graffiti artists*. These social networks provide youth “cooptation, friendship, love, association, and thereby... the principle of all durable alliances and connections” (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 5). Furthermore, social capital can arise through a set of social skills and dispositions that agents can use in their everyday lives. Through Bourdieu’s lens, we learn that African and Caribbean youth can use their Hip-hop orientated networks to help them create a collective power that they may not otherwise have.

Bourdieu (1987) divides cultural capital into three realms: institutional, objectified, and embodied. In the institutional realm, cultural capital consists of recognition, knowledge, and credentials that can be converted into academic merit, or a promotion in a corporation. In the objectified realm, cultural capital constitutes a class’s clothes and materials. In the embodied realm, cultural capital equates to time, energy, personal investment, skills and manners. The embodied state of capital explains how agents cultivate resources to not only make life decisions, but also foster a sense of self-advancement. Embodied cultural capital is a set of dispositions that enable agents to determine their tastes, future desires, and how distinct they are from their peers. Although cultural capital can be institutional, Bourdieu’s ideas of embodied and objectified cultural capital apply best to this thesis, because they explain why youth conglomerate around Hip-hop culture.

For African and Caribbean youth who are involved with Hip-hop, the objectified state encompasses turntables, spray cans, Adidas, Puma track suits, and other Hip-hop resources that may help them foster a sense of power. In the embodied realm, it is the rapper’s self-recognition

after they find a perfect beat, or the virtue they gain when they make breakers spin on their heads. As a result, cultural capital helps us analyze how Turntablism, Breaking, Rapping and Graffiti create a set of dispositions - social practices - that enable African and Caribbean youth to uplift one another. As a result, they may conglomerate in a space to become artists, and recognize each other's creativity.

Overall, through Bourdieu's theorizing, we learn that social and cultural capital may help African and Caribbean youth to produce freedom, self-distinction, and self-recognition. Youth may be able to create their own conditions of existence because they have a "practical mastery, a practical knowledge of the social world... [which] involved a truly creative power" (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 15). Although we have highlighted a number of theories that deal with culture and race, it is equally important to understand how they intersect and impact youth's place in society.

### **Intersectionality**

Historically, social scientists have isolated identity markers such as race, class, gender or culture, with little analysis of how they intersect. Intersectionality theorists do not gaze at the world through one lens (i.e., race or class). Rather, they argue that we must understand how various spheres of life intersect to influence and shape a social agent's world (Davis, 1983; King, 1988; Wane, 2007). Intersectionality theorists seek to understand how identity markers such as race and culture, converge to shape social agents' lives. At this moment we will turn to Collins, one of the most profound intersectionality theorists, and her concept of the *Matrix of Domination*.

With regard to domination, Collins (2004) argues that we need to consider all forms of power that intersect to influence an agent's social activities. She contends that, "intersectionality creates different kinds of lived experiences and social realities" (p. 7). Collins (1992) asserts that factors such as race and culture blend to organize social life. These factors converge to structure the experiences of social agents. As race, culture, and other identity markers intersect, they create a system of power and inequality that dominates agents' lives. This system of power becomes self-sustaining.

As these markers intersect, they give birth to the *Matrix of Domination*. This *Matrix* is the result of "social structures as having multiple, interlocking levels of domination that stem from the societal configuration of race, class, and gender relations" (p. 8). It not only influences how agents relate to dominant social institutions, but also with themselves and others. By studying this *Matrix*, we paint a deeper - latent - portrait, of how race and culture influence agents.

Collins' body of knowledge is essential to understanding the experience of my study participants, because race and culture together cloud their outlook of the world. Through her concept of the *Matrix of Domination*, we realize that race and culture intersect to shape the perceptions of youth in this study. For example, respondents revealed that they are not only marginalized for their race, but also as ambassadors of Hip-hop culture. In these instances, race and culture are multidimensional, and do not act independently; they feed off one another, and prohibit respondents from being active agents in constructing their social world. As a result, race and culture infiltrate African and Caribbean youth's lives, exclude them, and make them doubly oppressed.

In regards to intersectionality and inclusion, there are theorists (Anzaldúa, 1986; Davis, 1983; Smith, 1997) who have discussed how race, culture and other identity markers intersect to help social agents contest domination. In the work *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992), Hooks proposes that social agents can resist structures of domination when they diverge from white norms. But how? Hooks argues that when race and culture intersect, agents can assert themselves against white supremacy and structures that dominate their lives. As a result, race and culture converge to permit agents to form a critical consciousness, one that challenges stereotypical ideals of whiteness, and interrogates the *Matrix of Domination* outlined by Collins. This critical consciousness helps them rehumanize their cultural and racial identities that were previously marginalized.

Hooks (1992) urges Black youth to adopt a proactive sense of agency that comprises their race and culture in order to understand when they are misrepresented so that they can adjust their responses to inaccurate stereotypes. In order to do this, they must engage with critical literacy, which will help them overlook negative cultural and racial portrayals, and also critique the forces of whiteness.

I assert that these thoughts extend to this thesis. Hip-hop - the process of writing critical poetry - is a form of literacy that can be used to fight cultural and racial discrimination. As a result, youth could use Hip-hop to foster inclusion because it is an art form that helps intersect their race and culture to dismantle the *Matrix of Domination*. Youth may use their Blackness, and rhymes to foster a sense of self-value that retaliates against white dominant cultural norms and oppressive racial forces. Insofar as they may attach themselves to very specific cultural

resources such as pens, pads, and microphones, to express their Blackness in the face of exclusion. At this moment we will now turn to the methodology section of this thesis.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To answer the two research questions of this thesis, quantitative methodologies such as tests of significance, multivariate regression, or diagnostic techniques were not employed. Rather, I used qualitative methods to examine how agents envision their social world (Berg & Lune, 2012). As quantitative methods aim at understanding *what* occurs in social life, qualitative methods explore *why* and *how* it occurs (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative methodologies seek to find answers to research questions through the perceptions and attitudes of a group of selected participants. Rudenstam (2007) states that “the qualitative researcher is more apt to elect purposive or theoretical sampling to increase the scope or range of data exposed as well as to uncover the full array of multiple perspectives” (p. 20). Many scholars (Hennink, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 2013; Patton, 2014) consider these methods to be at the vanguard of contemporary social scientific research, because it enables researchers to gain access to in-depth human experiences through various research tactics, including: panel discussions, analysis of written documents, observations of groups’ social patterns, and interviews. Richards and Morse (2011) argue that “good qualitative research is consistent, the question goes with the method, which fits appropriate data collection, appropriate data handling, and appropriate analysis techniques” (p.1). In particular, qualitative methodologies via interviews were used in this research to understand a unique social phenomenon, and its deeper - latent - substance.

This methodology allows us to understand how immigrants appropriate Hip-hop culture to foster feelings of inclusion and makes it possible to recognize the attitudes, consciousness, and impressions of those who occupy this musical culture. It also permits us to uncover valuable insight from those who live this social phenomenon, and to identify how youth use Hip-hop

culture to create strategies that remedy the challenges they face. As a result, this methodology provides a rich description of youth experiences. It was also aided and driven by a specific methodological orientation, which is critical ethnography.

### **Critical Ethnography**

Critical Ethnography advocates a value-free orientation to knowledge because it allows for a “deeper understanding of how people in particular contexts experience their social and cultural worlds” (TESOL, 2015, para.5). For Douglas Foley (2010), critical ethnography is in higher demand for social scientists, because they are increasingly being challenged to adopt an activist and political gaze. Foley asserts that, “once an ethnographer abandons the positivist fallacy that specific research techniques and methodologies can produce a detached, objective, or omnipotent standpoint, it also opens the door to use more intuitive or subjective ways of knowing” (p. 481).

Madison (2012) has argued that “critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain” (p. 5). This methodological underpinning is useful for researchers studying marginalized subcultures, such as immigrant youth, and new areas of pedagogical academic inquiry, such as Hip-hop (Harvey, 1990), and groups who represent distinct racial, gender, and sexual identities. Critical ethnography uses social justice to create knowledge that provides social unity. As a result, critical ethnography creates “a market for more critical, investigative ethnographies that expose relations of power and exploitation” (p. 471). The emphasis on social justice and positionality are of particular relevance to this study, which highlights the importance of social

existence and knowledge. Through a social justice model, this study explores immigrant youth's sense of belonging, while seeking social change. Through this research, power inequalities that produce social oppressions and injustice were identified. At the same time, this study documents how social agents promote human freedom through the use of Hip-hop.

Critical ethnography also allowed me to celebrate my positionality in the research process. As a radio host, DJ, sound engineer, and producer, I feel like I had vital access to networks that have been understudied and often unrecognized in academia. In addition, I found that as a Black male I was easily able to establish trust from respondents, and this enabled me to access rich knowledge that often does not see the light of day. I was continually able to examine how my personal background influenced the study (Madison, 2012). I believe my personal knowledge was recognized by my respondents, because “who the researcher is and what his or her racial, gender, and class embodiments [are] govern the research questions and findings” (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 278). My identity helped me to connect with people who are young, Black, African and Caribbean, who practice urban hobbies, and occupy musical spaces. As a result, I was able to create communicative spaces that encouraged acceptance and were free of judgment. My respondents had so much to discuss as they saw me not only as a social scientist, but also as someone who reflected their identity, and saw their internal suffering. I also became very moved by my research.

As I look back, I cannot help but realize how much I have grown throughout this process. Today I am more conscious of my own Blackness, because I am able to walk in this world knowing that I am not alone, that someone else out there feels a similar sense of disdain and pure hatred for racism that I do. But has this project impacted me negatively? Sometimes yes. I walk

this planet and feel like I have a secret that has been heavily neglected by generations of people: racism is causing massive amounts of suffering. No words can truly explain how much it damages the identities of the oppressor and the oppressed. But has this project impacted me positively? Sometimes yes. Not only has this research made me more conscious, but it has added fuel to a fire that more so now than ever, desires social change. Although there are some days I wake up and feel sad for this world, there are more days when I feel I can fight to change it.

## **Data and Data Collection Techniques**

### ***Interviews***

I used qualitative methods to conduct face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The utility of using interviews allowed me to gain extensive knowledge on a topic and population that has historically been understudied (Berg & Lune, 2012). Simply, interviews yield data that provides deep knowledge of the respondents' experience of a social phenomenon (TESOL, 2015). Although Hip-hop culture comprises many elements, I conducted my research on self-identified rappers and poets. Using this method, I gained in-depth knowledge of the racial and cultural discrimination that first and second generation Black immigrant youth encounter and how they use Hip-hop to foster feelings of inclusion.

I incorporated techniques of semi-structured interviews into my research design for a number of reasons. First, I did not desire to attain knowledge from participants through a rigorous set of structured questions. I wanted knowledge to be spawned in a free-flowing fashion (Charmaz, 2014). Second, I believe that semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to have intellectual autonomy over what they deemed valuable to my research (Creswell, 2009). Silvia

(2011) contends that this interview style “is a flexible and powerful tool to capture the voices and the ways people make meaning of their experience” (p. 563).

I conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with participants. Interviews comprised verbal exchanges and allowed participants to remain anonymous. To ensure that respondents remained comfortable, interviews took place in local coffee shops. Demographically, these sixteen interviews consisted of the following: ten males and six females; nine African and eight Caribbean; and nine second generation and eight first-generation immigrant youth. All respondent’s educational backgrounds ranged from high school to university. This has led to an array of professional experiences among study participants, including nurses, warehouse managers, sound engineers and accountants.

I began these interviews by asking respondents a number of questions on whether they had experienced any difficulties within Canadian society. Such topics involved issues with race, racism, and cultural discrimination. In this phase of the interview I asked questions such as: “Have you ever been discriminated against in Canadian society?” In the next part of the interview I asked respondents questions on Hip-hop culture and their involvement. Some questions resembled: “How did you become interested in Hip-hop culture?” The last section of the interview consisted of respondents talking about how Hip-hop has helped them foster social inclusion. I asked: “Have you ever used Hip-hop culture to tell your story?” Initially, I expected that interviews would have lasted 45 minutes. However, I was wrong, as they lasted between one and two hours.

## **Sampling Procedures**

### ***Snowball Sampling***

I used snowball sampling to recruit my research participants. I found that this was an appropriate sampling method, because I did not want to generalize the results to the population. Although other Hip-hop studies (Clay, 2012; Denzin, 2007; Teddlie, 2008) have used this sampling procedure, it is important to highlight its advantages and disadvantages.

Academics have noted that snowball sampling faces minor drawbacks. Historically, this technique has faced challenges when researching participants that are located in areas fueled by conflict, distrust, and suspicion (Cohen & Arieli, 2012). In addition, this method has frustrated social scientists because it limits their control over who is selected to partake in their research (Noy, 2008). These drawbacks did not particularly affect my research, as there are no major conflicts within Calgary's Hip-hop community, and I relied on gatekeepers who best recommended to me the participants that they knew could provide valuable insight to my project. Also, there are more advantages to this sampling method than the limitations listed here. Faugier (1997) contends that it is essential to use snowball sampling when there is little research on a particular social phenomenon. This method contributes to "social visibility" because it enables researchers to gain access to difficult to reach "hidden" populations (Berg & Lune, 2012). Snowball sampling was useful for my research because I was able to access two arenas that have historically been hard for academics to access: immigrant youth subcultures, and Hip-hop arts communities.

As I used this sampling procedure, I created and distributed flyers to advertise the purposes of the study. I posted them in local Hip-hop venues and gave them to gatekeepers who

had vast Hip-hop networks within the city. In addition, when I would DJ at local venues, I also took the opportunity to verbally express the criteria of my study to those who may be interested in participating. I snowballed sixteen participants that met the specified characteristics of my study. I asked two gatekeepers to participate in my study. After they complied, I then asked them to nominate another participant who met my research criteria (i.e., African or Caribbean, Black, etc.). When this agent was interviewed, I proceeded by getting them to nominate another potential participant. For ethical reasons, I did NOT contact anyone who was nominated. Rather, only those who voluntarily contacted me were interviewed. I then utilized this procedure until I completed sixteen interviews, and saturation was reached.

It is important to note that snowball sampling is a non-random sampling procedure that is unable to generalize research results to the population. Through this sampling procedure I obtained a certain group of participants that were aware and understood the goals of this research. In addition, participants understood the research questions and a number of specific issues such as racism, and how hip-hop can be used as a means to foster inclusion. As a result, the experiences of participants are not generalizable to youth or peoples who occupy urban arts cultures such as hip-hop.

### **The Population**

I conducted my study on a very unique and often overlooked demographic that resides within Calgary. Calgary is a city that contains approximately 1.2 million people (Statistics Canada, 2010), and accommodates the fourth largest immigrant population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2009). By 2020, “Calgary’s total immigrant population is estimated to reach almost half a million” (Diversity in Calgary, 2009, p. 1). In addition, Statistics Canada (2010) projects that

from 2006 to 2031, Calgary's visible minority population will increase from 22 percent to 38 percent (para. 4). Along with these trends, there is also data that suggests that the number of self-identified Blacks within the city has increased exponentially in the last decade (Calgary Economic Development, 2014), which has left many first and second generation African and Caribbean immigrant youth to immerse themselves in the city's urban arts scenes.

I sought interviews with Black youth whose common ancestry originates from the Caribbean or Africa. I required that these youths identified as either first or second generation Black immigrants. By first generation, I refer to youth who were born outside of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2014); and second generation, I include those "who were born in Canada and had at least one parent born outside Canada" (para. 5). In total I sampled 9 participants from Africa, whose heritage included: Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan; and 7 from the Caribbean whose heritage included: Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, and Jamaica. I also required that they be between the ages of 18-30 years because I wanted to incorporate youths who could comprehend issues such as inclusion, exclusion, and discrimination. However, the respondents are aged 22-28 years. Lastly, both males and females were represented in this research. Historically, female voices have been marginalized throughout much Hip-hop research. The literature review acknowledged that female participation within the culture is marginal, because of Hip-hop's masculine tendencies (Dyson, 2010). As a result, I believe that since I represented both groups I can make a substantive contribution to studies of Hip-hop culture, and inclusion practices of young people.

Lastly, although Hip-hop is a culture that consists of many art forms, I chose to focus on the social practices of rappers rather than graffiti artists and dancers, because rappers were Hip-hop's first historians and activists. They became Hip-hop's voice, because they "told painful

memories of social isolation, exclusion, and the painful truths about the internal struggles that have wounded their souls” (West, 2006, p. 183). For these reasons I believe that it is important to explore rappers/poets’ perspectives and experiences in order to better comprehend the relationship between Hip-hop and social inclusion.

**Table 1: Demographics of Interview participants.**

Participant's Name/Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Immigration Status	Education Status	Employment Status
Tizzmo	24	Male	Second Generation	Consortium of Music	Entertainer
Aiania	24	Female	Second Generation	High School/Some College	Sales
Cheya	21	Male	First Generation	College	Construction
Emeer	27	Male	First Generation	High school	Insurance Sales
Delilah	28	Female	Second generation	High school/ some College (MRU)	Administration
Raja	23	Male	Second Generation	College	Security Services
Rocka	22	Female	Second Generation	High school	Hotel Services
Raz	23	Male	Second Generation	University	Full time Student
Young Nuru	23	Male	Second Generation	High school	Construction
Gina	24	Female	First Generation	University	Nurse (RN)
Rani	25	Male	First Generation	High school/ University Acceptance (Pending)	Entertainment (Promoter)
Lotus	25	Female	First Generation	University	Educator
Dynast	21	Male	First Generation	High school/University Acceptance (Pending)	Administration
Adreama	26	Female	Second Generation	High school	Safety Operations
Sultan	28	Male	Second generation	High school	Construction
Mikado	22	Male	Second Generation	College	Student

Black African and Caribbean Youth Inclusion Practices: The Role of Hip-hop, Fieldwork, 2015.

## **Ethical Considerations**

### ***Anonymity and Confidentiality***

My research questions contained themes of marginalization, isolation, injustice, and personal experiences. Sensitivity toward these issues was acknowledged in my research design. A number of mixed emotions arose for participants during the interviews, with some that contained feelings of frustration towards issues such as racism, but also happiness because of how much the participants love their racial and cultural identities. Overall, my research design contained minimal risks, because the “probability and magnitude of possible harms stemming from [the participants] involvement in a study is no greater than those encountered by the participant in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research” (Government of Canada, 2015). Although this study is classified as minimal risk, participants maintained that it was important for them to discuss sensitive subject matter, such as issues with racism, as well as topics that revolved around their identity and Hip-hop culture.

Ethical considerations throughout my research comprised participant’s anonymity and confidentiality. Respondents were given pseudonyms and were required to sign an informed consent form. Participants were informed that their contributions to my research were completely voluntary, and they had the right to stop the interview at any time when they do not wish to continue. Luckily there were no participants that felt they needed to stop. There were no forms of distress that arose, and when I provided them information on distress resources all declined.

Although my study contains minimal risks, I found that great benefits were gained from this research. First, this study provided a platform for participants to share their inclusion and exclusion experiences, which they felt go unrecognized within Canadian society. Second, I

believe my research helps develop Calgary's hip hop community, by bringing it into an academic realm. In turn this will contribute to the small but growing body of urban arts studies in academia. Third, this study provided Black immigrant youth another platform to discuss their musical experiences in an academic light. Lastly, and most importantly, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the exclusion and inclusion practices of young peoples in Canada. I am hopeful that this will make an essential and substantive contribution to how we understand the experiences of young Black people in Canadian society.

## **Data Analysis**

### ***Content Analysis***

In this research, I used content analysis. Berg and Lune (2012) state that content analysis is proficient in its techniques on studying textual data, artifacts, and photographs. This coding technique enabled me to “unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes” (Attride-Stirling, 2000, p. 378).

To code my data, I relied on open and axial coding techniques (Bowen, 2009). Open coding is the process of creating broad themes, formulating categories, and making labels (Patton, 2014). This domain consisted of visible, readily observable, and immediately evident content that stood out in my transcripts. As a result, open coding allowed me to understand the manifest realm of my raw data. I began this phase by reading my data extensively (Neuendorf, 2001). I contextualized my transcripts, created major themes such as *Hip-hop and Youth Development*, and subthemes such as *Hip-hop and Platforms of Expression*.

After I had crystalized these categories, I proceeded to conduct axial coding, which is the process of decomposing broad themes to uncover metaphors, perceptions, and underlying knowledge from participant's interviews (Bowen, 2009; Miles, 2013). As a result, I used this technique to better comprehend the more latent - deeper - levels of meaning that remained embedded in my data (Attride-Stirling, 2000). I was able to reflect on previously created themes, and connect them to new patterns that emerged in the data.

After I coded the data, I then analyzed the themes that arose. First, I compared and contrasted them to one another. Second, I discussed them in regards to previous literature and theory that was discussed earlier in this thesis. The outcome of these techniques is included in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### Barriers to Inclusion

#### *Racism*

As noted earlier, race and racism act as barriers toward positive inclusion amongst Black African and Caribbean youth in Calgary, Alberta. In my study, a respondent who lived in three different countries claimed: “I have never felt a real sense of racism even when I was growing up as much as I did in Canada.” Unfortunately, all respondents reported that they experience racism in two forms. In the first realm, they are subjected to forms of racism in subtle ways; while in the second realm, they encounter racism in often explicit and harsh ways. Although this form is reported less than the first, it still exposes us to a vicious type of discrimination that is often overlooked and ignored within Canadian society. We will now discuss subtle racism, and how it dominates respondents’ lives including school, work, and leisure activities.

#### *Subtle Racism*

Each respondent acknowledged that subtle racism is omnipresent, yet difficult to define. For example, Young Nuru called it “Nonchalant Racism,” Raz coined it as “Shady and Implicit Racism,” and Lotus defined it as “Underground Racism.” But what does this type of racism include? Interestingly, two of my respondents operationalized it perfectly in their interviews.

Mikado echoed:

Instead of sayin’ “nigga” [whites] say “we are not hiring.” Instead of saying “nigga” [whites] say “license and registration?” They go about it differently. There’s ways around things, you don’t have to come right out and say you are racist, but you can now have racist motives to the things you are doing.

From Young Nuru's statement, we learn that subtle racism is implied. Rather than someone overtly discriminating against him based on his color, they code their racial intentions with passive language. Interestingly, Tizzmo added a unique perspective when he compared his life in the United States to when he moved back to Calgary. He claimed:

I remember growing up, people would look at me differently. But it was also how I dressed. It was a combination of my skin and the way I dressed, and the way I talked. My mannerisms. Racism here [in Canada] is not... explicit.

In America, I have noticed from going to Boston that there is a very open dialogue on it. The most interesting thing... is that when I went to Boston, no one made jokes about race, whereas here, it reveals itself in subtle ways. No one here wants to be called a racist. Here racism is showing itself in comedy. There are certain stereotypes that are appropriated in subtle ways.

Tizzmo believed that subtle racism is something that is endemic to Canadian society. For Tizzmo, rather than make someone feel different because of their skin color, why not highlight the stereotypes that encircle them? In the past, people associated his white sneakers, basketball jerseys, and how he talks, with thuggish behavior. Rather than target him on his skin color, they focused on his style and slang as a way to marginalize his racial identity. In addition, subtle racism also emerged through racial jokes. Much like Tizzmo, I also grew up in a predominantly white school system, where Black jokes were embedded in the discourse of the student body. Some that I encountered included: "You are so Black that the teacher counts you absent," or "Black people are good at basketball because they can run, shoot, and steal." As I gaze at Tizzmo's experiences and my past, I realize that these jokes were intended to marginalize our Black identities.

From these excerpts mentioned above, we can paint a clear picture on what subtle racism signifies. At first glance, it seems that it is a concept that is boundless. However, through my interviews with respondents, I argue that it is an umbrella approach to describe how many whites discriminate against Blacks in subtle ways. As I analyzed the data, I could not help but realize that this type of racism invaded respondents' lives in their work, school, and leisure. More interestingly, every situation that was described occurred in spaces that were heavily occupied by whites, where Black people stood out as a minority. Outnumbered, Black youth in these situations quickly became victims of racial difference. Cheya discussed how he and his friends bore this brunt when they attended leisure activities with friends.

We can walk into [a local bar] and have all eyes on us, as if we had walked into the wrong place. It's not like you are getting beat up or anything, it's like... as soon as you walk into a place where people think you don't belong in, all of a sudden you are the center of attention.

Cheya and his friends often stick out like sore thumbs. This has become a significant barrier for them to include themselves into various facets of Calgary leisure life. But what about educational settings and workplaces? Are these not areas where everyone can be recognized for their creativity? Unfortunately, these spaces have acted as sites where Black youth are discriminated against, making it hard for them to foster a sense of inclusion. Raz shared his experiences while he attended his first year at a University in Alberta. He recounted a particular event where he was singled out, and which later influenced him to leave his university residence. He claimed:

I lived in residence in my first year, and I was the only Black kid in residence on the floor, and the people would talk behind my back on multiple occasions. They would think I am a typical stereotypical Black man. Someone was smoking weed on the floor,

and the majority of the people assumed it was me, off the bat, and I wasn't even home. It was crazy because the entire building got evacuated, and I wasn't there. And the people on my floor were blaming me for it. They all pointed their fingers at me.

This excerpt details Raz's experience as a Black male living on a university campus. He immediately realized that his skin color made him susceptible to gossip by his white counterparts when he lived in residence. His peers viewed him as a stereotypical Black male, one that resembled a thug and dealt drugs. As a result, he was often blamed for issues he did not provoke, such as smoking marijuana in his dormitory when - ironically - he was not present. In this instance, he recalled that none of his peers believed his innocence because they were so consumed with viewing him as a gang member rather than a business major.

As we see, subtle racism attacks the life experience and social recognition of respondents. When respondents were acknowledged by their peers it was not for genuine purposes, but to blame, isolate, and exclude their Black identities. Unfortunately, these instances were not isolated to school and leisure, but also appeared in the workforce. A particular incident that was brought to my attention was a situation that involved Gina, who moved from Toronto to Calgary recently. At night Gina is a rapper, but by day she is a registered nurse. In this example she provided details of her experiences with subtle racism at work:

What is insulting is that I find people are very, very surprised when they find out I am accomplished or accomplish things. People say to me "NO WAY YOU WENT TO SCHOOL?!" "NO WAY YOU ARE SMART?!" "YOU ARE TALENTED?!"<sup>1</sup> People sometimes genuinely don't want to believe that I am a nurse, and I am educated, just because I am a young Black female. That is where I find the most discrimination. People are surprised I have my things together.

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<sup>1</sup> I capitalized this portion of Gina's excerpt to emphasize how her voice intensified during our interview.

Even at my work, I have had patients say things like “where is the nurse?” They assume that I am a health care aid. I remember telling a family, “I am the nurse in charge,” and they said, “No seriously where is the nurse in charge?”

As we see, subtle racism is exposed when non-Black Canadians are shocked at the accomplishments of Black persons. When respondents stepped out of the boxes that whites tried to fit them into, they were greeted with more confusion. Gina, an educated Black female, constantly lives her life outside of what mainstream society perceives a Black woman should be: overly promiscuous, angry, and stuck up. As a result, a number of her interactions end in displeasure.

From this analysis we see that many respondents reported that their identities are constantly in question in Canadian society. Lotus concluded that, “Canadians are culturally obsessed,” and seeks to fit Blacks within boxes. Often times respondents noted that they feel that others want to categorize them into boxes based on *what* they are, not *who* they are.

### *Explicit Racism*

In the second realm, respondents reported that they often experience volatile forms of racism. The term we shall adopt for the purpose of this thesis is: explicit racism. This type of racism heavily contrasts its subtle counterpart, and seeks to intentionally damage the identities of racialized peoples. In my interviews, respondents spoke at length of incidents that have occurred in their lives when they have encountered this form of racism. What is unfortunate is that these events affected their identities, and forced them to reassess how they relate to those who are white. In this dataset, explicit racism is created from two types of social groups: authority figures such as police or work managers, and peers such as classmates.

Mikado explained how he has been excluded and marginalized in a vicious manner within Canadian society. In his interview he reflected upon a series of incidents in his life where he experienced racism in barbarous ways, particularly with the police:

Stefan: Have you experienced racism within Canadian society?

Mikado: Oh HELL YEAH! The Police! The Police! I have had all kinds of stuff happen to me over the fact that they assume I am the bullshit they watch on TV. I have been assaulted. Dropped in different cities. I have had them take my shoes, my wallet and my phone. All of that.

Stefan: Have you been physically assaulted by police?

Mikado: Several times. There have been times where I have gotten pulled over doing nothing. They picked me up. Driven me somewhere all the while telling me these apparent charges they have on me. Once they get to some random location out in the middle of nowhere they pull me out of the car and beat on me. Take my shoes and phone. Then drive off. It's happened to me a couple times.

Throughout the interview Mikado discussed the various moments in his life when he felt he was discriminated by the police because of his skin color. Unfortunately, Mikado's story has been told too many times. In addition to Blacks, many racialized men - particularly Aboriginal - have been taken by Canadian police and driven to the outskirts of urban centers to be beaten and even freeze to death (Voyageur, 2009). These are situations known as Starlight tours and represent the horrors of vicious racism within Canadian society. When this happens, Black youth such as Mikado and other racialized minorities are unable to foster a sense of security amongst those who are employed to serve and protect them. Mikado reminds us that racial profiling stems from how police consume stereotypical images of Blackness, such as thuggery, via mainstream mass media.

After Mikado shared his story, I paused, took a deep breath, and reflected. As I sat across from him I tapped into my sociological imagination (Mills, 1959). For myself, I know how hard retelling these stories can be. As I write this section I think of my own experiences with vicious types of racial exclusion, as I have had very negative encounters with police. I reflected on the historical issues that young - often innocent - Black males have had with law enforcement. Today we are unable to escape news reports of police shootings and beatings of unarmed Black men. Although these issues may be viewed as exclusively American, I was not surprised to see them arise in my Canadian data. These social issues are endemic to the lives of Black peoples who occupy a world where whites are in powerful positions. Through Mikado's memory, we see that these issues continue to haunt us in a society that prides itself for its policies on 'multiculturalism'. In another instance Adreama recalled her experiences with the police:

I remember when I was very young we used to go to the leisure center, and play basketball from morning until night everyday throughout the weekend. I was hanging out with my friends one time, and my identity was mistaken. Cops dealt with me pretty horribly. They handcuffed me when I was 15 years old. And because of the colors I was wearing they said I looked like someone in the area.

Although these accounts are brief, I could not help but see how moved respondents were as they retold their past. They echoed these statements as if they relived them. From this excerpt we can see that troubles with law enforcement are not isolated to Black males, but are issues that Black females also experience. This analysis shows that females are targeted by police, but through less hostile measures compared to males. These forms of discrimination continue to occur regardless of how far 'forward' we think we have come in Canada. Unfortunately, these explicit experiences of racism occur in places where we think we can foster a safe sense of self:

school, work and community leisure spaces. In a particular case, Young Nuru recounted experiences of racism when he worked with a group of colleagues at a ceramic tile warehouse.

He recalled:

White people take stereotypes and make them real. I have seen some despicable shit... Shit at work.

We have two [Black] guys that work with me...who are from Africa. One from Sierra Leone and the other... Nigeria. They always have to be talked about [by white coworkers] that they are Black. They can't just live. Someone is always poking comments.

I worked at a ceramic tile house, and the boss was an ex-skinhead. They don't see that. The first people to notice are Black. I have met some blatant racists that couldn't tell I was Black and they will go crazy in front of me. And I will just shut my f...ing mouth. What am I gonna do? I have been in a room with eight really racist people, saying tons of crazy shit referring to Blacks as Niggers. I sit there and I feel so f...ing weird. What the f... do I do? These are people I have grown to know so long, and you never even knew!

This one day, I was around the boss, and he told me he was in this biker gang. He still harbors those feelings.

One day I pulled my Black coworker aside, and I asked "How do you f...ng deal with this?" That, to me, has given me a sour taste about Calgary's society, and the way they handle race here, and other cultures moving in.

Young Nuru's Black identity sometimes goes unrecognized by whites who come into contact with him because he is a lighter-skinned Black male. Young Nuru lifts the veil and is able to enter into a world where he can see the experiences of other Blacks as an outsider looking in. He is able to see the true attitudes of racist whites towards Blacks.

Young Nuru recounted a time when he embraced his African coworkers. In his experience we can see that Blackness is not only a matter of skin tone but transcends to one's

inner core, insofar as Blackness is a spiritual aura that enables agents to view each other's struggles as their own. This aforementioned excerpt heavily correlates with the work of Du Bois (1903). Many Whites view Blacks through a veil that is convoluted by color, pigments and skin tones. However, Blacks view each other in a way that extends beyond complexion. Young Nuru believed that this essence is unbreakable, because it is a consciousness that cannot be attained by many whites. These ideas alter how Young Nuru comprehends race and racism within Calgary. Next we will explore how explicit racism arises from peers within educational institutions.

It is through our peers that we are better able to comprehend our own identity. But what happens when our peers seek to exclude us racially? Many respondents retold their stories of being singled out by their classmates because of the color of their skin. Although these experiences have occurred in a distant past, they remain influential on how respondents currently relate to those who othered them. First, we will view the experiences of Tizzmo:

I remember the first time I realized I was Black, and that Black was different, was when there was a girl. A Caucasian girl. She got angry at me and called me "Blackie" and the whole class went quiet. I had never heard of such a thing... that was the first time I had been singled out.

This excerpt from Tizzmo is riveting. Through his classmate's comment he realized his difference. This event marked a tipping point in Tizzmo's life, because it was the first time that he recognized that his Black skin was viewed negatively. When I further probed him on his educational experiences he reflected:

I remember in grade 12, I went to a private school. It was the first week I had experienced racism. I had heard that there was actually a previous Black student at the school who had to leave. When I arrived I had filled his boots [laughs].

I had no idea what I was getting myself into... That's kinda funny...

Stefan: What is “kind of” funny?

Tizzmo: Racism did exist. During the first week there was someone who confronted me. He said very racist things. He used the N word. I decided to respond.

Nonetheless, I also experienced it from the institution as well. And that is why I was removed from that school.

We see that when Tizzmo began to attend his high school, he took the place of another Black student who had also faced severe racial barriers. This reminds us that until recently there were no Blacks in some schools in Alberta and that some Blacks endured the difficulty of being the first Black students in those schools. Tizzmo quickly learned that his school had deeply rooted issues with race, which placed him at the center of attention. He was targeted in very harmful and hostile ways. Students used derogatory language to characterize his identity and refused to appreciate his presence. In addition, they failed to provide peer support for the turmoil he encountered. In fact, in many instances, he felt that his teachers added to the upheaval because they instigated conflict between him and others.

Unfortunately, Tizzmo’s excerpt can be complemented by Delilah’s experiences, who discussed at length how her early encounters with race at school continue to influence her today. As a child she used to get beat up at school for being the only Black girl. She reflected:

It was kind of messed up thinking back now.

I remember being in [primary school] and this one kid told me he didn't want to play with me. And I said, “Why?”

And he said because I had sand all over my face. And even another time, they told me I had yellow marker on my face, like in my eye.

I remember going into the washroom and looking in the mirror and crying. Thinking that it would take the yellowness out of my eye.

Stefan: When did these experiences come to a close?

Delilah: I would say that the final straw was when I came home after school. I was really upset. I went to my parent's room and I grabbed the baby powder, and I went to my bathroom and threw it on my face, and I started crying. I asked myself "maybe they will like me now." My mom came into the room and was so sad it got to that point. It was at that moment that I realized that it doesn't matter. That was when I broke free.

Delilah's peers often targeted her physical characteristics, and teased her about every aspect of her complexion. Compared to Tizzmo, Delilah sought to change what made her feel different for the wrong reasons. When she was victimized by her peers, she sought to change what actually made her beautiful. She began to associate whiteness with goodness, and used whatever she had at her disposal to color herself. Unfortunately, at this young age she felt that changing her complexion would make her feel more socially accepted.

As we have seen, explicit racism is vicious and includes severe forms of othering such as being called a 'nigger', or being threatened because of the color of one's skin. Respondents reported that at some point(s) in their lives they were labeled, ostracized, and singled out for being Black. Many reflected that this type of racism had negative consequences on their identities that still influence them today.

From the above analysis, we see that race and racism act as barriers toward positive inclusion amongst Black African and Caribbean youth in Calgary, Alberta. Unfortunately, all respondents reported that they had experienced racism in two forms. The first realm contains subtle racism, which respondents acknowledged as being present in their lives at school, work and in community leisure spaces. When respondents were recognized socially, it was not for

genuine purposes, but to blame, isolate, and marginalize their Black identities. In the second realm, explicit racism, respondents reported that they had experienced racism in harsh and overt ways. Explicit racism is vicious, vindictive, and volatile. Whether it was subtle or explicit, racism sought to exclude respondents based on the color of their skin. Through this analysis, we see that it made the respondents feel different, overlooked, and undervalued. As a result, we learn that to be Black in Canada is to be othered for one's skin color.

Through this qualitative study, descriptions of the social experiences of respondents help us to understand the nature of race and racism within modern Canadian society. Today, racism continues to attack the quality of life and social recognition of people of color. It attempts to mold their identities into boxes and categorize them based on what they are, rather than who they are. Although we may feel that we occupy a country where everyone is accepted for their differences, I contend that racism is embedded in the daily social lives of Black African and Caribbean peoples, who continually have their identities contrasted against the backdrop of dominant white norms. Through this analysis, we see that to escape racism within this country is improbable for the study demographic. Racism, both subtle and explicit, invades all spheres of African and Caribbean people's lives and follows them to work, school, and recreational spaces.

Race theory may be applied to understand the racial difficulties that the respondents experienced. The concept of race, orchestrated by Satzewich and Liodakis (2013), relates to the lives of the study participants. For Satzewich and Liodakis (2013), how we define race varies on a sociological time and space. Typically, we see race as social agent's physical - ascriptive - characteristics, however throughout history race has been used to create and sustain real and

imagined social groups. All respondents in this study stated that race played a fundamental role in their lives.

Race is a social construct that shapes participants' lives and influences how whites view and treat them. Many respondents expressed that how they were treated "back home" in Africa and the Caribbean is vastly different than how they are viewed in Canada. This is exemplified through the experiences of Lotus. When Lotus lived in Sudan she was seen as Sudanese, when she moved to the United States she was viewed as African, and when she arrived in Canada she was recognized as Black. Similarly, when Young Nuru and Gina moved from Ontario - an area highly populated by Blacks - to Calgary, they were quick to notice that their identities were constantly in question. Young Nuru stated that race was never as pervasive in Ontario as it was in Alberta, because it was not until he arrived in Calgary, that he was confronted by people who constantly asked him *what* his background was.

Omi and Winant (1993) extend Satzewich and Liodakis' thoughts to argue that race is a complex, politically charged social process. They contend that race is difficult to define, but acknowledge that "we are inserted in a comprehensively racialized social structure... [where] ... race becomes a common sense - a way of comprehending, explaining and acting in the world" (p. 319). These ideas on how race is formed heavily intersect with the social experiences of the respondents in two realms.

In the first, Omi and Winant (1993) maintain that race is ascribed, fixed, concrete and objective. It is an observable trait. Rather than being noticed as human beings, respondents are viewed as Black. When they step into their worlds, they are not observed as citizens, but are marked for their skin color. Adreama and Cheya discussed that when they move throughout their

social terrain, many whites fail to see them as agents who contribute beauty to society. Rather, they see them as Black, a social category that Omi and Winant (1993) describe as fixed and objective. In the second realm, Omi and Winant charge that race is an illusion, and an ideological construct, which heavily relates to the experiences of Young Nuru. When I asked Young Nuru if he could attempt to conceptualize race he stated it was “white people taking things and making them real.”

Although race may be viewed as an illusion, I argue that it is essential to how respondents relate to themselves and others. Respondents echoed that they are Black and proud, and refuse to dispose of the concept of race. Artists such as Tizzmo and Gina believe that race is central to their identity, and plays a fundamental role in how they structure their social world. However, they also perceive that they are treated differently by mainstream society because their skin color differs from what is considered socially acceptable. As a result, they believe that they are overlooked and forced into disadvantaged social positions. We will now discuss racism, and how previous scholars’ theories relate to the social lives of participants.

In the literature review we learned that racism occurs when dominant groups use race to categorize racial minorities into various tiers. These tiers are socially constructed, and are used by those in power to subordinate the identities of visible minorities. To understand these concepts, I reflect on the works of Du Bois (1903), Dei (2012) and Memmi (2000). Together, they believe that those in power are afforded status and privilege because their ways of life are considered normal, while those who deviate from these norms are socially isolated and excluded. These studies allow us to understand the social experiences of the study respondents.

Du Bois (1903) believed that the most paramount social issue in the modern world is the color line. He contends that this color line suppresses and marginalizes Black voices. Respondents believe that racism is pervasive within Canadian society. Artists such as Dynast, Raja, and Rocka often stated that they do not feel like they have the same privileges as their white counterparts, and are frequently excluded - if not socially isolated - from dominant social institutions. Many respondents such as Lotus and Raz often expressed that their voices and struggles go unrecognized by their white Canadian counterparts. They asserted that a color line truly does exist, because racism is improbable to escape, and makes them feel different for the wrong reasons.

As I re-analyze Du Bois, I recognize that the respondents' experiences echo his concept of the veil. The study participants' discourse described a social curtain, which divides them from mainstream white society. Respondents such as Mikado, Tizzmo, Gina, Lotus, and Delilah clearly understood this curtain, and spoke extensively about which side they occupy, and the disadvantages that are associated with it.

I hold that respondents occupy a sphere where the veil is thin, if not transparent. They were able to conceptualize the privileges that are associated with whiteness, and discuss how they feel overlooked by white dominant cultural ideologies. Artists such as Mikado, Raz, Lotus, and Gina often detailed how they feel their identities are pushed into the margins of white society because the color of their skin does not reflect the norms and values of whiteness. They are singled out through subtle racist jokes, ignorant statements, and coded language, which seek to undermine their Black identities and further afford white privilege. In addition, respondents such as Sultan, Delilah, and Adreama discussed that they are the victims of particular - more explicit -

forms of racism that hunt them down and damage their sense of self. As they gazed through this thin veil, respondents reflected on their own disadvantages, and the advantages of whites.

In their interviews, respondents described how whites occupy a world where the veil is thick, if not translucent. Du Bois argues that this thickness makes many whites blind to how Blacks suffer, and the privileges that whites have in their social lives. Artists such as Lotus, Cheya, and Delilah felt that it is improbable for many whites to clearly understand racial suppression because they enforce social norms and dominate public consciousness. As a result, whites live in a world where they fail to acknowledge their privilege, escape discrimination, and sustain racism, not only by controlling social norms, but also by coding their racist intentions through passive language.

The color line described by Du Bois illustrates how respondents' social worlds are constructed based on their race, and explains why respondents are socially divided from white mainstream society. Furthermore, Du Bois' concept of the veil - and its transparency versus opacity - can be applied to understanding the study participants' experiences with racism and white privilege. Although Du Bois' work is considered a classical sociological theory, I maintain that it enhances our modern understanding of race and racism in a Canadian context. However, his work can be supplemented by the work of Dei and Memmi, to further conceptualize the respondents' experiences.

Respondents' struggles with subtle racism in Canada can be extensively linked to Dei's work. Dei (2012) focuses on "the silence of race," and how racial inequalities persist when we fail to discuss them within Canadian society. This work heavily intersects with the experiences of respondents in the theme "subtle racism." All study participants reported this form of racism

in their interviews, and stated that they feel their identity is frequently compared to white Canadian norms. Rather than be othered explicitly, they are discriminated against via coded language, subtle racist jokes, ignorant statements, and being denied access to social events. Through Dei's lens, artists are discriminated against in silent ways. When we occupy a world that hides its racial discourse, it allows whites to discriminate against others through passive means. Although subtle racism arose in most interviews, Delilah's life intrigued me most. When whites 'compliment' a Black woman and say: "You are pretty for a Black girl," or "How do you wash your hair?" they use coded language to silently marginalize Black identities. In turn, this coded language enables whites to escape their racist motives. Dei agrees, and holds that statements like the ones listed here perpetuate unequal group differences because they hide the deep power dynamics that are embedded within them. Furthermore, when whites make subtle jokes, or ignorant statements, they silently misrecognize Black identities, further dividing social groups. As a result, the "silence of race," ironically, reinforces racial inequality because people are discriminated against in subtle ways.

Furthermore, Memmi (2000) reminds us that racism is endemic in a society that sustains power imbalances between those who represent dominant social institutions, and those who do not. He believes that people of color are exposed to vicious forms of stigma, compared to those who preserve the status quo. Through Memmi's lens, racism is intentional, limits human freedom, and damages the identities of people of color. Memmi's work intersects with the experiences of respondents in the theme "explicit racism." Respondents such as Mikado, Delilah, Adreama, Tizzmo, and Young Nuru all echoed Memmi's work in their interviews. They discussed in-depth how throughout their lives they had been exposed to a form of racism that

intentionally sought to damage their identities. For these respondents, racism acted as a social disease that tried to infect every facet of their lives. Mikado and Adreama were racially profiled, and victimized by those who are assumed to serve and protect. In addition, Tizzmo and Delilah experienced explicit racism in school - a space that has historically been considered to act as a hub of knowledge. Lastly, Young Nuru discussed at length how his boss - a neo Nazi - harassed his Black coworkers. Through Memmi's lens, racism acted as an illness, which sought to hunt respondents down, disable their ability to express themselves, and constrain the little freedom that they had.

Aside from theory, some of the respondents' experiences with racism converge with previous works on how Black African and Caribbean youth are marginalized within Canadian society (Das Gupta et al., 2007; Dei, 2012; Ibrahim, 2011a; James, 2003; Madibbo, 2008, 2015; Mensah, 2010; Tator & Henry, 2006). Although Canada is celebrated for its multicultural policies, and its efforts to include peoples from all walks of life, this analysis shows that there still exist forms of racism amongst Black first and second generation immigrants. Black youth continue to experience constant scrutiny from law enforcement, peers, and employers, which makes it difficult for them to cultivate feelings of belonging and inclusion. Through these aforementioned scholars' lens, we see that Black African first and second generation youth continue to suffocate within modern Canadian society, because they unwillingly adopt a racial burden that hounds their identities, and prohibits them from achieving a full sense of existence.

I maintain that this thesis adds to existing literature on race and racism within modern Canadian society. First, my thesis paints a picture of race and racism within Western Canada. Historically, studies have focused on the racial issues of Black immigrant youth who are

concentrated in eastern Canada such as Toronto and Montreal. My Calgary-based analysis presents evidence of existing structures that oppress Black voices within Canadian discourse. My research shows that Black youth within this city are exposed to subtle and vicious forms of discriminatory treatment in many spheres of their lives, such as work (technical jobs to nursing), school (primary to post-secondary), and leisure activities (organized hockey to dancing). Second, this study shows that females, as well as males, are exposed to a vicious form of explicit racism that intentionally seeks to damage their identities. Specifically, Black females are targeted through law enforcement because of the color of their skin, albeit in a less hostile manner than what young Black males experience. In regards to studies on Black youth, academics have focused on Black males' exposure to racial profiling, which overlooks Black females' encounters with the police, such as the incident that this thesis has reiterated. Overall, this analysis shows that Black immigrant youth live in a world where racism takes hold as a disease in Western Canada. Next we will analyze how culture impacts Black youth.

### ***Hip-hop and Cultural Discrimination***

Throughout my data collection process, respondents often discussed how they feel discriminated against because they are ambassadors of Hip-hop culture, an art form that heavily contradicts modern culture in Calgary. In this section, we will understand what this cultural discrimination resembles, and how it occurs in the respondents' social and artistic lives.

### ***Calgary, Hip-hop, and Misconceptions***

Respondents stated that some misconceptions and stereotypes encircle Hip-hop culture within Calgary. Unfortunately, this exposes the art to a form of cultural discrimination that makes it strenuous for young Black Hip-hop artists to foster a sense of inclusion within mainstream society. Adreama explained that within Calgary her craft has been viewed as: “Loud, obnoxious, derogatory, and gangism.” She spoke at length about how she was not able to attend her own shows: “There are times when we have had to play shows and couldn’t get into our own shows, because - you know - the bouncer was racist or management did not like the way we looked. We faced many restraints.” Many respondents experienced these restraints. For example, Raja believes that Calgarians view Hip-hop as, “Something that hoodlums do... it is something that is violent, or something that degrades women, or something vulgar, or rebellious.” Respondents stated that they grow frustrated when they are unable to show others the real beauty of Hip-hop culture. This was expressed by Emeer as he explained, “The scene is misunderstood... it is interpreted like it is thug life, Black American culture.” In a more detailed example, Rocka further debunked why she is met with stereotypes within Calgary.

Stefan: Do you feel that Hip-hop is treated equally with other art forms in the city?

Rocka: I think everyone that doesn't know Hip-hop thinks that there is something terrible with it. Every guy that raps is a gang banger, or every female is very sexual.

I think being naive and ignorant plays a big part. Or watching movies, and the way directors portray Hip-hop artists paints someone’s views of it.

Rocka feels that Hip-hop culture experiences stigma within Calgary, and holds that ignorance is to blame by those who fail to envision what the culture truly represents. Those that view Hip-hop as thuggish are the same agents that see Black people as low class, promiscuous,

and ghetto. When people consume these false images, they internalize them as real and begin to overlook how a culture such as Hip-hop, which is embraced by Blacks, can be beautiful.

Interestingly, Aiania echoed Rocka's statements. When I asked her whether she had been discriminated against as a Hip-hop artist she replied:

A lot of people associate Hip-hop with gangster rap. And "oh it is influencing the youth to want to be trappers or be violent and deal drugs." The gangster stuff is more marketable, and that is what makes it to TV. You see a lot of rappers using bad language, and derogatory terms. There is more to [Hip-hop culture than] that.

Aiania reminds us that Calgarians are unable to see Hip-hop for what it genuinely represents: the foundation of youth expression. Mainstream Calgarians associate Hip-hop culture with negative stereotypes of Black people from mainstream media. Aiania's discourse tells us that there are differences in how Blacks are constructed on TV and how they are in reality. On TV, Black youth and Hip-hop culture are projected as violent. However, in reality the art form can be beautiful and help Black youth express their life experiences, aspirations and feelings. Gina extended Aiania's thought. In her interview, she discussed the struggles she encountered when she took her music to various venues within the city.

When I first came to Calgary I googled open mics, and I went to...  
I went to places where they didn't accept me...

Before they [venue owners] even ask me what I do [they] tell me to go and perform at the urban spaces. That kind of vibe. Why can't I explore anything else? They send me to the urban places, without ever realizing that I may do folk. They assume because I am Black.

When Gina began to share her craft with others, she was met with a sense of otherness. Certain music venues in Calgary rejected her music, because they were anti-urban, and catered to mainstream white audiences. She felt unwelcomed, and was told to go to spaces where Black

people and Hip-hop would better accept her. White venues failed to give her a chance to express herself because they placed her in a box that contained negative stereotypes such as criminal activity and sexual promiscuity. Instead of seeing her as someone who could sing folk music, they saw a Black girl with a microphone and assumed all the negative traits that are associated with Hip-hop culture.

Overall, the respondents of this study concurred that they feel culturally discriminated as Hip-hop artists. All study participants explained that they feel their art is subject to stereotypes. Many of them were frustrated by these inaccuracies and believe that the fallacies originated in how mainstream TV depicts Blacks as poor people who degrade women and promote violence. As a result, respondents found that it is difficult for them to foster a sense of inclusion in Calgary because they and their art are pushed aside by the mainstream.

I argue that there are latent reasons why rappers are exposed to such ridicule. In nearly all of the interviews, respondents spoke at length about how they feel they were not accepted within mainstream Calgary culture. When I asked Young Nuru if he felt Hip-hop was suppressed within Calgary he said:

I feel that Calgary, as a city, as a political thing doesn't want to be seen as a Hip-hop city. There is super separation. There are blockades. It was a breakthrough thing for [a TV Channel in Calgary] to do that documentary about me. Originally the film crews didn't want to cover it.

Young Nuru is culturally discriminated against because of the barriers he faces when he tries to get his music into public consciousness. It was uncommon for a local news organization to cover his story, because these platforms rarely report on how Hip-hop can benefit youth in Calgary. Ironically, when the network agreed to film Young Nuru's story, he continued to face

backlash from the film crew, who were apprehensive to air it. When I probed Young Nuru on this experience, he stated that “Cowtown” fails to accept Hip-hop because it is a culture that is rooted in the struggles of marginalized youth. As a result, Young Nuru believes that there is a social distance between Calgary and Hip-hop culture. Mikado and Raja expressed the reason behind this social distance in their interview:

Mikado: Calgary is one of the most country places. They prefer Garth Brooks compared to Hip-hop. They don't accept it, and push it to the back. It's known for being a hick town.

The country folk mentality, is the same mentality that created the racism in the first place. They always wanted it to be country, and cowboyish, rock and roll at best... They still have all white communities... they are still stuck in their old ways.

Raja: Cowtown culture is not conducive to Hip-hop culture, because of the people that originated this Cowtown culture. Hip-hop came from the struggle. The essence came from people who were thrown under the bus, and were the have-nots, who did not have a voice. It blossomed at a time when minorities felt almost hopeless. That is not conducive that it can be related to a Cowtown culture.

For Mikado, mainstream Calgary rejects Hip-hop, because Hip-hop does not represent its cowboy culture, and “Cowtown” identities. Hip-hop receives backlash because it pushes conventional norms of what Calgary represents: country music and various forms of cowboy culture. In addition, Calgary seeks to preserve a western / country state of mind that heavily clashes with the realities of visible minorities and international citizens. In fact, this mindset has been identified and described by many scholars, who propose that this mindset has created and sustained racist discourse throughout North America (Cleaver 1968; Davis, 1983; Newton, 1973). As a result, artists such as Raja believe that Calgarians do not desire to hear Black youth's messages of struggle, because of their western / country mentality.

Raja added to Mikado's statements, when he discussed why Calgarians push Hip-hop culture away. Raja explained that mainstream Calgary pushes Hip-hop away because it is a culture that represents marginalized peoples... not cowboys. He also alluded to the historical differences between "Cowtown" and Hip-hop culture. Specifically, Calgary has its roots in oppression: white settlers marginalized Aboriginal people for political goals that involved land and resources; whereas, on the other hand, Hip-hop culture has its origins in the struggle against oppression.

In this context, it is important to emphasize that Hip-hop culture was brought to life by Black Caribbean and African American youth in the south Bronx in the early 1970s. This was a time of Black power, and inner city conflict with marginalized youth and dominant social institutions. These youths united around very particular cultural resources that consisted of: rap and poetry, as well as DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti (Change, 2005). Through this culture, "Black teenagers established an identifiable discursive arena, a forum where the ideas and concerns as well as the expression of powerful strains of both nihilism and optimism of a generation can be heard in multiple articulate forms" (Forman, 2002, p. 13). In her interview, Gina added: "People forget that Hip-hop is rooted in the voices of the voiceless. It was a community that was systematically underprivileged. It was a group of youth who were not encouraged to succeed... the only core and roots of it showed the Black experience." Black youth created a force to express their sociological, political, and economic frustrations. To paint a wall, dance on a mat, spin James Brown on turntables, or to spread political messages through a microphone, helped them incorporate themselves into their civil society.

Through this analysis, we see that Hip-hop is marginalized for two reasons. First, Hip-hop is discriminated against because of the negative stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream media. Respondents felt that many Calgaryans still view Calgary as a hick Cowtown whose western / country mentality views Hip-hop as an alien culture. Second, respondents felt that Hip-hop is overlooked because it is a culture that represents the voices of Black youth. When Calgaryans reject Hip-hop, they subtly reject Blackness. This idea was most exemplified when respondents reported that they were unable to book shows at predominantly white venues. In some occurrences when artists were finally able to book a show, they were not granted entry by bouncers and promoters because their appearance did not appeal to the venue's market.

The described experiences of respondents can help us to further understand how social groups experience cultural discrimination within contemporary Canadian society. Within our modern social world, groups continue to be misunderstood and judged for their culture. Although we may feel that we occupy a country where everyone is accepted for their differences, I believe that cultural discrimination is embedded in the daily social lives of Black African and Caribbean Hip-hop artists, who continually have their identities contrasted against the backdrop of white, Eurocentric cultural norms. Through this analysis, it is revealed that there exists a mainstream - predominantly white Canadian narrative that stigmatizes racialized groups for their group customs. Throughout history, Canada has had trouble accepting the cultural practices of minority populations. The reason why Black culture is rejected is the same reason why First Nations were banned from fishing, and why Sikhs were unable to wear their religious garments in the RCMP. These examples represent cultural practices that do not conform to white norms and dominant cultural ideologies in Canada. Hip-hop culture steps outside the boxes of whiteness. As a result,

mainstream Canadians reject this culture and attach stereotypes to it as a way of suppressing Black voices. Rather than celebrate the essence of Hip-hop, they embrace the inaccuracies that surround it. We will now turn to a discussion of how this analysis relates to previous theory and literature.

Bell Hooks' (1991) theory of culture sheds light on how and why African and Caribbean youth are culturally discriminated in Calgary. Respondents in this study discussed how they are discriminated against because they represent Hip-hop culture. Hooks (1991) charges that Blacks are often discriminated in this manner when they occupy a society where whiteness is the norm. Whites, and white culture, dominate our society and shape our cultural landscapes. Respondents stated that they are constantly stigmatized because their art does not fit the mold of Calgary's white, western / country culture. According to Hooks, this type of backlash arises because Black cultures - such as hip hop - heavily threaten white norms. Hip-hop is culturally stigmatized because it pushes the boundaries of what Calgary has historically represented: The Stampede, country music, and oil. Through Hooks' lens we see that whites create a system that marginalizes Hip-hop artists. As a result, Blacks, and their culture, are portrayed as hoodlums, and suffer culturally biased attacks. Hooks asserts that throughout mainstream culture, "Black people are bearing the brunt of more overt and blatant racist assaults" (p. 60). As discussed above, these assaults are ubiquitous.

Respondents stated that their culture is frequently compared to stereotypical images of Blackness from popular American mediums. Hooks (1991) asserts that these stereotypes do more harm than good because they create and recreate racial differences between Blacks and whites. As a result, many whites are unable to envision Hip-hop as a Socratic art form, and see it instead

as loud, obnoxious, and derogatory. Artists such as Mikado, Young Nuru, and Rocka believe that their art and music scene is misunderstood, and given a bad *rap*. Hooks posits that when Black culture is marginalized it is often overlooked because it does not represent popular discourse. She maintains that when mainstream society distances itself from Black youth, it disenfranchises them and further suppresses their voices. Respondents often reported that they feel mainstream Calgary has pushed them and their craft off to the side, as if it does not exist. Often, they were unable to book shows at certain venues, or were not allowed into their own scheduled performances by security guards and promoters.

The foregoing analysis shows us that respondents are on some occasions discriminated against racially, and on other instances culturally. However, racial and cultural discrimination often intersect to modify respondents' identities and their outlook on the world.

### ***Intersectionality and Exclusion***

Patricia Hill Collins' (2004) concept of the *Matrix of Domination* can be deployed to grasp the way race and culture together marginalize respondents. Raz best exemplified the feeling of being doubly marginalized when he stated that, "Within the equation of Hip-hop is Black people, Black culture, Blackness. Within the equation of all that is all the other stereotypes that might go with it. So Calgary is a city that, when it comes to Hip-hop, most of the people - and especially those with power - don't care." For Raz, Hip-hop is undermined and rejected because it is an art form that represents Blackness. He feels that Calgary overlooks Hip-hop because it is rooted in the voices of the voiceless, an art form that represents Black identities, and critiques mainstream society. From his excerpt, we see that respondents are doubly marginalized

and undervalued for their skin color and their culture, both of which are not considered norms within mainstream Calgary. Raz - along with other respondents - echoed that Calgary rejects their racial and cultural identities because of the stereotypes that encircle their Blackness such as: gang life, violence against women, rebellion, and thuggery.

From this analysis, we see how race and culture create a *Matrix of Domination* that excludes respondents. For Collins (2004), factors such as race and culture intersect to structure the realities of social agents' lives, and create a system of power and inequality that dominates their identities. Through respondents' experiences we see that race and culture do not always act independently, rather, they are multidimensional and sometimes act together to prohibit Black youth from being an integral part of society. In the study respondents' interviews we see that culture and race collide to other Black youth in Calgary. Although many artists such as Raja, Raz, and Gina see themselves as intelligent people, whites continue to view them as thugs, and associate Black North American culture, including Hip-hop, with negative stereotypes. As a result, race and culture infiltrate respondents' lives, and make them doubly oppressed. We now turn to an exploration of how Hip-hop can still be utilized as a tool of social inclusion.

### **Hip-hop and Social Inclusion**

From a sociological framework, it is clear that youth across the globe use various resources to foster feelings of inclusion. Many become involved with organized sports, such as hockey, or join the school band. But for youth in this study, there is *something* about Hip-hop culture that speaks to them on deeper levels than any other art form or resources.

I contend that Hip-hop culture serves as a means of inclusion for Black African and Caribbean youth. A number of themes have arisen not only to support this position, but to answer the initial research questions on the relationship between Hip-hop and social inclusion, and to provide substantive insight into the inclusion experiences of young peoples in Canada. They include: *Hip-hop and Black Identities*, *Hip-hop and Cultural Capital*, *Hip-hop and Youth Development*, *Calgary Hip-hop Community*, and *Hip-hop and Broader Society*.

### ***Hip-hop and Black Identities***

Hip-hop is not just a musical genre, it is a culture that specifically speaks to Black youth. Artists in this study believe that Hip-hop is an excellent mechanism for them to foster inclusion, because it helps them comprehend their Black identities more than any other art form. This is orchestrated in my interview with Raja. When I asked him how he became interested in Hip-hop culture he deeply reflected:

Honestly, when I picked up that first Pac<sup>2</sup> album, as I was reading so many other influential Black figures, there was no turning back from that. It engulfed me. Something came over me. I was still into athletics, but when I picked up that Pac album, and dove into the Biggie<sup>3</sup>, and Jay<sup>4</sup>, and Nas<sup>5</sup>, all these things, man. I studied what they did, how they did it, what they spoke about, how they spoke about it, and how they represented... WOW.

**Stefan:** What was this “something” that these artists represented?

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<sup>2</sup> Tupac Shakur is considered one of the greatest Hip-hop lyricists of all time. He is also known as the nephew of the Black Panther leader Assata Shakur who was imprisoned during the Black Freedom Struggle in the United States.

<sup>3</sup> “Biggie” is also known as the Notorious B.I.G, a Hip-hop artist hailing from Brooklyn, New York. Much like Tupac, fans also refer to him as one of the greatest of all time.

<sup>4</sup> “Jay” is known as Jay Z. Although many consider him a rapper, he is now considered a prestigious business mogul.

<sup>5</sup> Nas is a rapper that hails from Queens, New York, and is considered one of the most prolific lyricists of Hip-hop culture.

Raja: All of them represented the have-nots: the people that were thrown under the bus in society.

I was able to relate in a way, because of the fact that I felt I was one of those people. That is what people did to me - threw me under the bus, in a minor way. It wasn't as severe as [the rappers'] situations, but people did that to me, because I was raised around a lot of ignorant people, they did not know. And they have not seen people of my skin tone and of my nature; people eventually judged and did things that made me feel kinda inferior.

So when I heard Nas, Jay, and Pac talk about their serious circumstances, and were able to prevail through their music, and creatively putting their heart in their music, that's what I did, but in my own way.

Raja became attracted to Hip-hop because he felt that popular artists represented people he saw in himself: excluded Black youth who had been pushed unto the margins of society. He reflected on many of the issues of racism that he discussed in the exclusion section, and reminisced about how people were hostile and treated him as inferior because of the color of his skin. However, he felt he could turn to Hip-hop in times of struggle because it is an art form that creates spaces for those who are marginalized and forced “under the bus” in society. As a result, he saw himself in the music of Tupac, Biggie, and Nas, and their messages of Black love. When he put himself in their shoes, he was able to foster a sense of inclusion because he realized that he was not alone in “the struggle.” For that matter, Hip-hop opened him up to a world where he could better identify with himself and other Black people who shared similar experiences.

This analysis resonates with Walcott’s (2005) findings to argue that hip-hop opens spaces for identity making amongst Black youth to express their culture. Youth in this study appropriated hip-hop as a developmental force because it permits them to culturally express themselves. Walcott’s work particularly reflects the social experiences of Raja, as well as other

artists such as Tizzmo, Young Nuru, and Gina, who believed that hip-hop is a cultural force that encourages them to express their backgrounds, and community that is frequently discredited and overlooked. This analysis is in line with Walcott's work inasmuch as it asserts that this music enables respondents come to knowledge, because writing and rhyming provide them with tools to critically think about the world while nourishing their cultural imaginations.

Interestingly, Raja's longtime friend Tizzmo complimented his excerpt:

Stefan: How did you become interested in Hip-hop culture?

Tizzmo: I became interested in Hip-hop culture when I realized that the color of my skin makes me be treated differently.

Reason being, I wanted to know what it meant to be Black.

I realized that there was a certain disadvantage that was associated with the color of my skin. I went on a search for any empowering traits that were associated with the color of my skin.

When a young Black kid is looking for a role model, they are going to go to the most obvious one. And that was Hip-hop culture. Hip-hop gave me a model to follow.

There were artists who were more eloquent, and more sophisticated. They did not promote violence. They were from the first school of Hip-hop. It wasn't about shooting people. There were adverse conditions that were present and Hip-hop was a beacon, it was a light.

I realized that there was so many different sides to the Black image that one could embrace. I could be Hip-hop and still be eloquent, and intelligent.

Hip-hop helped me relook at the world.

Hip-hop culture helped Tizzmo grasp that many whites saw him as inferior and that his Black identity was regularly the source of ridicule. In the exclusion section, Tizzmo spoke at length of how he was, and still is, a victim of subtle and explicit racism that includes: racial

jokes, ignorant statements, and explicit harassment from coworkers and peers. He related in his interview how it was difficult for him to find resources to grasp his othered status. Luckily, this changed when he became exposed to Hip-hop. Not only does Hip-hop allow Tizzmo to comprehend that his Black identity is marginalized due to historical and contemporary racial and cultural discrimination, but it also is a tool that uplifts him from this discrimination. Tizzmo appropriated beats, rhymes and life, to find unique and beautiful qualities of Blackness. It is important to note that he utilized a particular kind of Hip-hop to do so. He did not turn to Hip-hop that promotes stereotypical images of Blackness, but rather to an era that he called “the first school of Hip-hop,” a period (the early 1990s) that is celebrated for innovation, influence, thought-provoking rhymes, and complex subject matter. He was able to foster a sense of inclusion because Hip-hop helped him learn social eloquence, which consisted of creativity and bravado. As a result, Hip-hop permitted him to reject racism and discrimination by expanding his mind on what Blackness can represent. This culture exposed him to a new sense of self-worth.

From the excerpts mentioned earlier, we learn that Hip-hop seemed to be a source of Black consciousness. Du Bois (1899) defines Black consciousness as universal knowledge about the global marginalization of Blacks that is shared by Black people around the world, regardless of their geographic location or origin, and the need to dismantle this oppression. By extension, Hip-hop exposes respondents to a source of honor, which enables their Black identities to navigate their social world with confidence.

There is also evidence that suggests that respondent’s use this art form as an academic institution that provided them knowledge on Blackness that their schools should have offered them. Respondents appropriated Hip-hop culture to learn as if they were in a classroom. This

arose in my interview with Cheya. When I asked him whether Hip-hop influenced him as a youth, he recalled:

It helped me relate to a lot of problems. For example, J Cole<sup>6</sup> was a teacher of mine. Kendrick<sup>7</sup> was a teacher of mine. That's how it was.

In high school we had our teachers. They taught us our subjects: Math, Science and English, ecetera. Those were things I knew I needed to graduate with in order to receive my diploma, but they weren't things I wanted to know about life.

So J Cole would teach me about socially aware topics. For example, J Cole taught me about domestic abuse. Hip-hop opened my mind into a different form of understanding. When Kendrick taught me the same things, I would listen to it, because I knew he went through what I am going through. That's why I say that rappers were my teachers.

Unlike his high school teachers, prominent rappers had influenced Cheya significantly inasmuch as they have exposed him to deeper levels of Black consciousness and identity. Much of what his teachers sought to teach him was inapplicable to his social experiences. This was simply because Cheya's teachers were not in tune with Blackness. They were middle-class, white people who did not understand the intricacies of being Black. As a result, Cheya experienced a social dissonance between the knowledge they promoted and his own.

Cheya's thoughts resonate with the research that was discussed earlier in this thesis on Black immigrant youth and educational institutions (Dei, 2012; Madibbo, 2008). From these works we learned that Black youth face disadvantages that prohibit their ability to learn in

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<sup>6</sup> J Cole is a contemporary rapper that is known for his rhymes on racial and gender struggles.

<sup>7</sup> "Kendrick" is known as Kendrick Lamar, a Compton native who is a rapper and an activist. He speaks on issues that revolve around the Black Liberation Struggle. Recently President Obama invited him to the Whitehouse to discuss matters that involve youth inclusion.

various educational environments from primary school to university. The information that Black youth need to acquire about Black history and culture is underrepresented in the mainstream curriculum, and the youth are often times unable to connect with teachers and peers. In order to gain a source of consciousness, Cheya appropriated Hip-hop culture as a form of curriculum, rather than rely solely on his teachers. As a result, he directed his attention to artists such as J Cole and Kendrick Lamar, who speak in a language that resonates with his heart:

**Stefan:** What language did these artists speak that your teachers could not?

**Cheya:** Being Black.

These guys go through feelings of separation and segregation with other cultures and because...

What I am trying to say is...

Kendrick for example, speaks to Black people getting out of hard situations. I feel like it is not as much [about] preaching to Blacks about doing this or that, but [saying] we have to stick together in terms of moving in an upward direction. We need to move toward a positive, to a better future. We can never forget our history, but we can move on from that history. That history makes us stick together.

Hip-hop spoke to Cheya in a language that his teachers could not: being Black. This is the language of those who have been excluded and pushed to the margins of society. Compared to his teachers, rappers provided him with knowledge that enlightened his identity. Not only did this help him understand his sense of self, but made him realize how essential unity is amongst Black peoples. Through this culture, Cheya learned to strengthen his Black identity, overcome racism, and prosper in a world that does not fully accept him.

I argue that this analysis supports Ibrahim's (2011b) findings on how youth are able to use Hip-hop to cultivate knowledge similar to an educational environment. Through Ibrahim's lens, we see that Cheya saw Hip-hop as a form of curriculum, one that he appropriated to learn about issues such as race, class, and domestic abuse. Similar to Ibrahim's participants, Cheya treated Hip-hop as a space, much like a classroom, where he could invest in his learning, and raise awareness on vital identity topics.

As such, respondents first became interested in Hip-hop culture because they related to the messages of popular artists who spoke to them on deeper emotional levels than any other art form. These artists not only helped the study respondents to understand why they felt excluded because of the color of their skin, but also challenged them to discover how to cope with racism and discrimination, insofar as Hip-hop helped them to grasp their othered status and to envision how they could uplift themselves and one another.

This analysis relates heavily to how Satzewich and Liidakis (2013) theorize culture. They argue that culture is a set of dynamic social processes and practices, and that it is a collective response of socially constituted individuals to their ever changing external conditions. Respondents in this study advocated that Hip-hop culture completely defines their identities. They believe that Hip-hop culture contains a set of values and beliefs that are shared cohesively among members of the culture, insofar as Hip-hop is the collective expression of their souls. Respondents organize themselves around this art form, because they feel it best represents their Black identities. As a result, they use Hip-hop as a means to flourish, and to position themselves in the world.

In addition, this analysis is connected to Memmi (2000) and Dei (2012)'s thoughts on how social agents enter into a struggle against racism when they are marginalized. The results of this analysis show how youth appropriate Hip-hop culture to express their racial identities, which often encounter subtle and explicit forms of discrimination. In regards to Memmi (2000), I maintain that artists use Hip-hop to "swing the pendulum back," because they tap into a Black art form to celebrate their difference and marginalized status. For example, artists such as Tizzmo use their rhymes to redefine Blackness as beautiful and eloquent, rather than underprivileged. Through Dei (2012), we see that artists utilize Hip-hop to un-silence the "silence of race," and express their Black identities. Hip-hop is therefore re-presented as a mechanism of anti-racist action, whereby artists target forms of oppression, and express their disdain for racism. Artists such as Mikado and Raja deploy Hip-hop practices such as writing and rhyming to contest their marginalized status and challenge the forces that make them feel different for the wrong reasons. Through Dei and Memmi's lens, we see that Hip-hop is a means to foster inclusion and challenge the structures that marginalize Black identities. We will now discuss how respondents utilized the art form as a means of *cultural capital*, as discussed by Bourdieu (1986) to fight discrimination.

### *Hip-hop and Cultural Capital*

Respondents utilize Hip-hop as a form of cultural capital in both the objectified and embodied realms. In the objectified realm, it is clear that the respondents appropriate cultural resources such as pens, pages, microphones, and beats to develop self-merit. However, in the embodied realm, the youth use these cultural resources to share knowledge with others, which

helps them nurture people's minds. This was exemplified in the interview with Young Nuru when he opened up about why he became interested in the culture:

Pac touched me in certain ways. His messages about not having a dad around... Pac helped me understand more. What happened was that Tupac became my father figure for all these things he would say. I took it and really looked up to him so much. When I started listening to him, I started feeling super true.

I began having things to say. I began having people hear what I wanted to say.

After a while I recited [my rhymes] in front of my friends and I thought they were really good. I said to myself, "Maybe I should put them on the net and see what happens." I ended up putting them out and it never felt better than for people to say, "Wow I feel that."

Tupac exposed Young Nuru to a source of truth that he thought was unimaginable. As Young Nuru listened to Tupac's rhymes, he found his voice and strived to express himself in a similar fashion. He started to write all day about the difficulties that are highlighted in the exclusion section of this thesis. In turn, this art form became a cultural tool that he appropriated to share his Black identity with others. When he began to share this side of himself, he was better able to connect with other people, who in turn started to understand him on deeper levels and accept the messages he conveys in his music. As demonstrated in the interview with Raja, these messages notably include education about Blackness. When I asked him what made him transition from a listener of Hip-hop to a participant he stated:

It was because of the influence it had on other people. I am not going to lie.

I can literally educate people. Not only about my experiences but about the Black experience as well.

When I started rapping to Nelly or Pac, rapping songs people knew, when they heard me, I saw that it had an effect on others. When I started to write my own, and relate it to what was going on around us, and my history, and [to] my peers' experience, it was huge. It was influential.

Raja utilized Hip-hop to energize his Black identity, and to assert to others his views on Blackness. He used Hip-hop as a cultural power by educating audiences on Black identities. This happened because, at a young age, he saw the effect that rapping had on his school peers and realized that he could appropriate the microphone, as an orator of Black knowledge. Raja deployed music to provide others with insight on the struggles that are faced by Black peoples, much like the popular artists he listened to as a child had done. Before he began to rhyme, Raja noted that some of his white counterparts treated him passively, and with little praise. However, when he began to rhyme many of them no longer continued to view him as a stereotypical Black male, but as someone who is beautiful and content with life. He witnessed that this culture captivated them on deep emotional levels, because some of them began to appreciate what he truly had to say.

The aforementioned analysis relates extensively to Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital, and how immigrant youth are able appropriate capital to resist their marginalized status. Bourdieu holds that cultural capital is the "accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status" (p. 244). Black African and Caribbean youths are exposed to specific cultural resources that they have at their disposal. In a Bourdieuan sense, these unique resources generate very specific social practices such as writing, rhyming and performing.

In regards to objectified cultural capital, Bourdieuan scholars believe that it constitutes a class's skill, clothes, manners, materials, and credentials. These factors help social agents forge a

sense of power and status. Within the orbit of Hip-hop culture, the objectified state encompasses turntables, microphones, beats, and the music of Tupac, and the Notorious BIG. For respondents such as Young Nuru, the most important of these cultural resources are pens and pages, because they help Black youth express freedom, celebrate their Black identities, and use their words as weapons against exclusion. In addition, artists such as Lotus and Raz utilize these resources to empower themselves amidst their hardships. Many artists maintained that when they employ these tools they are able to make their voices heard within a world that overlooks and marginalizes their Blackness and their Hip-hop art.

The embodied state of cultural capital explains how agents cultivate their resources to foster a sense of self-advancement. In the context of this study, this form of capital is most evident when artists embrace Hip-hop to forge a cultural knowledge that empowers their Black identities. This is knowledge that they own, and is used not only to uplift themselves and their Black peers, but also to educate others on Blackness. This is most exemplified by the social experiences of Young Nuru and Raja, who both believe that Hip-hop is an appropriate mechanism to generate knowledge, express their culture, and raise awareness of others. When they engage with the art, they begin to take stands on issues and to use the culture to overcome obstacles similar to popular Black artists they listened to as children. In addition, they appropriate the art to generate and share Black consciousness. Through Bourdieu's lens, respondents appropriate Hip-hop to create a set of dispositions that change their lives for the better. Writing becomes a social practice that enables respondents to uplift themselves, and educate audiences on what it means to be Black. As this happens, they produce feelings of self-distinction and generate social recognition.

In this section we learned that Hip-hop is an excellent mechanism for youth to foster inclusion, because it celebrates the essence of their Black identities. Rather than join the school band, or play organized sports, Hip-hop helps them to comprehend why they are excluded based on the color of their skin, and to engage proactively and confidently with mainstream society. We also observed how this music best communicates the Black experience. Artists such as Kendrick Lamar, Tupac, and Nas not only help Black youth to understand their social positions, but also to expand their ideas on what it means to be Black. In some instances, Hip-hop acts as a form of Black consciousness that is unrecognized in academic classrooms. Another key theme that arose in the data discussed here was that youth appropriate Hip-hop for developmental purposes.

### ***Hip-hop and Youth Development***

Every youth in this study acknowledged that they utilize Hip-hop as a mechanism for personal growth in their social lives. This occurs in a number of realms. First, Hip-hop is used by youth as an outlet to cope with the frustration that is caused by their racial and cultural struggles. Second, Hip-hop is appropriated by youth to create and recreate a sense of self-awareness. Through this culture, youth are able to comprehend their self-worth, and find purpose in their daily lives. Lastly, Hip-hop provides youth with a platform for free expression. As a result, they gain a sense of self-control in a world where they have a clear vision of the bigger picture.

### ***Hip-hop as a Coping Outlet***

Although respondents reported that there have been times when they felt alone; they believe that Hip-hop enables them to deal and cope with how they were othered. Hip-hop became an outlet; one that youth used to seek comfort and develop their sense of self. This is reflected in accounts of Tizzmo's life:

When I was younger, before I started rapping... I had no way to vent my anger. If I was feeling something I would get in a fight or do something to get in trouble. That didn't keep me in school. I don't know when I first wrote a rap, but what I do remember is that it was anger I was trying to express. Hip-hop gave me an outlet for that anger. It was a way I could get that negativity out, without being destructive. It was a creative way to vent my anger. The fact that I could turn something negative into a positive creation was addictive.

Then my life changed.

Interestingly, many artists acknowledged that if it were not for this culture, they would not know what to do with their angst. Respondents used Hip-hop to deal with the mixed emotions of being Black, and Hip-hop artists. For Tizzmo, Hip-hop became essential to his sense of self because it was used as an outlet to express his inner turmoil. Not only was he frustrated with his social world, but also, for extended periods of time he dealt with his issues in destructive ways. However, much like other respondents, Hip-hop helped him channel his anger into something beautiful: pens and pages were used by respondents to soak up their anger and cope with their marginalized status. Respondents took what they felt they could not change (i.e., racism and cultural discrimination) and turned those frustrations into aspects of their lives that contributed to the development of a positive sense of self. These experiences were described by Gina, the registered nurse, who in the exclusion section discussed how she continually faced racial barriers from co-workers, peers, and audiences, she stated:

Music is my therapy. Once it hits you feel no pain. Music doesn't judge me. Music doesn't make me feel I am not worthy. The beat doesn't judge me. Hip Hop is a tool that has to be used.

I have gone through a lot of stuff, and I find that a lot of artists are much wounded. They say a hurt heart makes good for your art. It is the outlet I can express.

I read my own lyrics and listen to my own songs sometimes when I feel low and want to pick myself up. I look at the paper and say to myself "Damn girl, you wrote that? How did you do that? Who were you when you wrote this?" As a result, I put my mind back into it, and focus. It makes me want to leave a mark in this world. A good mark.

I wake up and want to do [Hip-hop music]. It makes me realize I am worth something. There's days where I wake up feeling depressed and I tell myself, "let me go to that open mic, let me go and reconnect." I found a totally different confidence.

Hip-hop helps Gina because it is a tool that takes away forms of pain that have weighed her down. The culture helps her heal when she engages in the music making process. Whenever she immerses herself in the culture, she enters into a space where she feels she won't be overlooked. In the loneliest time of Gina's life, she found Hip-hop. When she began to participate in the art, she found a source of worth that enabled her to cope with her social difficulties. It took her in at her lowest of moments to recreate her identity into someone powerful beyond existence. Thus, Gina found a new Gina, one that fostered a new type of confidence that she previously did not have. Her excerpt resembles the experiences of other respondents who also appropriate Hip-hop to find their place in the world. Artists such as Young Nuru and Adreama echoed Gina's thoughts and believe that Hip-hop creates a site where they can express their true selves without ridicule from the outside world. As a result, Hip-hop

represents a source of freedom that enables them to cope with what weighs them down in their social lives.

In the analysis presented here, we learn that youth use Hip-hop for development purposes because it helps them cope. From previous sections, we understand that artists felt a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness before they came into contact with the culture. Many expressed that they had no creative outlets to vent their frustrations and anger. However, with time they encountered Hip-hop and its power. All respondents acknowledged that Hip-hop music acts as a source of comfort that helps them feel accomplished. However, this is one of many benefits in which Hip-hop is appropriated for developmental purposes.

#### *Hip-hop and Self-awareness*

In another realm, youth use Hip-hop for development purposes because it helps them create a sense of self-awareness. Through this culture, artists explore their self-worth, human potential, and realize what they have to offer the world. An example of this is rapper Young Nuru. Throughout his life he encountered massive difficulties, especially when he moved from Ontario to Alberta, as previously alluded to in the exclusion section. When he arrived from Toronto, he noted that he was exposed to more white people who critiqued him on his dress, speech, and complexion. In school, he was labeled as rambunctious and was continually separated from his peers. In his interview, he discussed in detail how his life changed when he started to participate in Hip-hop culture:

Young Nuru: Hip-hop set me on the right track.

Once I started to participate, my life started to go up.

My mom was super proud of me, as before she was always mad wanting me to get my grades up. Now she says I am doing really well. I made friends now that are not racist. They are my best friends that I can see for the rest of my life.

I really started meeting people. My life started happening and flourishing. Things stopped being negative, but started being positive. I started being positive. I started to think differently. I changed myself. And the work ethic I put towards Rap - I learned.

Stefan: How was it that Hip-hop helped you cultivate a dedicated work ethic?

Young Nuru: It made me realize the hard work! So I applied that ethic to my workplace. My actual job. And I f...g killed it. I got a promotion within a few weeks. I worked so hard at rapping, and I just wanted to get better. I applied that mind state to the real world. It taught me a lesson that my dad would have probably taught me... about tolerance and how to handle people, and doing business, and interacting with people.

Young Nuru's excerpt clearly exemplifies how Hip-hop has helped all study respondents create a level of self-awareness they did not have before they encountered the culture. Before he was immersed in the art, he struggled with school, and was socially awkward. However, much like many of the study respondents, when he began to rap a number of significant changes occurred in his life. Hip-hop permitted him - and other respondents - tap into their creative energies. They not only became more aware of themselves, but also of what they could offer the world. As a result, Hip-hop is used to help them find their inner potential. This source of awareness exposes Young Nuru and the rest of the respondents not only to the beauty of their own voices, but to a dedicated work ethic.

Many respondents charged that Hip-hop helps them gain a sense of self-awareness because they grasp their various emotions and turn them into something melodic for others. Hip-hop provides them with a level of emotional control that they did not have prior to making

music. Many study respondents take situations that they feel they have no grip over and turn them into something harmonic for others. Through the testimonials of the study respondents we realize that Hip-hop permits them to understand a level of self-worth that they previously could not tap into. As a result, this culture allows artists to gain feelings of inclusion because they are able to see themselves as invaluable to their social world.

### *Hip-hop and Freedom of Expression*

Respondents reported that Hip-hop enables them to express themselves freely. They often explained to me in our interviews that their daily lives of work and/or school do not help them grapple with issues such as racism or other forms of discrimination. As a result, youth rely on melody and rhythm to freely express why and how they are frustrated. Respondents feel that their messages are better received by audiences when they use music to communicate their disdain for topics that revolve around marginalization. Emeer particularly expressed this:

Stefan: Does Hip-hop help you become the person you want to be?

Emeer: Right now I feel like I have two different lives. I have my work life and then I have my Hip-hop life. I think that Hip-hop as a whole helps you become that person that you want to be.

You're expressing your inner self. It comes from your mind and your soul, and what you went through, whether it's what you see or smell, or listen to or touch. You can express all your senses by words. And that's the reason why it lets you be what you want to be. You use everything as a whole.

With Hip-hop it is a full embracement of expression.

Hip-hop is oxygen.

Emeer seems to use Hip-hop to express the inner workings of his heart freely. Through this culture, Emeer explores the various emotions that are trapped inside him, and feels that music lets him find a source of wholeness, more so than his insurance job. As a result, he believes that Hip-hop is a source of life. Interestingly, Cheya added to Emeer's views on how Hip-hop is the best means to express himself freely:

Cheya: What made me attracted to [Hip-hop], was that everyone in Hip-hop culture expressed their struggle for life. That's what I liked about Hip-hop. You had the freedom of expression. The freedom to say that you came from here and you are trying to go here.

When I make my music, I make my own beats. When I sit there at night, I will think about a time, like my cousin getting locked up [in jail], I have a real conflict. I go into the studio and rap: "free my cousin [name], I hope you turn into a Christian." I go through those conflicts, of being at the bottom and learning not to complain about it.

Growing up I never really had the confidence in voicing my opinion. It wasn't until I started performing, and getting crowd reactions that I felt that my voice really meant something to a certain amount of people. [Hip-hop] helped me because I can jump on a song and say exactly how I feel. I can listen to a beat and feel so at peace.

Through Emeer and Cheya's thoughts we see that Hip-hop can be used to freely express one's ideas, and also to document their struggle for existence. Hip-hop is a means to discuss one's limitations and aspirations. As a result, Cheya became attracted to Hip-hop because it represents a source of freedom, and permits him to express himself in ways he previously could not. An example of this is when he wrote about his cousin, who he hopes will find faith while imprisoned. This portion of Cheya's excerpt is important to discuss, because it highlights another realm of inequality that Black youth face within Canada's justice system. In the last 10 years,

there has been a 70% increase in the number of Black Canadians who have been incarcerated (Mcintyre, 2016). Although Black Canadians comprise 2.5% of Canada's population, they represent 10% of those who are incarcerated (Statistics Canada, 2016). This makes them the second most incarcerated peoples next to Aboriginals. Unfortunately, this has impacted Black communities across Canada, including Cheya, who continually keeps his cousin in his mind when he writes his rhymes.

Hip-hop provides Cheya with a platform to express himself. Before he was immersed in the culture his voice was limited and unrecognized; however, when he started to rhyme he felt boundless. He appropriates Hip-hop as if it were a blog or essay, where he can say how he feels without holding back. As a result, Hip-hop provides him with peace because it helps him get his messages into public consciousness.

From this analysis we see that within modern Canadian society, Hip-hop permits artists to foster inclusion because it creates quality experiences to confront the challenges of the world, and develop their capacity to immerse themselves into our social fabric. As a result, Hip-hop helps artists to reach their full potential, in a world where they feel they are not accepted and unable to be themselves. We will now discuss how the analysis thus far relates to previous literature on Hip-hop and youth development. To do so we will focus back on the ideas of West (2006), Dyson (2010), Perry (2004), and Asante (2009).

I assert that aspects of West's (2006) thoughts partially intersect with respondents' social experiences. In the literature review, West holds that Hip-hop is inclusionary, because it enables youth to reconnect with their true selves, which were previously oppressed by dominant social institutions. Furthermore, he states that when youth become exposed to Hip-hop culture, it helps

them cope with how dominant social structures marginalize their identities. I contend that West's ideas particularly arose in the sub theme: *Hip-hop as a coping outlet*. Similar to West's research, youth in my study encountered structural barriers that altered their sense of history, and left them with an improper idea of their virtue. Hip-hop became an outlet; one that respondents appropriate to seek comfort and develop their sense of self. For artists such as Gina, Hip-hop is essential to their identity because it is used as an outlet to express their inner turmoil. Through West's lens, Hip-hop captivates youth's hearts, and enables them to deal with their internal suffering. Artists take what they feel they cannot change (i.e., racism, cultural discrimination) and turn those things into aspects of their lives where they develop a positive sense of identity. For artists such as Sultan and Tizzmo, Hip-hop equates therapy, because they take what seems hopeless, and create a life that is felicitous, and filled with grandeur.

Dyson (2010) argues that youth are able to foster inclusion because Hip-hop permits them to tap into a source of human potential that is absent in their daily lives. I find that his thoughts relate heavily to the sub theme: *Hip-hop and self-awareness*. In this theme respondents spoke at length about how their culture empowers them to explore their self-worth, realize their human potential, and recognize what they have to offer the world. This was most evident through the social experiences of Young Nuru, who stated that his life significantly changed when he absorbed beats and rhymes. Young Nuru and other artists echoed that they foster a sense of inclusion when they rhyme, because they are able to take complex emotions and turn what they feel is agonizing into something that can be changed for the better. As a result, Hip-hop permits them to tap into their human potential, and find a way out of social neglect.

Perry (2004) charges that Hip-hop culture helps youth develop a tenacious voice that can be used to express their inner selves. I find that her thoughts relate heavily to the sub theme: *Hip-hop and Freedom of Expression*. In the analysis, we learn that youth engage with Hip-hop culture because it is an art form that holds the most necessary ingredients to reveal their souls. Through Perry's lens, respondents such as Emeer and Cheya believe that Hip-hop best represents the foundation of their spirit, and allows them to tap into their creative energies. Youth foster inclusion because Hip-hop helps them relate to themselves and to each other, and serves as a resource to share their racial and cultural struggles.

Lastly, I contend that Asante's (2009) thoughts on Hip-hop, youth development and social inclusion also relate heavily to the respondents' experiences in this study. In the literature review Asante argues that Hip-hop helps youth develop positive identities, because it permits them to freely transmit their voices between one another. I contend that his thoughts also relate to the sub theme: *Hip-hop and Freedom of expression*. Respondents believe that Hip-hop is a means to project their voices freely without being judged by others. Through Asante's lens, Black African and Caribbean youths are able to emancipate themselves from mental slavery when they are exposed to pens, pads, microphones, and other Hip-hop orientated resources. In addition, respondents freely evoke their angst, and have their messages better received by the public when they use music to communicate their inner struggles, as compared to other mediums such as Facebook. As a result, beats and rhymes are employed by respondents to articulate their social worlds.

Through the aforementioned discussion we can see that the theories of Perry, Dyson, Asante, and West relate heavily to the social experiences of my study respondents and how Hip-

hop is used as a tool of youth development and social inclusion. Not only did we see how my Canadian data converged with existing scholarly work, but I was also able to provide practical examples to illustrate their theories.

### ***Hip-hop and Belonging***

Throughout my interviews respondents often discussed that Hip-hop helps them foster feelings of belonging. They often argued that had it not been for the culture, they may have experienced a sense of loneliness. As a researcher, I was not surprised to have this revealed in my data. Hip-hop was given birth by the energies of oppressed Black youth who lacked acceptance by mainstream American culture. As a result, Hip-hop acts as a mansion that provides rooms for social agents from all walks of life. It represents my study respondents' spiritual potluck, where they cultivate a deep sense of belonging not only in their own Hip-hop networks, but also in Canada's broader society.

### ***Calgary's Hip-hop Community***

Respondents foster a sense of inclusion through Calgary's Hip-hop community. This community comprises artists, graffiti writers, club promoters, dancers, and radio stations. Over the years I have seen this community flourish, and currently view it as an ecology that incorporates peoples from a variety of racial backgrounds. I believe that Calgary's Hip-hop community permits respondents to feel unified, share each other's struggles, and offer invaluable support for each other's existence.

First, respondents echoed that Calgary's Hip-hop community helps them foster a sense of inclusion because they are able to bridge bonds with one another. Tizzmo acknowledged: "As a

member of the Hip-hop community, I am a part of this bigger collective. I am part of this group of people who are also going through different types of situations. Yes, it has facilitated this sense of belonging.” For Tizzmo, Calgary’s Hip-hop community represents a collective, a group of artistic agents that come from all walks of life. In Tizzmo’s interview, he discussed in detail how the scene is unified. He stated that Calgary’s scene is less about individuals, and more a group of artists that uplift one another regardless of racial and ethnic lines. Tizzmo’s thoughts resonated with other artists, who believe that Calgary’s Hip-hop community helps them foster inclusion because it creates spaces where everyone can feel accepted, regardless of the various messages they promote on the microphone.

Many noted that they are able to tear down racial and ethnic barriers and unify in a melodic way. As a result, the Hip-hop community creates social spaces where unity is present between respondents and with others who are racially different from them. This particularly arose in my interview with Rocka, who believes that Calgary’s Hip-hop community is inclusive because it brings people together from various racial backgrounds. She stated: “Hip-hop culture in Calgary isn’t judged by race. [Name of artist] is not Black, and [the artist] is allowed to be in our Hip-hop culture. I feel like I can express myself in the community, because no one is judging you.” For Rocka, there are no strict rules that one must follow to enter this scene. She believes that Calgary’s Hip-hop community is rooted in peace and that its primary dialect includes beats and rhymes. As discussed previously, the earliest Hip-hop communities were given birth by Black African American and Caribbean youth within urban ethnic environments. Today these communities transcend race to comprise various ethnic and racial groups throughout the globe. This enables respondents, such as Rocka, to build ties with fellow break-dancers, DJ’s and

graffiti artists who are white, Native, and Asian. As a result, respondents can foster a sense of inclusion within Calgary's Hip-hop community because it creates multiracial spaces where they can feel they are not stigmatized.

In the 1980's Calgary's Hip-hop community was predominantly comprised of Black and some white youth who lived in the Northwest and Northeast quarters of the city. This somewhat changed during the 1990's with the influx of Filipino immigrant families. From the early 2000's until now, Calgary's Hip-hop community continues to become more multiracial as the years progress. At this moment there is much uncertainty about whether the attitudes of white Calgarians toward the culture will shift. In this context, an essential question is: If Calgary's Hip-hop community increasingly becomes multiracial, does it change how Calgary whites perceive the culture? Personally, I argue no. Hip-hop continues to be viewed as a Black art, regardless of who occupies the culture. When I speak with some white Hip-hop artists, they tell me that they are somewhat apprehensive to let people in their workplace know that they DJ, rap, or breakdance. This somewhat provides insight on how Hip-hop continues to be stereotyped as a thuggish culture within mainstream Calgary.

Regardless, through Tizzmo and Rocka's stories, we see that respondents are able to bridge bonds with one another because they unify through rhythm and poetry. Artists are able to sustain these relationships because they view themselves through the eyes of each other. As a result, these bonds permit them status, recognition, friendship, love, and alliances.

Second, respondents felt that Calgary's Hip-hop community helps them foster a sense of inclusion because it creates spaces where everyone can share each other's struggles. Agents not only bridge bonds and unite to share music, but help one another overcome life's difficulties. All

respondents reported that Calgary's scene represents a source of therapy that can be used to cope with their racial and cultural struggles. In a way, Calgary's Hip-hop community represents a place to escape, one where they can cultivate peace between each other. Examples of this arose in my interviews with Rani and Young Nuru:

Rani: If you are aspiring to become a producer, or mix and record or create a studio, you go out and you are in a room filled with artists that are looking to get their frustrations and angst out! Not only do you meet people with their aspirations, you meet future partners, family, and relationships. You meet them in positive states, and you both push for something, and you can help each other attain it.

Young Nuru: After I found rap... I found that I had something that I could really push towards.

I thought I had nothing in high school.

I found a completely new group of friends that are now my best friends [and I] can't see me getting old without [them]. That is where I fit in. Now I dress the way I dress and my friends think I look dope, back then [classmates] used to think "why are you wearing that?"

I belong here. These are my friends.

Rani fosters inclusion when he is surrounded by others who share his struggles and embrace his existence. Similar to Rani, many respondents also believe that they are able to foster a sense of inclusion because they rely on each other to bear the uncertainties in their lives. Not only does this community help them push each other to be better people, but it also helps them handle their individual troubles. As a result, Calgary's Hip-hop scene creates spaces of inclusion and love, where everyone feels accepted for who they truly are; Rani's thoughts are complemented by the statements of Young Nuru.

Earlier in Young Nuru's interview he often spoke about how teachers and peers treated him in high school. He expressed that his classmates often critiqued how he dressed, spoke, and carried himself. However, in the excerpt presented here, he explains that this changed when he started to surround himself with those who embraced his identity. Much like the other study respondents, Young Nuru charged that when he involves himself within Calgary's Hip-hop scene, he grows inextinguishable social bonds that offer him a type of support that transcends music. He compared his networks before, and after, he became absorbed within Calgary's Hip-hop scene, and feels his identity is more complete when he surrounds himself with other artists.

From Rani and Young Nuru's testimonials we see that Calgary's Hip-hop community offers artists a source of support. Not only do they bridge bonds, but they also share each other's existence, and provide love to one another's personal lives. To sum up, my data suggests that respondents are able to foster a sense of inclusion within Calgary's Hip-hop scene.

### *Broader Canadian Society*

My data also suggests that respondents appropriate Hip-hop to bridge bonds with Canada's broader society. Artists believed that they use their voices to connect with agents outside of their Hip-hop community. This was expressed by Dynast:

[Hip-hop] provides me with a voice. It gives me an opinion to orchestrate to people. I can use music to get my message out there.

People respect me when they can listen to a song and relate to it. They come up to me and say "This track did this to me."

I think that gives me a belonging, a feeling of belonging.

I am very shy, and a quiet person. When I get on the stage I am loud, I can hear myself, and people can hear me. That is something

I want to feel each and every time. It is a good feeling being on stage. That is what I love. [Hip-hop] is the best way for people to hear me, and what attracted people to listen to me and pay attention.

Dynast uses Hip-hop to voice his concerns to Calgarians who he does not normally come into contact with. He cultivates inclusion when his rhymes and identity resonate to the ears of others. When he touches strangers with his art, he better understands his place in the world and in broader Canadian society. When I interviewed Dynast I found that he was the shyest person I had ever met. It was not until I saw this soft-spoken gentleman perform that I realized his power. Like Dynast, many artists echoed that they feel they are better received when their messages contain melody and rhythm.

As such, this culture enables artists to cultivate a number of skills that they utilize to immerse themselves into Canada's social fabric and can be applied in their daily social lives. Hip-hop helps participants cultivate essential social skills that allow them to immerse themselves into Canada's social fabric and communicate with people who he considers strangers. Cheya said: "Performing Hip-hop helped me build communication skills. Now I can talk to a stranger about a certain topic, and tell them exactly how I feel. It is a matter of problem solving." In addition, Emeer stated: "Hip-hop is one of the biggest network keys". A clearer picture of this idea is presented in the interview with Aiania, who believes that when she appropriates Hip-hop culture, she build stronger ties to Canadian society:

**Stefan:** Has Hip-hop helped you build connections?

**Aiania:** If you can belong here [Calgary Hip-hop community], then you can belong in the bigger picture [Canadian society]. You have to start somewhere. Because I belong here I know I belong in the bigger picture.

Stefan: How so?

Aiania: Because I am successful here [Calgary Hip-hop], in this scene, that I know I can take what this scene has taught me, and take these experiences, and I can incorporate that into the bigger mainstream culture. I can take the tools. Even on a social aspect. How I interact with other artists, and people who are fans, and take those experiences I have learned, just as small as a show and I get off stage and someone says “Oh my god you are awesome, where can I get your info?” Taking that and learning from it. They are learning blocks to prepare me for the bigger picture. It’s teaching me for the big CEO position.

Aiania learns necessary communication skills when she engages with Hip-hop culture. Although she can meet others who love Hip-hop, the communication skills she gains from the music enable her come into contact with resourceful social agents in the broader Canadian society. Aiania views Hip-hop as a connection point, one where she networks with those in very powerful positions such as business owners, promoters, and other popular artists. Furthermore, Aiania and other respondents are able to take advantage of their Hip-hop networks because they permit the artists to learn a set of essential marketing skills that help promote themselves and their craft. The more networks they have within broader society, the better the opportunities that will cross their path. Aiania felt that she is able to take what she learns within her Hip-hop networks, and apply those skills to the “bigger picture,” a metaphor she uses to refer to Canada’s broader society. Within the city Aiania is known as one of the very few artists who manages her social media accounts, edits her music videos, and travels throughout North America. In the networking realm, Hip-hop has helped her express herself unequivocally and build communication skills, where she feels she can attain a very powerful position in Canadian society.

From this analysis we see that respondents appropriate Hip-hop to foster inclusion into broader Canadian society in two realms. In the first, Hip-hop helps respondents build a voice that they can use to project to Calgarians who are not involved within the city's Hip-hop scene. As a DJ I have personally witnessed how artists connect with mothers, oil executives, and sports teams who randomly come to Hip-hop shows. In the second, Hip-hop enables artists to build a set of social skills that they use in their everyday lives outside their artistic communities. These skills include: effective communication, networking, public speaking, receiving feedback, a dedicated work ethic, writing proficiently, teamwork, and personal drive. As a result, Hip-hop is a tool, much like organized sports, used by youth to gain skills that can be deployed in their daily lives. We will now discuss how the theme *Hip-hop and Belonging* relates to previous theory and literature.

I hold that the analysis in the subtheme *Calgary's Hip-hop Community* relates heavily to the works of Bourdieu. In particular, I find that respondents are able to forge a type of social capital when they unite in their own Hip-hop communities. Bourdieu (1986) argues that social capital comprises durable networks and institutional relations that provide social groups with status and recognition. In addition, he holds that within these defined networks, groups cultivate value and benefits because they receive love, cooptation, and collective authority. Similarly, this thesis explains how respondents create their own Hip-hop centered networks in order to foster a sense of group inclusion amongst one another. Rather than excelling through social networks such as fraternities, guilds, and boards of directors, Black African and Caribbean youth's social capital comprises their "sistahs", "brothas", break dance crews, DJ's, and fellow rappers. These social networks provide respondents, "cooptation, friendship, love, association, and thereby

[provide] the principle of all durable alliances and connections” (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 5). Within these communities, respondents support each other’s existence, and create their own source of unity. Artists such as Tizzmo, Rani, and Rocka believe that these networks are unbreakable because they help them to overcome their personal difficulties, and share each other’s struggles. As a result, they use melody and rhythm to conglomerate, which permits them to create a collective power that they did not have before they were immersed within the culture.

In addition, Bourdieu and his work on social capital converge heavily with the subtheme *Broader Canadian Society*. Bourdieu (1987) contends that social networks permit agents to develop a set of skills that affords them recognition and authority in their social world. Although Calgary’s Hip-hop scene offers artists love and peace, they are also able to gain a set of skills that help them flourish in Canada’s broader society. I argue that these social capital skills permit respondents to flourish in their own community, and also to climb social ladders in broader society. This is most evident for Aiania and Cheya, who believe that Hip-hop culture helps them become more business orientated, where they can: market themselves to potential employers, think critically in their workplace, present complex information in a coherent manner, and receive promotions. As a result, I contend that Black African and Caribbean immigrant youth can also foster inclusion through Hip-hop because it provides them with social capital skills to advance themselves in the larger society. Although the work of Bourdieu can be applied to this analysis, it is also important to reflect on the previous studies on Hip-hop and social inclusion.

I find that the analysis in the sub theme *Calgary’s Hip-hop Community* resonates with the experiences of Schneiderman’s (2014) work on the Hip-hop nation of Uganda. His study and my findings converge to show that youth use Hip-hop as an inclusionary device because it helps

them create and sustain spaces of belonging where they can express themselves collectively. Similar to Schneiderman's work, I find that youth in my research create their own type of *Hip-hop nation* where they can fuel social exchanges, rhythmic networks, and share love, peace and friendship. Much like *Hip-hop nation*, respondents described spaces of possibility that comprise venues in Calgary, where they cultivate peace, share unity, and support one another's struggles and existence. Similar to Ugandan youth, artists such as Tizzmo and Rani stated that when they enter into these spaces they feel that they are a part of a bigger collective where they can reach their full potential. By using a microphone, or dancing on a floor, Ugandan youth and the respondents in this study not only build connections, but design spaces of possibility.

Furthermore, the described experiences of artists in the theme *Calgary Hip-hop Community* also contribute to existing literature (Kellerer, 2015; Manzo & Potts, 2013; Sheffield, 2011; Morgan & Warren, 2011) on Aboriginal youth and Hip-hop. In these studies, scholars contend that Aboriginal youth cultivate their own ethnic Hip-hop communities when they face forms of marginalization. I am able to contribute to this body of research, because I found that Black youth in Calgary foster a sense of inclusion within their Hip-hop communities that are comprised of various cultural and racial backgrounds. Examples of this are particularly derived from Rocka, and my own DJ life, in the sense that we can foster a sense of peace amongst our melodic brothers and sisters regardless of their racial and ethnic creeds. Compared to previous research on Aboriginal Hip-hop communities, this thesis suggests that youth are able to immerse themselves into a community that is racially and ethnically diverse, and comprises Black, white, Latino, Native, and Asian networks. To sum up, the Hip-hop community opens up spaces of acceptance for peoples of various racial backgrounds.

The analysis in the sub theme *Broader Canadian Society* relates to the work of Marsh and Petty (2011), and how Kenyan youth appropriate Hip-hop to immerse themselves into their country's social fabric. Marsh and Petty find that youth form a Hip-hop parliament where they can share their concerns with those who represent dominant cultural ideologies within Kenya. His work particularly focuses on how the culture enables youth to develop a voice that can project to mainstream society. In my study, I find that Hip-hop provides youth with a voice and presence where they can express themselves to members of Canada's broader society. Respondents such as Dynast stated that Hip-hop helps him foster feelings of inclusion because it presents him with a means to voice himself to others, whom he has never encountered. In his interview he echoed that Hip-hop is an excellent mechanism to share his reality with Calgarians who may otherwise never hear what he has to say. Similar to Kenyan youth, respondents in this study reported that when they immerse themselves into the culture, others hear what they have to say. Thus, youth appropriate beats and rhymes to make their voices limitless within Calgary's broader social fabric.

Although the analysis on *Broader Canadian Society* shows some similarities with existing literature, there are differences with Warner's (2006) research that must be addressed. Warner believes that Hip-hop enables Black youth to cultivate a "northern touch identity" that consists of their African and Caribbean ancestry together with their Canadian attributes. This hyphenated identity permits youth to navigate Canada's social fabric. However, I did not find any remnants of Warner's results in my analysis, because youth did not use the art to develop a hybrid identity. Rather, Hip-hop in the Calgary context allows artists to sustain and develop a beautiful Black identity that they take massive pride in. While Warner's research details how

Black artists adopt characteristics of Canada's broader society and uphold their own identities, I show that artists can still foster a sense of inclusion when they maintain their Blackness. Artists in this study carve their Black identity within Canada's civil society, and feel that they do not need to ratify mainstream ideals in the process.

Furthermore, there is another contribution that my thesis makes to existing literature on Hip-hop and inclusion into one's broader host society. Previous studies do not discuss how Hip-hop culture can help marginalized youth build social capital skills that are transferable to broader society. My thesis shows that respondents not only use Hip-hop to project their voices into public consciousness, but also learn essential skills that help them advance and flourish within Canada's broader society.

Lastly, this thesis makes an overarching contribution towards existing literature on Hip-hop and inclusion practices. Previous literature focused on how youth utilize this art to include themselves into either their own community, or in broader society, not both. In this thesis I show that youth appropriate beats and rhymes to cultivate inclusion simultaneously into their own networks, and broader Canadian society. I hold that when they are able to include themselves into both realms, they create and nourish their own style of Canadian existence, one that helps them challenge and cope with racial and cultural barriers. From the discussions presented here, I contend that my thesis makes an overall contribution towards existing literature on Hip-hop and inclusion practices. Next we will discuss how various identity markers conglomerate to create a system of inclusion into Canadian society.

### ***Intersectionality and Inclusion***

Although various identity markers can be used to dominate social agents' lives, it is equally important to understand how they can also empower. As a result, I found that artists intersected their race and culture to achieve the following: contest domination and foster inclusion, empower other youth, and assert their identity in the face of difference.

In the literature review Hooks (1992) suggests that race and culture intersect to create a system where respondents foster a sense of inclusion. In my study I found that race and culture collide to enable respondents to cultivate a source of power amidst exclusion. This appeared in a number of subthemes such as *Hip-hop, Inclusion, and Black Identities*, and *Calgary's Hip-hop Community*. A particular example of this arose when I interviewed Gina, who stated that when her race and Hip-hop culture intersect she is able to challenge the world and view it more critically.

**Interviewer:** Has Hip-hop become a mechanism for you to channel your energies?

Gina: 100%. 150%.

**Interviewer:** How?

Gina: I use Hip-hop to challenge stereotypes. I use it to show people that someone can be a rapper and make it sound cool and cut across the youth, and still have a good message. People complain about the world, and the youth, but not a lot of people do things about it. Hip-hop is my way of doing something about it, all that anger I feel for racism and prejudice and segregation is channeled into this art form that helps me become elevated and to inspire people - the younger generation - to open up their mindsets.

It is a lot bigger to me than just bars or rhymes. I do this for the culture, and the love, and the impact that it can have. The way it saved me, I know it can save someone else.

Gina believes that she can foster a sense of inclusion when race and culture intersect. She uses Hip-hop to challenge racial boundaries, and appeal to other youth who are marginalized within Canadian society. Furthermore, Gina appropriates the culture to contest racism and diminish segregation lines between people. When her race and Hip-hop culture converge, they help her create a lens that challenges the world critically and gives her power where she can uplift herself and others.

Gina views herself through the eyes of those who are younger and feels that her struggles are synonymous with theirs. She uses Hip-hop and her racial identity to heal other youth that have been discriminated against for their race and culture. I have been fortunate enough to see Gina perform countless times at youth-oriented events. From a distance, I have witnessed how her rhymes, bravado, and passion cut through people's flesh to reach the essence of their being. From this excerpt we see that Gina uses her race and culture as a means of self-recognition, and to share peace. Gina's experiences also resonate with other participants, who believed that race and culture intersect to help them adopt an analytical mindset where they can challenge the forces of domination. They echoed that Hip-hop and their Blackness serve as a boost to their identity, helping them assert themselves whenever they feel overlooked. Overall, many artists stated that they were able to develop a higher form of consciousness when their race and Hip-hop culture interlocked.

The experiences of the artists mentioned here converge with the work of Bell Hooks (1991) and how she theorizes intersectionality and inclusion. Respondents foster inclusion when race and culture combine to challenge white norms and feelings of exclusion. Through Hooks'

lens, artists take their identity markers (rhymes, beats, and Blackness) and utilize them to assert themselves in the face of difference. As a result, race and culture converge to permit them to form a critical consciousness, one that challenges stereotypical ideals of whiteness, and interrogates the *Matrix of Domination* outlined by Collins (2000). This particularly occurred for Gina, who takes her Blackness and rhymes, and affirms herself into the ears of agents to empower them. Through Hooks' lens, Gina and other artists adopt a proactive sense of agency when their race and culture converge to retaliate against marginalization and oppressive forces.

Through this analysis, I contribute to the work of Ibrahim (2011b) on Hip-hop, intersectionality, and inclusion. Ibrahim particularly focuses on how gender, culture, and language influence Black French-speaking east African ESL students in Toronto. He finds that these various identity markers help youth learn English and express themselves through Hip-hop culture. However, I add to his results, because my study includes English-speaking youth from all quarters of Africa and the Caribbean islands. In addition, I show that these various identity markers converge with Hip-hop culture to permit youth to foster inclusion and develop a sense of self within Western Canada. As we combine the above analysis with Ibrahim and other scholars work (Chang, 2005; West, 2006), we uncover that Hip-hop culture can be recognized as a global strategy for Black youth from various ethnic backgrounds to cultivate a sense of belonging within society.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter we will summarize the major findings, advance how they contribute to existing literature and theory, their relevance to the methodology, and recommend policy and future research.

### **Major Findings of the Study and Relevance to Literature and Theory**

There is no doubt that Black African and Caribbean youth experience significant barriers within contemporary Canadian society. All respondents echoed that they face endless disadvantages that make inclusion strenuous. The most prevailing inequalities that they discussed were issues with race and culture, which both marginalized their identities, and excluded them from Canada's social fabric. I argue that these findings correspond and contribute to existing literature and theory. At the same time they help paint a drastic picture on the nature of contemporary racial and cultural relations in Canadian society.

This thesis is in line with existing literature on race and racism. The first major finding of this thesis is that race shapes the experiences of Black youth insofar as they are constructed as an inferior racial group that does not deserve equal status as whites. This finding supports Satzewich and Liodakis, and Omi and Winant's perceptions on race as a socially constructed category that is used to marginalize and exclude racialized minorities. In addition, this thesis shows that racism continues to be omnipresent in our modern social world. As hard as we try to overlook it, and act as if it does not exist, racism continues to be a significant barrier to inclusion

in Canadian society, particularly amongst Black African and Caribbean first and second generation immigrant youth. For this group, racism is improbable to escape, and invades all spheres of their lives. This major finding corresponds with the theories of Du Bois, Dei, and Memmi. In one corner, racism is implied, shady, implicit, and is hidden with passive discourse. In the other corner, it intentionally seeks to damage African and Caribbean identities, and targets them through very harmful and hostile measures.

Historically, research was concentrated in eastern Canada and focused on the difficulties Black youth face in Toronto and Montreal, with little analysis of how these youth experience racial exclusion in other Canadian provinces such as the western provinces. Although my thesis echoes studies by Madibbo, Dei, Das Gupta et al., and Tator and Henry on the racism that Black youth face in eastern Canada, I show that racism also attacks the existence and recognition of Black youth within Calgary, Alberta. Within this city, racism molds their identities into boxes, and categorizes them based on *what* they are rather than *who* they are. Although Calgarians may feel that they occupy a city where everyone is accepted for their differences, racism continues to be embedded in the daily social lives of people of color, who continually have their identities contrasted against the backdrop of white Canadian norms. This thesis also contributes to existing literature because it uncovers how Black females, as well as males, are exposed to vicious forms of racism that explicitly seek to damage their identities. This is highlighted through the experiences of respondents such as Adreama, who were racially profiled and harassed by the criminal justice system. Her experiences and those of many other Black females are rarely discussed in existing literature on race, racism, and gender within modern Canadian society.

This thesis corresponds to existing literature on cultural discrimination. The second major finding is that Black first and second generation immigrant youth Hip-hop artists experience forms of cultural discrimination within modern Canadian society. All respondents believe that their craft is exposed to inaccurate stereotypes and that they are viewed as drug dealers and gang members rather than poets and activists. When they try to schedule shows, promote their music, and deal with promoters, they face major barriers. In some instances, when artists were able to book a show, they were then refused entry by bouncers and venue owners, based on their appearance. As a result, they felt ostracized and pushed away from Calgary's public consciousness because their art conflicts with traditional Calgary culture. As discussed in the previous chapter, this finding resonates heavily with Hooks. In one corner, Hip-hop culture is discriminated against because its roots do not reflect mainstream Calgary. In the other corner, the art is pushed off to the side because it represents Black identities.

This thesis contributes to existing literature on cultural discrimination and proposes a number of dilemmas for theorists such as Hooks. Although Hip-hop is marginalized because it represents Black culture, this thesis uncovers that the art is increasingly becoming more multiracial within Calgary, Alberta. This poses many new areas of academic inquiry for cultural theorists. Will Hip-hop culture continue to be discriminated when it is increasingly absorbed by other ethnic groups besides whites? Will the status of Blacks change, the more Hip-hop becomes multi-racial and appropriated by whites? As whites utilize Hip-hop, will Blacks become more accepted in Calgary's social fabric? Or will they continue to be further marginalized? And what does this mean for the future? These questions pose many dilemmas. Next we will conclude how this thesis corresponds and adds to existing literature on Hip-hop and youth studies.

Although the difficulties listed in this thesis continue to invade the lives of African and Caribbean youth, this thesis uncovers that Hip-hop culture can be used as a mechanism of inclusion to counter discrimination and marginalization. This arose through the following themes: (1) *Hip-hop and Black Identities*, (2) *Hip-hop and Youth Development*, and (3) *Hip-hop and Belonging*.

African and Caribbean first and second generation immigrant youth are able to foster inclusion through Hip-hop, because it is an art form that represents Blackness. Rather than join the school band, or play organized sports, Hip-hop helps them comprehend why they are excluded based on the color of their skin. This thesis contributes to existing literature to show that Hip-hop is a global strategy for Black youth to counter the forces of suppression, and push their identities into civil society. Not only do they appropriate this art to understand why their Blackness is marginalized, but they use it as a tool to uplift themselves from racism. This study illustrates how Hip-hop culture helped young artists grasp the reasons why whites saw them as inferior and why their Black identity was regularly the source of ridicule.

Second, Hip-hop culture enables Black African and Caribbean first and second generation immigrants to cultivate inclusion because it acts as mechanism of youth development. This finding resonates with youth development scholars such as Perry (2004), Ibrahim (2011b) and West (2006). Hip-hop enables youth to cultivate self-awareness and find purpose in their daily lives. In addition, Hip-hop is a means of personal growth, one that helps youth cope with their racial and gender struggles.

This thesis contributes to the youth development domain of research, and shows that Hip-hop can be appropriated by youth for developmental purposes within Canadian society.

Historically, Hip-hop and youth development studies have been primarily concentrated within the United States with little analysis of the Canadian context. I hold that this thesis provides much needed clarity on how Hip-hop enables marginalized groups to cultivate peace, self-awareness, and freedom of expression within western Canada's modern social world.

Third, Hip-hop enhances the youth sense of belonging because it allows them to create and sustain close relationships with members in their own community. Similar to previous research such as Schneiderman (2014), I find that youth create their own style of inclusion when they immerse themselves into their own Hip-hop networks. In turn, these networks transcend music to constitute communities that include deep emotional connections, and also act as a source of love and acceptance.

Although my findings resonate with earlier works on Hip-hop and community inclusion, I also add to this body of work to show that youth use Hip-hop to foster belonging within their own multi-ethnic community. In particular I contribute to previous literature on Aboriginal youth and Hip-hop communities. Historically, research on Aboriginal youth has focused on how youth appropriate Hip-hop culture to sustain their own ethnic networks. However, I add that Black youth surround themselves with agents who are racially diverse to share struggles, unify through melody and rhythm, and cultivate inclusion.

Lastly, Black African and Caribbean youth appropriate Hip-hop to foster belonging and inclusion into Canada's broader society. The art helps youth utilize beats and rhymes to develop a voice to connect with the minds of people in Canadian society. This finding resonates with Marsh and Petty's (2011) research on Kenyan youth and the Hip-hop parliament. I uncover that

Hip-hop provides youth with a platform where they can express their concerns and troubles to members of Canada's broader society.

This thesis expands the literature on Hip-hop, youth, and broader society in two realms. I show that Black youth do not need to develop a hyphenated identity to immerse themselves into Canada's social fabric. Black youth need not adopt mainstream ideals of their host society to cultivate a sense of belonging. Rather, they can use art to celebrate their Blackness, and assert themselves against the forces that marginalize them. Therefore, Black African first and second generation youth immerse themselves into society while maintaining a true sense of self.

In addition, this thesis contributes to existing literature and theory, because I show that Hip-hop is an art form where social capital skills can be cultivated by youth to advance themselves in their daily social lives. These skills revolve around: effective communication, networking, public speaking, receiving feedback, a dedicated work ethic, writing proficiently, teamwork, and personal drive. As a result, Hip-hop culture can be seen as an inclusionary device, much like organized sports and education, which permit youth to gain skills they can use to thrive in their host society.

### **Relevance to Methodology**

In this research I employed a qualitative research methodology to demonstrate how Black immigrant youth are discriminated against in Calgary, Alberta, and how Hip-hop culture shapes the inclusion practices of young people in Canada today. This thesis shows that qualitative methodologies are an essential tool to study difficult-to-reach subcultures, such as Black African and Caribbean youth, and musical areas of academic inquiry such as Hip-hop culture. In

particular, interviews allowed me to understand the experiences and perceptions of a group of youth who face exclusion, but are immersed within a musical phenomenon. I contend that my methodology, therefore, supports my aim to understand how Black African and Caribbean first and second generation youth utilize Hip-hop to foster inclusion within Canadian society.

As I look back, I realize that critical ethnography was essential throughout every step of the research process. Before I began this process, critical ethnography helped me formulate research questions, analyze existing literature, and formulate my methodology. As the research progressed, critical ethnography helped me adopt a social justice lens, where I could understand: xenophobia, marginalization, diverse perspectives, and discriminatory practices. Through this methodological framework I was able to fully accept various views on often-neglected topics that include Hip-hop, racism, and cultural discrimination.

Furthermore, critical ethnography will help me after this study. As a researcher and academic, I will continue to explore how music can fight oppression and xenophobia in our world. As an artist, I will continue to build relationships with musicians who express themselves through melody and rhythm, and seek to contest discrimination. And as an activist, I will lobby the government in hopes of creating musical spaces for everyone to express themselves free of oppression.

### **Policy Recommendations**

I recommend a number of policy changes that can enhance our understanding of the inclusion practices of immigrant youth in Canada today. First, I hold that socio-economic resources be provided to vulnerable immigrant peoples and communities in order to help them

thrive within Canadian society. It is important to help make their inclusion process as smooth as possible, because their contributions are essential to Canada's economic and socio-political future. Many of these communities are economically deprived, and racially excluded from Canada's social fabric. As a result, I feel it is imperative for scholars, government officials, and committees to continue to help marginalized peoples and shed light on the difficulties they face. Second, I charge that music-based programs be established to help youth express themselves in a melodic and rhythmic fashion. Respondents acknowledged that when they were exposed to Hip-hop at a young age, they were able to tap into their creative energies like never before. Music helped them become better social agents. As a child I saw these programs as safe havens where I could go and connect with role models who helped me use art to express myself. Today, I continue to be a witness of how these programs inspire youth to reach their greatest potential that they may not experience in school. I believe that when and if we support these initiatives, we will be better able to raise awareness on issues that deal with racism. I hold that projects such as the one described here will develop proactive responses among youth to counter social exclusion using music.

### **Further Research**

There are a number of topics that I recommend for future scholars who are interested in social inclusion, immigrant youth, and Hip-hop culture. First, more research should be conducted on immigrant youth from various cultural and racial backgrounds. This study focused on Black African and Caribbean youth, and did not consider the lived experiences of other immigrant groups such as Asians and Latinos who also heavily occupy Hip-hop communities. Second, I

recommend that scholars include the social experiences of females. Research on females and Hip-hop is very much underexplored. I hold that their voices may help us gain substantive knowledge on how Hip-hop can be used as a source of social inclusion. Third, since my thesis showcases the positive implications of Hip-hop for Black youths, I prescribe that scholars conduct research at the national level, to determine if Hip-hop has negative impacts on youth and how these impacts could be improved. Although Calgary's immigrant populations grow daily, this study is a drop of ink compared to Canada's life portrait. Fourth, I recommend that scholars study elements of Hip-hop that extend beyond rapping and poetry to include DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti. Lastly, I advocate to never stop studying immigrant youth exclusion and inclusion. Today we occupy a time where youth face unique structural barriers that prohibit smooth inclusion into society. This study is one that seeks to understand how to breach these structures, and better connect youth with themselves and others. I conclude that there is a need for academics to continue to fight the good fight, and strive to create better roots for our youth.

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## **APPENDIX: A**

### Interview Guide

#### Demographics

- 1) What is your Name?
- 2) What is your Gender?
- 3) What is your Age?
- 4) What is your Ethnic origin?
  - a) Are you a first or second generation immigrant?
  - b) If you are First Generation Immigrant, where do you originate from? If so, when did you come to Canada?
  - c) If you are second generation immigrant, where did your parents originate? If so, do you know when they came to Canada?
- 5) Are you currently a student at an academic institution? If so, which institution? And what is your field of study?
- 6) Are you currently employed? If so, what is your job title?

#### Exclusion

- 1) Have you faced any difficulties integrating into Canadian society? Please explain why?
- 2) Have you ever experienced feelings of exclusion or isolation in Canada? Please explain why?
- 3) Do you feel that your identity goes unrecognized? If so why?

#### Hip Hop Culture

- 1) How did you become interested in Hip-hop culture?
  - a) Were you attracted to Hip-hop more than other cultural art forms?
    - i) What was it about this particular culture that attracted you?
  - b) Did you start listening to it before you participated? If so, what made you want to transition from a listener to a participant?
- 2) Has your life changed since you started to participate in it? Please explain why?
- 3) Do you feel that people have misconceptions about Hip-hop culture? If so, why?

#### Inclusion

- 1) Are you able to find spaces of belonging where you can express yourself creatively? If so, please describe these spaces?
- 2) Do you feel that Hip-hop culture has helped you foster feelings of inclusion or belonging? If so, why?
- 3) Has this culture helped you generate feelings of belonging in your own Hip-hop networks? If so, how?
- 4) Has this culture helped you generate feelings of belonging in mainstream society? If so,

why?

- 5) Do you feel this scene fosters healthy safe environments? Why?
  - a. Do you feel you can express yourself creatively within this community?
    - i. Can you describe the feelings you have when you participate in the culture?
    - ii. Do you feel you can turn to this culture in times of difficulty? If so, why?

## **APPENDIX B: LEGEND**

... - few words, sentences or phrases deleted from narrative.

[ ] – added a word or phrase to clarify statement or protect an identity of venue, news organization and name of fellow rapper

