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African, Know Thyself: Hip-Hop Pedagogy, Epistemic Disobedience, and Youth Engagement in West Africa

Noella Binda Niati

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AFRICAN, KNOW THYSELF: HIP-HOP PEDAGOGY, EPISTEMIC
DISOBEDIENCE, AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN WEST AFRICA

by

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DEDICATION

To the members of Y'en a Marre and FESCI

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation was a 23-month comparative case study of Y'en a Marre, a civic organizing movement based in Dakar, Senegal and FESCI, a student organization in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. This study investigates the ways in which these organizations view Hip-Hop and its pedagogical utility as a means to encourage socialization, promote authenticity, and foster leadership. Through Hip-Hop, young people are drawn to a cultural expression that reflects the social, economic, and political realities of their lives speaking to them in a language and manner they understand. This is critical given sub-Saharan Africa's tremendous youth population and their potential impact on the continent.

Utilizing a transnégritude theoretical framework, this study situates Hip-Hop pedagogy and epistemic disobedience as vehicles of expression impacting language, identity, and engagement as a means to decolonize and liberate from dominant narratives. To articulate Hip-Hop pedagogy as an effective tool for engagement, a comparative case study methodology was employed study to consider the macro, that is the social, political and historical dynamics that have shaped and influenced young people, education and engagement; and the micro—the multilayered lived realities of young people in West Africa.

By focusing on young people as an asset, this study considers young people to be at the helm of social change, playing a crucial role in curtailing corruption, migration, and political instability. The influence and notoriety of organizations such as Y'en a

Marre and FESCI, illustrate the impact of a Hip-Hop pedagogy that not only heals but promotes leadership, ownership, and autonomy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In June 2011, thousands of young men and women shouting “enough is enough!” marched in Dakar to protest the president’s illegal bid for a third term. Citing mass unemployment, limited infrastructure, and a violation of the rule of law, organizations such as Y’en à Marre (fed up) rallied citizens through town hall meetings, makeshift civic classes, and Hip-Hop music and activism to engage the population in order to recognize their political strength as a collective unit (Lambert, 2016; Gueye, 2013). In March 2012, president Wade stepped down and admitted that he had indeed been defeated in run-off elections. Democracy, it seemed, had prevailed and young people throughout sub-Saharan Africa were emboldened to challenge their respective leaders who had continuously overlooked the constitution to govern as they saw fit. Youth protests erupted in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, and the Democratic Republic of Congo; with young people sharing their support, their strategies, and their willfulness to fight against social injustice.

In Côte d’Ivoire, university students fed up with broken promises including scholarships, student housing, and transportation, took on the mantle to challenge the university and later government officials. FESCI (Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d’Ivoire, or the Student Federation of Côte d’Ivoire), was initially created in 1990 in “response to repression by President Houphouet-Boigny’s government, a failure of dialogue to address the increasing demand for political freedom and rights in Côte

d'Ivoire” (Sany, 2010, p. 9). Claiming to be apolitical, they carried out their struggle outside the university campus to challenge the government on political and social issues, organizing strikes and protests (p. 9). From Dakar, to Ouagadougou, and now Abidjan, it seems that young people in West Africa are at the helm of a monumental sociopolitical change.

Sub-Saharan Africa has one of the fastest growing youth populations in the world. Recognizing the role young people are beginning to play in social and political activism, it is evident that young people can stimulate innovation, but they can also be a destabilizing force (Lambert, 2016; Abbink, 2005; Strong and Ossei-Owusu, 2014). A confluence of factors has contributed to a disgruntled generation of youth facing mass unemployment, limited infrastructure and resources that Senegalese journalist and organizer Fadel Barro frames the dilemma facing youth today as, “Y'en a Marre or Boko Haram,” civic organizing or radical extremism.¹ Given the region's young population and its development struggles, young people reside in a delicate imbalance that could and has affected the sociopolitical make-up of the country and the region. Yet, through Hip-Hop, youth organizations appear to have found a powerful, expressive tool to engage effectively with disaffected youth (Gueye, 2013; Lambert, 2016; Clark, 2018; Schumann, 2012). My research project seeks to investigate the role of Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool as a means for challenging majoritarian epistemologies of disobedience, schooling, and engagement.

Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire are in the midst of this critical organizing or radicalizing conundrum. A French-speaking and predominantly Muslim country, Senegal stands as one of the few stable countries in West Africa. It is surrounded by politically

tumultuous states such as Mali, Mauritania, and Guinea. Additionally, mass unemployment and limited options lead many to question the necessity of formal schooling. This leads to over 50% of young people eschewing post-basic education and who are susceptible to recruitment (UNESCO, 2016). Is it no wonder that Y'en a Marre (YEM) was so eagerly adopted by young people in Dakar who felt invisible and voiceless? I contend and show through my research that a Hip-Hop pedagogy can be useful as a counter to formal schooling, a tool for civic engagement, and identity formation.

Côte d'Ivoire too, faces a complex social and political quagmire for its young population. Also a French speaking West African nation, Côte d'Ivoire has a mixed Muslim and Christian population that is heavily divided between the North and South. Young people must navigate massive unemployment with limited skills and education. When young people face a lack of opportunity, they may feel compelled to flee in search of safety and better opportunities therefore implicating nations within these social transitions. Those who stay, are left to navigate limited social services or in the case of child-gangs, resort to violence as a means of survival. As Ivoirian sociologist Francis Akindès concludes, petty crime has been legitimized as a source of economic activity for child-gangs and, if given the option, many would join jihadist groups if recruited (Adélé, 2016, para. 2). This is why youth organizations are so relevant in the Ivorian context. What this study shows is that when managed and organized by young activists, youth movements that incorporate global education, Hip-Hop, and political activism are eagerly and quickly accepted by those they feel share their same social and political frustrations.

Though there is considerable discussion concerning the purpose of education (McMannon, 1997), education in Africa has generally been seen as a key to national development (Kanu, 2007 and Woolman, 2001). In this regard, the role of education goes far beyond socialization and instruction but instead to build or rebuild—in the case of postcolonial African countries—a country’s national identity, infrastructure, and prosperity. Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal, like many African countries, endured a forced transition from an indigenous to a colonial educational system. Much later, the two countries, like much of the continent, fought for an emancipated education system, which placed a specific emphasis on the political and social autonomy of the continent. It is through this political and social autonomy that I wish to examine civic education, identity formation, and socialization. Echoing Ladson-Billings (2004) and Spindler (1987), Levinson (2011), contends that, “much, if not all education is citizenship education” (p. 280). As such, I seek to understand whether and if so how a pedagogy influenced by Hip-Hop can be an effective tool utilized to transmit sociocultural norms, challenge the status quo, police social systems, and effect change within a society.

For a lot of young people, Hip-Hop reflects the social, economic, political and cultural realities of their lives speaking to them in a language and manner they understand; or as Bridges (2001) puts it, Hip-Hop is a “term used to describe the collective experience, modes of thinking, epistemologies of urban youth” (p. 326; Aldridge & Stewart, 2005, p. 190). Hip-Hop pedagogy is thus a “way of authentically and practically incorporating the creative elements of hip-hop into teaching,” that is rapping, djing, mcing, breaking, graffiti, and the philosophies of consciousness and social justice, and inviting students to “have a connection with the content while meeting them

on their cultural turf by teaching to, and through, their realities and experiences” (Johnson, 2017).

Due to its longevity and its pertinence to youth worldwide, Hip-Hop cannot be dismissed as “merely a passing fad” or something that will run its course. Though vilified in certain fields and broader society, Hip-Hop can be a critical pedagogical tool that builds on what Bridges calls a “critical cultural movement,” that is, “a critical epistemology or a theoretical tool that challenges our beliefs about teaching, shapes our conception of the function of informs our understandings of the qualities of effective educators” (p. 327). bell hooks (1994) calls this an “engaged pedagogy,” to teach in a way that nurtures the soul of the student; what Freire (2000) called *conscientizacao*. As such, Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool, can be used as a challenge to schooling, an epistemic disobedience, and a source of transformation.

My research project investigates how Hip-Hop *is and can be* used as an effective pedagogical tool to engage and organize youth exposed to social inequality, illegal migration, gangs, and extremism. Through my examination of Y’en a Marre and FESCI, I will discuss Hip-Hop, Hip-Hop pedagogy, and the sociopolitical complexities that impact young people. Given ongoing discussions with the overwhelming idle youth population and the encroaching threat of extremism in neighboring countries, young people are a critical focus in the present and future political structure of West Africa. To this end I ask the following research question:

With the intention to further understand Hip-Hop culture as a pedagogical counter to infrastructural lack of, how does Hip-Hop culture engender civic engagement and civic education in Senegalese and Ivorian youth?

Context

Education has played a long standing role historically in the continent of Africa. From the ancient philosophers of Egypt to the great research centers of Timbuktu and Jenne, which served to educate and inform much of western Europe, it is evident that education has been a major influencing factor in African history. As famed Senegalese scholar, Cheikh Anta Diop (1997) writes, “it is impossible to stress all that the world, particularly the Hellenistic world, owed to the Egyptians” and, as he later notes, the Ethiopians or Nubians of east Africa (p. 230). This view and respect for education would dramatically change during the colonial period as education “was changed to meet the goals of the colonizers” (Pagano, 1999, p. 3). Thus the status education had received in the region and much of the continent, significantly deteriorated and evolved to benefit an elite population.

Education in Senegal

The intersections of education, religion, engagement, and identity are intricately interwoven in Senegal’s history. From Cheikh Hamidou Kane’s (1961) famous tale of a young man educated in both Qur’anic and French school, struggling between his dual identities in *L’aventure Ambiguë*, to Ousmane Sembène’s tale of protest against colonialism in *Les bouts de bois de Dieu*, to *La grève de bàttu*, Aminata Sow Fall’s objective critique on the role of religion and government in Senegalese life, the country has evolved within a unique stance marrying religion, education, youth, and protest that engendered a unique sociopolitical makeup within West Africa. Navigating the history of education in Senegal will provide a lens to examine the evolution and perception of education in Senegal.

The end of colonialism, brought with it greater expectations for many African countries to remove all signs of foreign domination and push toward modernization. Universities were supposed to produce experts in all fields as a counterbalance to colonial expatriates. They were also expected to restore African languages and culture and to stop the curricular dependency from the West. Economic transformation of the continent, it was argued, was to follow from university education (Banya and Elu, 2001, 5).

The United Nations designated the period of 1960-1970 the “Development Decade for Developing Countries,” during which concentrated efforts would be made "to lessen the gap, to speed up the process of modernization, to release the majority of mankind from crippling poverty, to mitigate the tension and hostility which must flow from the world's vast inequalities in wealth” (Harbison and Myers, 1964, 50). It was clear that African states had a long way to go in order to build towards an economic stable future. And in many ways, several countries experienced tremendous growth post-independence.

However, the economic crises of the 1980s, critically impaired the political and economic strength of many African states. Many were forced to seek foreign aid for economic relief. Banya and Elu (2001) write, “The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international institutions...attached the reduction of public expenditure and the commitment to a free market as the conditions for major loans and structural adjustment programs” (p. 16). Thus, spending on public services such as health care, infrastructure, and education was severely cut to allow for external aid from (mostly) western countries and/or agencies. Since then, the region has been stuck under a vicious cycle of

dependency that persists to this day, which is continuously mirrored within the continent's education systems.

In Senegal, the French influenced educational system plays a significant role in the social and political makeup of the country. The structure of the formal education system in Francophone Africa closely resembles the French system with its three general stages: primary, secondary, and higher education. Even though the overall curriculum of French schools has been adapted to fit within local realities, the overall system of education is still highly similar to the French system. In 2004, for example, the Senegalese government changed laws concerning compulsory education which was extended from 6-16 years old. (Gönsch & Graef, 2011, p. 5). This was also similarly done in Côte d'Ivoire under the first president Houphouët-Boigny and later under the Gbagbo administration. Briefly, primary education begins around age 6/7 years old and continues for six years. At the end of primary school, students take an official nationwide exam that includes several written and oral exams to obtain the Certificate of Completed Primary School Education (CFEE) in order to enter secondary school.

There are two cycles that makeup secondary schools with mandatory exams at the end of each cycle. The lower cycles last four years and end with exams for the Diploma for Completed Lower Secondary Education (BFEM) at around 16 years old. Those who pass the BFEM are then promoted to secondary school which can be attended between 1-3 years depending on the type of qualification. At the end of upper secondary, students take the Baccalauréat (BAC), which is equivalent to a high school diploma (p. 5).

The current school curricula have been specifically designed for Senegal unlike previous curricula that were developed for Europe and later transferred to Senegal and

other francophone African countries. In their “Education for All” case study in Senegal, Gönsch & Graef (2011), state that teachers have confirmed that the curriculum is “well adapted to the realities in the country,” consisting of math, science, French, health care, hygiene, and protection of the environment (p. 5). However, teachers have voiced complaints over the inability to complete all the proposed lessons in the curriculum and language deficiencies. They write, “since children typically only speak their maternal tongues when they enter school, the first year at school is used to teach them French and basic Calculus” (p. 6). Along with deficient equipment, large class sizes, multi-grade teaching, poor school conditions, and the financial burden of schooling, it is evident why *daara*, quranic schools, are considered the most attractive choice especially for those in low income households. Yet, as Gönsch & Graef note, those who complete French school BACs have access to university in Africa and/or abroad, an opportunity rarely afforded to those with a Qur’anic education.

Marabouts argue that the attainment of a *daara* BAC prepares one for any and all professions. This shared understanding mixed with the perceived wealth and status of marabouts, lead many to eschew post-basic or post-secondary education. More importantly, the underlying issue of unemployment and urbanization continuously hinder educational pursuits, especially within the formal sector. As such, youth are prone to forego formal schooling and its expenses with the more collective *daara* as a means to reinforce religious piety. Here in lies the ensuing dilemma, can Hip-Hop assist in challenging perceptions of schooling?

Despite Senegal’s commitment to accessible education, in practice, social and political constrictions have demeaned educational initiatives. Post-independence, Senegal

adopted a new educational project known as “*école nouvelle*” in the 1980s to “move schools out of their former colonial patterns toward a system with a more truly African character, better adapted to current national development needs” (Pagano, 1999, p. 14). Today, Senegal has attempted to align its educational projects within the current international framework as a means to promote “Education for All.” Through the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, enrolment in primary school in Senegal increased from 57% in 2000 to 82% in 2015 and secondary school enrollment increased from 15% to 49% in 2015 (UNESCO, 2016).

Currently, the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), of which ensuring equal and inclusive quality education is a major goal (Goal 4), is attempting to improve access to education (UNESCO, 2005). As of yet, continuous K-12 attendance is still low; only 50% of boys and 49% of girls manage to attend secondary education; even fewer finish (UNESCO, 2012). The literacy rate, though one of the highest in West Africa, is still relatively low at 55%. Lastly, the unemployment rate among young people is estimated at 48% (UNESCO, 2012). The implications for the Senegalese population and specifically the youth population are huge. Much work must be done in encouraging and bridging school attendance and social and political engagement. Hip-Hop, can therefore be the tool needed to engage youth and influence their social perceptions.

Young people in West Africa, and Senegal specifically are a social political asset (Maina, 2012). They face significant challenges—unemployment, limited skills and education, and exposure to extremism—and yet are an opportunity source who can challenge and shape the future of the continent (Maina, 2012; House Foreign Affairs Committee, 2020; AYS, 2020). Recognizing their importance is necessary in order to

develop policies and programs that can aid in increasing engagement and encourage positive perceptions to education.

Cote d'Ivoire and education

Similar to Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire too, is a country that faced a similar French colonial trajectory, however that is where the similarities end. Whereas Senegal has a majority Muslim population, Côte d'Ivoire has a mixed Muslim (42% of the population) and Christian (33.9% of the population) population, with a large immigrant population that is ~25% of the population, and a diverse ethnic makeup (Sany, 2010, p. 4; Banegas et al., 2010). Cote d'Ivoire's population tends to be divided between the Muslim, agrarian, immigrant populated north and the predominantly Christian, wealthy population in the south. In sum, the country's internal tensions arise from the country's immigrant, religious, and economic division that has been used as tools to justify conflict and division (Miran-Guyon, 2006 and Onishi, 2000). Navigating the country's colonial past and its multilayered present, I was confronted with the opportunity to provide nuance to Côte d'Ivoire's educational system and inform us on whether and how Hip-Hop is utilized to encourage engagement.

Since Côte d'Ivoire gained independence in 1960, Ivoirians have placed a high value on education. During his tenure, former President Laurent Gbagbo initiated the *politique de refondation* (policy of renewal), a process that overhauled the educational system in Côte d'Ivoire to "give every child in Cote d'Ivoire the chance to go to school" (Sany, 2010, p. 2). During this time, education became a symbol of Ivorian identity and status, a factor that would play a role during the coup d'état and eventual civil war.

Though Gbabgo's initiatives had made gains, the limited gains adopted became tools used to stoke oppositional attacks against the government.

However, the economic crises of the 1980s brought on by "deteriorating terms of trade and fierce competition between economies, increasing the concentration of capital giving conglomerates the power to determine prices and economic policies" led to the Bretton Woods institutions that led to the imposition of fiscal restrictions called Structural Adjustment Programs in sub-Saharan Africa leading to a dramatic decrease in spending for social programs such as education and health (Oyeniran, 2017, p. 284). Whereas the education budget was 45% of the national budget between 1960 and 1980, it decreased to 4.4% between 1980 and 1990, and since the civil war it has recovered to 25% of the spending, though still half of what it used to be after independence (p. 284).

The limited lack of state support and the general struggle for Islamic school students to enter the formal sector's job market left them "confined to precarious informal activities and oftentimes unemployment...a majority of juvenile offenders and drug addicts...were former madrasa students" (Miran-Guyon, 2006, p. 19). Reformists therefore developed a new type of Islamic school modeled after Christian schools. These schools named, "conventional confessional Islamic school" adopted French as the language of instruction, Islamic and Arabic lessons were optional, and students were not forcibly Muslim (p. 20). Though there seemed to be educational reforms and advancement made in the late 20th century, the civil war starting in 2002, severely handicapped if not halted the education system all-together, encouraged the militarization of young people on both sides and changed young people's perception on schooling.

Prior to the civil war, school attendance was already unequal between the north and the south. In 2001, school attendance in the north averaged five years while it was fifteen years in the south. Literacy rates were 30% in the north and 70% in the south (Hamer, 2011, p. 11). To explain the low achievement rates in the north, Hamer found that most students stopped going to school due to a lack of means, loss of interest in general education, to generate an extra source of familial income, feeling too old to continue going to school, or educational failure (such as repeating grades) (p. 12). Many of these young people made great targets for mobilization during the war either through the government, rebels or their own causes. During and after the war, most recruits took up arms as a means for self-protection and others took up arms because there was “nothing else to do” because in the hardest hit regions, economic activities had either stopped or slowed down so young people “pragmatically decided to join an armed group to have something to do and to at least be fed” (p. 16).

The civil war resulted in a large number of out-of-school children and youth left to their own devices. (Sany, 2010, p. 6). The massive displacement caused by the war caused at least 700,000 students out of school, including university students in some northern cities who had to flee rebel-controlled zones. Many more were not able to leave and thus saw their education interrupted leading some to argue that “with this many out-of-school children and youth Cote d’Ivoire may be developing a ready pool of malleable youth who could contribute to further instability” (p. 6).

Past economic crises and the civil war of 2002 have had adverse effects on the social fabric of Ivorian life. Sany (2010) writes that besides intensifying economic disparities and ethnic differences, which have impacted access, quality resources, and

organization, “the conflict has had a more subtle and pernicious sociopsychological impact on individuals, particularly on students” (p. 7). According to Sany, the failure of the state to provide educational opportunity to young people, has “undermined their self-esteem” leaving them vulnerable to criminal behavior, violence, and drug use (p. 7).

Even before the war in 2002, the country was already struggling with education initiatives and goals set under the Education for All (EFA) movement. Though significant gains had been made by 2001, research shows that the literacy rate, primary, and secondary school attendance still remain low. Currently the youth literacy rate (those between 15 and 24 years old) is 58%, while the adult literacy rate (those older than 25 years old) is 56.9% (UNICEF, 2019). Though primary school enrollment has increased dramatically, up to 95%, continuous primary school attendance stagnates at 68% with a significant drop in secondary attendance to 28%. Given that 60% of the country’s population is under 25 years old (World Bank, 2017), what measures can be done to ensure that out-of-school young people are engaged?

Given the role of education, the popularity of Hip-Hop music, and the rise of civic engagement among youth, Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire are perfect case studies for analyzing the role Hip-Hop can play as a tool for youth engagement and organizing in the region. Whereas the proliferation of Hip-Hop in Senegal is firmly entrenched and has been popular for a time, Côte d’Ivoire has developed a nascent Hip-Hop population equally attracting and empowering young people. This study therefore looks at the intersections of Hip-Hop, sociopolitics, and youth education, as a potential pedagogical tool for engagement and political activism among young populations. Senegal and Cote d’Ivoire will provide a rich, nuanced, and challenging landscape to assess how young

people have navigated division, new political and economic power structures, civil war and social inequality. Hip-Hop could potentially be that tool.

Literature and theoretical framework

This study is based on a transnégritude (Touré, forthcoming) theoretical framework that expounds on the shared struggles of colonized people throughout the diaspora, which creates an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983) of oppressed peoples that can elicit engagement or mobilization. Within this framework, I argue that utilizing Mignolo’s (2003; 2009) epistemic disobedience provides a necessary understanding of how engagement is thus employed and utilized by young people. My discussion focuses on literature centering Hip-Hop pedagogy as is discussed by Alim (2011), Akom (2009), Hill (2009; 2013), Adjapong (2017), and Buffington & Day (2018) among others. I also consider the ways in which Hip-Hop vis-a-vis civic education and epistemic disobedience is used as a vehicle of expression that impacts language, identity, and engagement as a means to de-link and liberate from dominant narratives. I then define youth and discuss the social political contexts young people navigate in West Africa. This allows for a nuanced examination that forefronts the voices and experiences of young people as one of the tools to determine policy changes and local action.

Research design - Comparative Case Study

I utilized Vavrus and Bartlett’s (2017) Comparative Case Study (CCS) to engage with decolonizing research, as it contributes to a better understanding of the sociopolitical nuances of Senegalese and Ivorian history, their educational policies, and the role music/Hip-Hop has played in influencing young people. This framework allows for a critical glance at challenging majoritarian narratives while highlighting the lived realities

of colonized populations. Given the unique phenomena evidenced in Abidjan and Dakar, CCS proves to be a useful methodology to contextualize how a group of young people have utilized a derided art form to teach, mobilize, and engage. Vavrus and Bartlett (2017) Glesne (2011) and Bray and Thomas (1995) note that researchers should approach case study as a means of contextualizing a unique event or phenomenon to the larger social systems at play. As such, data for this research was collected over 23 months in Dakar, Senegal and Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The data was heavily influenced by ethnographic methods and came from interviews, participant observation, field notes, surveys, and document analysis to provide what Vavrus and Bartlett (2017) call a transversal analysis that combines the macro, that is the social, political and historical dynamics that have shaped and influenced young people, education and engagement; and the micro—the multilayered lived realities of young people.

Contributions

In general, research that looks at Hip-Hop pedagogy, engagement, and young people in Africa, usually concerns discussions surrounding rap as a musical tool to connect to English literature (Kelly, 2013; Pardue, 2004; Emdin, 2008), as a means to equate engagement with violence (Oosterom, 2018; Tsuma, 2012; Cubitt, 2012), or by viewing young people on the continent as a ticking time bomb rather than an opportunity source as Krystal Strong suggests (House Foreign Affairs Committee, 2020; Abbink, 2005; Lambert, 2016; Gueye, 2013). This study aims to address a significant gap in literature by first, providing a comparative study on the growing youth movements in west Africa and the ways young people expand the boundaries of Hip-Hop by going beyond incorporating Hip-Hop culture into school-based curricula (Hill, 2009) and

instead considering a “hiphopography,” (Alim, 2011) an approach that combines the methods of ethnography, biography, and social and oral history (Alim, 2011 as cited in Buffington & Day, 2018, p. 3). Secondly, this study goes beyond the school to challenge epistemological norms around young people, schooling, and engagement in West Africa. And lastly, this project incorporates ethnographic methods that “interrogates the relationship between hip-hop and identity formation...[and] the fluidity and location of engagement” (Hill, 2009, p. 11). By focusing on young people as an asset, expanding our understanding of Hip-Hop pedagogy, and reframing how we view youth engagement on the continent, this study significantly contributes to the global literature on Hip-Hop in Africa, Hip-Hop pedagogy, and youth engagement in the field of comparative education.

Overview

In the following chapters, I will provide my definitions of youth or young people, how Y'en a Marre and FESCI approach and employ Hip-Hop pedagogy, and how engagement is nuanced within the socio-political context young people face. In chapter 2, I will review my theoretical framework and literature that explores issues of transnégritude (Touré, forthcoming), epistemic disobedience, civic education, the sociopolitical contexts in Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire, Hip-Hop pedagogy, engagement and definitions of young people. Chapter 3 will explore comparative case study as the methodological orientation I chose to use to frame and examine these multilayered topics. Chapter 4 will present the two organizations, Y'en a Marre (YEM) and FESCI, their histories, mission and structure. I will also contextualize these two organizations within the larger historical and sociopolitical contexts in Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal.

Chapters 5 and 6 present the major findings from this study. Chapter 5 focuses on the macro-level findings that contextualizes young people’s lived experiences and investigates how young people view and approach Hip-Hop and Hip-Hop as pedagogy. The chapter will interrogate socialization and schooling and how these concepts nuance youth engagement. Chapter 6 will delve into the micro; that is how FESCI and YEM employ Hip-Hop as pedagogy. I will first consider one of Hip-Hop’s major philosophical tenets, “keepin’ it real,” then I will explore how this is employed through language, leadership and identity formation. I conclude by contending that young people mobilized via YEM and FESCI envision a pan-African unity that emboldens and encourages ownership.

Chapter 7 concludes the project with a summary of the main arguments and an examination of the major findings from previous chapters. The chapter discusses how young people are and should be considered an opportunity source and an asset to changing the sociopolitical context of the continent. Chapter 7 suggests that young people are at the helm of social change and may play a crucial role in curtailing corruption, migration, and political instability. The chapter raises questions on the role of women and considers my limitations on not considering how students at the universities in Dakar and Abidjan perceive FESCI and YEM, their impact/effectiveness, and their views and approach to Hip-Hop. These limitations provide rich opportunities for follow-up projects that further examine the micro. Finally, the chapter concludes with a short discussion on centering the voices and epistemologies of young people and recognizing their optimism and “bullish” efforts to effect change (Kazeem, 2020).

CHAPTER 2

OUTTA HERE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To further consider the role of Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool for engagement, transformation and social justice, I draw from the ensuing literature to expound on concepts of youth and identity and the role Hip-Hop plays as a pedagogical force for young people in West Africa. I will first provide my theoretical framework; transnégritude (Touré, forthcoming), and the ways in which it shapes the transcolonial and decolonizing methods and motives of young people. Given Hip-Hop's origins, elements, and characteristics, epistemic disobedience becomes a pertinent element by which to structure and approach this transnégritude framework. I will consider how civic education is contextualized within FESCI and Y'en a Marre, then I will examine the role of Hip-Hop not only as an educative tool but as a healing and transformative pedagogy that can impact language and identity.

Lastly, I will contextualize the general conditions of young people in West Africa. Herein, I wish to frame the experiences, struggles and modes of engagement that influenced groups such as Y'en a Marre (YEM) and FESCI. Because of the inconsistent definitions of youth, I provide my fluid, unbounded definition of youth or young people, informed by Lambert (2016) and Spencer (2012) and provide a brief historical context of the sociopolitical dynamics young people have faced in Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal; this will be examined further in chapter four.

Côte d'Ivoire is a dynamic state to analyze how young people within a post-conflict context can be encouraged to engage. On the other hand, even though Senegal has never endured a civil war, the country has protested numerous times to challenge leaders and regional struggle with mixed results. Lastly, the global scope of Hip-Hop culture and its manifestations in West Africa nuances the ways in which young people approach education and how they are influenced by it as a counter to social ills. A transnégritude perspective aptly “straddles” black identity, agency, and deconstructionism and allows for a fluid navigation of Hip-Hop pedagogy. Through this framework, I am able to theorize epistemologies of disobedience and resistance, which inform the views of Y'en a Marre and FESCI. This text intends to contribute to qualitative inquiries on the connections between Hip-Hop, identity formation, and the “fluidity and location of engagement” in Hip-Hop culture (Hill, 2009, p. 11). The goal is to challenge the formal schooling context, interrogate youth identity and engagement.

Transnégritude

To better understand this concept of transnégritude as is understood by Touré (forthcoming), we must first understand the roots and origins of the négritude movement, developed in France in the 1920s and 1930s. The three major figures attributed to the movement, were francophone intellectuals from various parts of the diaspora who met during their studies in Paris: Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal, Aimé Césaire from Martinique, and Léon-Gentran Damas from Guyana. These three along with other intellectuals would grapple with questions of blackness, identity and colonialism (Clark, 2013; Sprague, 2018; Graham; 2014). Clark (2013) writes that négritude responds to two pillars of colonial discourse: the “power of erasure,” which resulted in the “psychic

disorientation” and the “arrested development of the african world” and “racial othering.” “Racial Othering,” he writes, “is a social process of demarcation where differential standards and moral codes are applied to distinct racial groups” (p. 74). As such, négritude, as it is understood, was, “a literary and philosophical movement that responds to colonial domination...a philosophy of black identity [that] evolved into a mode of thought that inspired blacks to reimagine African alternatives to the colonial state” (p. 71).

On February 12, 2018, Frieda Ekotto professor of comparative literature and chair of AfroAmerican and African Studies at the University of Michigan was invited to speak at the African Studies Center Speaker Series at UCLA. Dr. Ekotto began by saying: “To read Césaire’s work in light of recent events is to bear witness to the ongoing struggles of Black people. His work is rooted in the history of Blackness” (Sprague, 2018). Through Césaire, Ekotto provides a transnational analysis of the state of blackness within the diaspora. Négritude, as she understands it, responds to the systematic oppression and alienation of Black individuals by embracing African heritage, examining and challenging colonial relations of power, and incorporating previously ignored Black experiences into writing (p. 244).

Though developed in France in the 1930s, what Touré (forthcoming) and other contemporary Francophone researchers glean from the négritude movement are aspects of visibility and ownership. It is from this shared “struggle” and the current sociopolitical dynamics that impact the diaspora, that a reimagining of this francophone movement and its relevance today brings us to Touré’s (forthcoming) “transnégritude.” Just as Clark (2013), Sprague (2018), Graham (2014) and Thompson (2002) analyse the origins of

négritude, Touré also considers the “shared colonial oppression” in former colonies. Transnégritude, he writes, is informed by Françoise Lionnet’s concept of transcoloniality, “which translates the shared experience of colonial oppression in all former French colonies and those of other major European countries” (Touré, forthcoming, p. 1). Because of this transnational and transcolonial basis, the experiences, philosophies, and writings of the Négritude thinkers vary according to their geographies, histories, colonial encounters and freedom struggles. (p. 1).

In a nutshell, Touré continues:

Transnégritude also accounts not only for the silenced, oppressed, and invisible but also Afrodiasporic individuals whose living conditions entail no, single, dual and multiple roots, ranging from the physical to the digital spaces. It probes and articulates the conditions of the people trapped in the errant circuits between bodies of water and landmasses in search of freedom or alternative existence. It concomitantly deconstructs and reenacts the ongoing co-construction of an ostracized self and fearless other (p. 1).

Because one of the central questions that early négritude thinkers grappled with was how to be both Black and French within a colonial context, négritude offered what Clark (2013), citing what Benedict Anderson (1983, as cited in Clark 2013 and Lambert, 2016) calls the “imagined community.” Clark writes, “a community where there is a mental and emotional affinity among blacks that transcends nationality, language and economic circumstances” (Clark, 2013, p. 74). Touré instead imagines “multiple négritudes” and challenges the homogenization of the movement. He writes that transnégritude attempts to “examine the layers of the conceptual misreading of négritude by arguing for many ongoing négritudes instead of one, shunning the debates couched in the homogenization of négritude” (p. 2)

In considering this imagined community and the many “Africas” one might traverse, Touré challenges the notion of “cultural fixity.” The ability to converse with “different sections of the black worlds,” as imagined by early *négritude* thinkers, provides new ways of reconfiguring the Black condition. The reason why this is important is that in understanding this shared struggle, Black people could create what Césaire (1939) considered to be a cultural bridge that would do away with the “old negro.” (Touré, forthcoming). Through the writings of Césaire, Touré coaxes us to assess how the “falsification of history” has played a major role in “shaping the consciousness of black people” (p. 15). If, as he notes, the status of black people has not “transformed drastically in terms of their narratives and contribution to the conceptualizations of black identities,” how then can Black people benefit from this shared struggle? Referencing Césaire, Touré suggests that Black people “need to recalibrate linkages and bonds among people who share a common history of slavery, colonialism and ongoing racial prejudice or discrimination” (p. 13). The challenge however, lies in the identity crisis Black people have inherited from the “psychic disorientation” of colonialism.

Whereas Césaire’s conception of *négritude* was on race, psychology and color consciousness and thus, subjective. Clark argues that Senghor’s *négritude* was objective and focused on the “sum total of black cultural values;” objective (Clark, 2013, p. 76). *Négritude*, for Césaire (1939), was the “simple recognition of the fact that one is Black, the acceptance of this fact and of our destiny as Blacks, of our history and culture” (Césaire, 1939 as cited in Sprague, 2018). This is an announcement of a “sharpened, diasporic consciousness in the Black world” and one that seemed to challenge adherence to majoritarian narratives (Sprague, 2018, p. 244). Senghor’s *négritude*, was the “sum of

the cultural values of the black world as expressed in the life, the institutions, and the works of black men; the sum of the values of the civilization of the black world" (Senghor, 1964 as cited in Ba, 1973, p. 44). Senghor approached the movement by promoting the culture and civilization of the Black world; which has been critiqued for "essentialising Africanness" and not engaging in the sociopolitical struggle (Clark, 2013, p. 88).

These tensions within the experiences of négritude thinkers would be evidenced in their work. For Césaire, growing up in Martinique, Creole was his first language but it was regarded as "servile" and French was seen as the language of mobility. For Senghor, having French citizenship seemed to matter more than a Senegalese one (Clark, 2013, p. 75). This practice of "denigrating one's mother tongue and elevating the language of the conqueror" illustrates what Fanon (1952), Ngugi (1987) and Clark (2013) recognize as viewing the "Self" through the eyes of the colonizer (Clark, 2013, p. 75).

Négritude writers struggled with the identity crisis of being Black and French vis-a-vis language and identity. As the diaspora grows and evolves, questions of language and identity still permeate our society. Language, as Ngugi (1987) puts it, is "central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe...Language as culture is thus mediating between me and my own self; between my own self and other selves; between me and nature. Language is mediating in my very being" (p. 4 & 15). The subjugation of one identity or language over another is what Ngugi problematizes in his tome, *Decolonizing the Mind*. As Clark (2013) maintains, so embedded was the image of the 'Dark Continent' on the cultural assumptions of people of African descent that they did not identify with it. It was

commonplace for African elites in the Francophone world to identify as Frenchmen who happened to be black” (p. 76). Ngugi asserts that African intellectuals who claimed their allegiance to the West were essentially burying their “Africanity” under layers of “Europhonism” (Ngugi, 2009 as cited in Touré, forthcoming). Transnégritude, thus, allows for a more nuanced approach to the migritive cultural mélange that is the diaspora today.

Discussions with members of Y’en a Marre and FESCI led me to believe that they each approached and conceptualized their identities and missions differently. Though they had similar intentions, their methods and view of Hip-Hop pedagogy diverged in their employment and application. This will be further illuminated in chapter 4. However what I witnessed was that members evoked a sense of consciousness that urged adherents to “heal themselves.” And, their use of language, forms of leadership and identity formation, were seen as a means of “personal presentation, verbal artistry, and commentary on life’s circumstances” (Keyes, 2004, p. 22); Concepts that I wish to complicate within transnégritude.

Apart from language, Transnégritude allows us to reconsider négritude writers' views and approaches to authenticity as a response to imperialism. In 2018, President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana, declared and launched the “Year of Return, Ghana 2019” for Africans in the Diaspora, “giving fresh impetus to the quest to unite Africans on the continent with their brothers and sisters in the diaspora” (Tetteh, 2018). So too did Césaire’s “return to the native land” call for Black unity across the diaspora. Clark (2013) views it as a “uniting idea for African peoples to forge an ‘imagined Pan-African community,’ one that transcends ethnic, religious and national affiliation” (p. 76). But

how do we imagine this community not solely from the continent but also “from the experiences of diasporic populations?” (Touré, forthcoming, p. 11). “The question of migritude,” Touré writes, “responds to the proposal of *négritude*—that is to say, that we are no longer in a conceptualization of identity centered on race but on the migratory experience...” (p. 11).

In his discussion of Y'en a Marre (YEM) and their cultural philosophy of *nouveau type de sénégalais* (A New Type of Senegalese), Bryson (2014), considers how YEM draws not just from Hip-Hop culture but also from Senghor's *négritude* (p. 35). He continues, “Y'en a Marre's cultural interventions in Senegalese society echo Senghorian cultural ideology not simply in the way they embody a linkage between culture and politics, but also in the manner in which they evoke Senegalese national identity” (p. 50). *Transnégritude*, however goes beyond just national Senegalese identity but also considers the sociopolitical expression of black identity manifested contextually in each specific space and time.

Though francophone literature has concerned itself with the transformation of the immigrant, as Touré surmises, why has it not done the inverse? Or further still, considered the transformation within? (p. 11). If, as some have critiqued that *Négritude* was an ideal of the alienated bourgeoisie and not of the masses (Clark, 2013), *Transnégritude* then problematizes the Self within a decolonial narrative that pushes for epistemic and economic liberation. This framework challenges the “posts” in post-positivist research because, as Smith (1999) suggests, “[t]here can be no 'postmodern' for us until we have settled some business of the modern” (p. 34).

This study therefore situates transnégritude within discussions that consider the ways in which young people within this shared “transcolonial” narrative, bound through an “imagined community,” or “multiple roots,” negotiate their space, their identities, and their ways of knowing through a Hip-Hop pedagogy. This community comprises of young people who espouse an aesthetic, a linguistic expression, an identity, and sound with a philosophy that is “guided by black nationalism and street consciousness”(Keyes, 2004, p. 157). Guided not only by this shared struggle but also armed with the understanding that “Hip-Hop is a culture and genre of music that promotes social justice and provides an outlet for youth who have been marginalized to share their stories and experiences with the world” (Adjapong, 2017, p. 38). This discussion looks to epistemic disobedience to nuance our understanding of engagement and the shared struggle for liberation.

Epistemic Disobedience

In discussions surrounding the notion of the Self, Fanon (1952), Ngugi (1987), Wiredu (1998), Smith (1999), and Mignolo (2009), examine how language and identity have shaped the neocolonial socioframework and the pains in “delinking” from these disorientations. My analysis is thus informed by Mignolo’s (2003; 2009) epistemic disobedience and the geo- and body-politics that challenge neo-colonial epistemologies. Ngugi (1987), succinctly elaborates the connection between the Self and the impact of imperialism:

...I have pointed out that how we view ourselves, our environment even, is very much dependent on where we stand in relationship to imperialism in its colonial and neo-colonial stages; that if we are to do anything about our individual and collective being today, then we have to coldly and consciously look at - what imperialism has been doing to us and to our view of ourselves in the universe. Certainly the quest for relevance and for a correct perspective can only be

understood and be meaningfully resolved within the context of the general struggle against imperialism ((Ngugi, 1987, p. 88).

Along with the sociopolitical and economic domination of imperialism, western colonialism also privileged its own epistemology over all other ways of knowing. The world, according to Mignolo (2003), “became unthinkable” beyond western epistemologies and this colonial difference and hierarchy, “marked the limits of thinking and theorizing, unless modern epistemology...was exported/imported to those places where thinking was impossible” because it was lore, magic, or “ancient” wisdom (Mignolo, 2003, p. 90). This “geo- and body-politics of knowledge” a response “from the Third World to the First World,” brought to light the “epistemic privilege of the First World” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 8; Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 5). Geopolitics, Mignolo (2003) writes, “regionalizes the fundamental European legacy, locating thinking in the colonial difference and creating the conditions for diversality as a universal project” (p. 91). Thus, Mignolo continues, a step towards decolonial thinking is the “the unveiling of epistemic silences of Western epistemology and affirming the epistemic rights of the racially devalued, and de-colonial options to allow the silences to build arguments to confront those who take ‘originality’ as the ultimate criterion for the final judgment” (p. 4).

Where there is power, Foucault (1978) wrote, there is resistance (p. 95). Building on Touré (forthcoming), Mignolo (2003, 2009), and Ngugi’s (1987) shared understanding of a shared oppression, epistemic disobedience as exemplified by Mignolo and Ngugi also calls for acts of resistance. As Medina (2013) puts it, the shared struggle of Yenamarristes and Fescists is both internal and external. Those who live under conditions of oppression, however they inhabit those contexts, “have an obligation to resist” (Medina, 2013, p. 17). Throughout my interactions with yenamarristes and Fescists, it

was clear to me that they were not just resisting sociopolitical and economic structures that have engendered a push for autonomy but they also disobeyed or resisted social and pedagogical norms; from talking back to elders, to having women activists/leaders, to developing their own schools. This geo and body-politics of epistemic disobedience exemplifies this internal and external resistance. As Medina (2013) asserts, “It is a mistake to think that the forms of exclusion, subordination, and marginalization... can be resisted only from the outside, and not also from within...for the multifaceted activity of resisting is conceptualized as contending with, and not exclusively or fundamentally as contending against” (p. 17). From this epistemic oppression, comes an obligation to resist as Ngugi (1987) and Medina (2013) assert or “de-link” as Mignolo (2009) affirms. In order to do so, one must assume several “epistemic duties” to fight against ignorance, to know oneself and others, to learn and teach others, and to work towards social justice (Medina, 2013, p. 17).

Epistemic disobedience, or resistance as Medina puts it, charges one to “undermine and change oppressive normative structures and the complacent cognitive-affective functioning that sustains those structures” (p. 2). When talking to Yenamarristes and Fescists it was reported that their call to engagement was embedded in these theories of democracy, politics, oppression, and decolonial epistemologies. As medina (2013) notes, resistance begets contestation, that is the “political mechanisms and activities that make democratic interaction possible” (p. 3; Celikates, 2016). This involves a collective self-determination for citizens to protest and participate even if it can be complicated and divergent (Celikates, 2016 p. 41; Medina, 2013, p. 14). In the case of language, for example, linguistic resistance as asserted by Ngugi (1987) and built upon by Duranti

(2009) and Medina (2013), functions within oppressive language games and as such subversion of the “normative core” relies on “speaking from elsewhere while remaining within” (p. 16).

If, as Smith (1999) and Mignolo (2009) assert that “[k]nowledge-making presupposes a semiotic code shared between users in semiotic exchanges” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 18) then, the reclamation of sovereignty must contest the “accounts of the past by colonizers and colonized...They are not simply struggles over ‘facts’ and ‘truth’” (Smith, 1999, p. 33). This “de-linking” that Mignolo (2009) suggests involves the promotion of local experiences and needs “rather than from local imperial experiences and needs projected to the globe, invokes also the body-politics of knowledge” (p. 19). This is what contributes to epistemic disobedience and I will further examine as I discuss the themes of language and identity.

“There is an extraordinary power,” Fanon (1952) wrote, “in the possession of a language.” (p. 2). To speak, therefore, is not just the syntax and structure of a particular language but “above all assuming a culture and bearing the weight of a civilization” (p. 1). Language thus influences and molds one’s perceptions. Echoing Fanon, Ngugi (1987) writes that language is central to a “people’s definition of themselves in relation to their natural social environment” and is at the “heart” of the social forces on the continent (p. 4). The colonial consequence of language is substantial and complex as such, liberation and “delinking” must stem from the “rediscovery and the resumption of our language...[and] a call for a regenerative reconnection with the millions of revolutionary tongues in Africa and the world over demanding liberation” (Ngugi, 1987, p. 108). He continues,

It is a call for the rediscovery of the real language of humankind: the language of struggle. It is the universal language underlying all speech and words of our history. Struggle. Struggle makes history. Struggle makes us. In struggle is our history, our language and our being. That struggle begins wherever we are; in whatever we do: then we become part of those millions whom Martin Carter once saw sleeping not to dream but dreaming to change the world” (Ngugi, 1987, p. 108).

Because the legacy of colonialism favored the imperial language over local languages, there has been an impetus to “force” the continent into a state of “intellectual dependence” on the West (Mazrui, 2000, p. 56). Mazrui writes that this intellectual dependence is due in part to the favoring of euro-languages by international aid organizations such as the World Bank, but also the “wider capitalist design” that preferences euro-languages “which create and maintain social divisions serving an economy dominated primarily by foreign economic interests and, secondarily, by a small aspiring african bourgeoisie” (p. 55). This is why, Smith (1999), asserts that knowing the past is a necessary part of the “critical pedagogy of decolonization” that leads to an “epistemic awakening” from western thought (Mignolo, 2009, Wiredu, 1998). From this awakening, Medina (2013) concludes that it is through resistance that “relations of solidarity against domination” and various forms of oppression become possible and effective. Through resistance, Medina continues, citizens can develop their identification and thus influence their society (p. 21).

It is from this epistemic delinking and decolonial thinking that form the central frame for how I understand the parallels of Hip-Hop pedagogy and citizenship and civic education, as well as Hip-Hop pedagogy, epistemic disobedience, and transnégritude. There is a shared struggle that is echoed by Mignolo (2009), Keyes, (2004), Smith (1999), Ngugi (1987) and Touré (forthcoming) that colors the lived experiences of young

people. Through Hip-Hop culture we see young people or groups such as FESCI and YEM recognizing the failures of institutions to provide the “essential needs for economic survival and maintenance” and thus turn to this cultural expression as it “maps out real and imagined relations between people that speak to the realities of displacement, disillusion, and despair created by the austerity economy of post-industrial capitalism” (Keyes, 2004, p. 6; Buffington & Day, 2018). And, through this struggle and cultural expression, YEM and FESCI are emboldened to assert their identity, mobilize, engage, and create expressions that challenge neo-colonial struggles (Ngugi, 1980).

Civic and citizen education

Over the past forty years, there has been a rise in civic education (Evans 2007, Levinson, 2005; 2011). This became an important feature for many countries in the global South as they transitioned to multi-party systems, embraced democracy and developed a national identity (Johnson & Morris, 2012). Moreover, after decades of being excluded from citizenship rights, research shows that young people are eager to embrace their civic rights and participate in nationbuilding (Crossouard & Dunne, 2015).

This approach to education incorporates citizenship and civic rights, which are essential components to peacebuilding, state building, and nation building (Levine & Bishai, 2010; Evans, 2007). Given that our focus is on civic education in the global South, it is essential to also contextualize and broaden our definition of citizenship, which goes beyond “vertical relations between individual citizens and rights recognizing states” (Lieres, 2014, p. 49). For many, citizenship is experienced through “highly localised processes of horizontal identification and mobilisation” (p. 49). As such, citizenship is highly relational and contextual.

I utilize Levinson's (2005, 2011) definition of citizenship and democracy, which is informed by Ladson-Billings (2004) and Spindler's (1987) discussion of citizenship and education which argues that, "all education is citizenship education" (Levinson, 2011, p. 280). Going beyond Levine and Bishai's (2010) definition, Levinson (2011), conceptualizes citizenship as "constituted by the meanings, rights, and obligations of membership in public, as well as the forms of agency and modalities of participation implicated by the such membership" (p. 280). This definition approaches citizenship as relational and as developing identities of citizens, given that identity "captures the varying senses of social belonging and commitment" (p. 280).

From this we can glean that citizenship education, for comparativists, considers the state, the citizen, and their relational participation in society. Levinson (2011) defines democracy as "the continual striving toward a social order that sponsors reasoned deliberation, promotes civic participation in decision-making, justly and equitably distributes political economic power, and facilitates cultural inclusiveness" (p. 281). The study of citizenship education for democracy therefore situates members vis-a-vis their social belonging and participation as citizens (p. 282). For this study, the goals and methods of engagement of Yenamarristes and Fescists were heavily influenced by their identities as young people, their sense of belonging, and space in society.

This study intends to address the broader implications of schooled identities and how they have resisted or found "alternative political imaginaries" to shape their sociopolitical outlook and engagement. This analysis considers the ways in which the civic identities proposed in schools may also be in contradiction with alternative and informal ways of knowing that also influence young people. Y'en a Marre and FESCI

illustrate this dichotomy. They both engage in civic education that at times goes against learned curricula within the school setting. Examining Y'en a Marre and FESCI's engagement allows us to consider how civic education, through a Hip-Hop pedagogy, is adopted within and outside the formal schooling structure to consider matters of identity, democracy, citizenship, and engagement.

For Y'en a Marre and FESCI, what I witnessed was that they viewed their methods of engagement as “diasporic counterspaces of education” that contributed to affirming concepts of identity and belonging (Shirazi, 2019, p. 480). Similar to Touré's (forthcoming) “multiple négritudes” and challenging the notion of “cultural fixity,” Shirazi argues that within the context of schooling, diasporic spaces and practices provide possibilities of teaching and learning from multiple vantage points thereby becoming “counterspaces to query the dehumanizing modes of representation that position youth as outsiders to the nation-state” (p. 498). This study therefore examines the educational practices of Y'en a Marre and FESCI as “sites of cultural production and narrativization” (p. 483). What we see is that the practice of citizenship and education is “inherently messy” and involves “participation in, and resistance to a wide range of political institutions and societal spaces” (Lieres, 2014, p. 49).

If, as Levinson (2011) and Lieres (2014) contend that citizenship is a collective, intended to build broad coalitions, mobilise under a new agenda, and provide a counter balance to the state by encouraging citizens to voice their demands, advocate and play a watchdog role, we must then also consider the “possible disjunctures between the practices of democracy...and the everyday realities of clientelism, patronage and authoritarian local politics” young organizations such as FESCI and YEM face (p. 52).

Discussions surrounding civic education and citizenship, center the importance of an empowered citizenry who can actively participate in democratic life and hold the state accountable. If that is the case, then Hip-Hop pedagogy provides that source of empowerment and self-determination. As Hip-Hop pedagogy rests on the notion that traditional and non-traditional educational spaces that are youth driven can be places that “embody a critique of oppression, a desire for social change, and ultimately lay the foundations for community empowerment and social change” (Love, 2016, p. 417).

Hip-Hop, transnégritude, and epistemic disobedience

Young people of the Hip-Hop generation, represent a duality and contradiction that is unique and that which transcends geography. Consider first that Hip-Hop’s origins was highly influenced by interactions between Black American residents, Puerto Ricans and West Indians in the Bronx (Clark, 2018). Secondly, some of the early pioneers of Hip-Hop were Caribbean born immigrants who helped shape the sound and style of Hip-Hop (Clark, 2018, Chang & DJ Kool Herc, 2005). Moreover, Bridges (2011), Collins (2006) and KRS-One (2005) write of the contradictions splicing the Hip-Hop generation one which sees a population born after the Civil Rights and Black Nationalist Movements in the U.S. and the end of the colonial era in Africa. Bridges (2011) writes that the Hip-Hop generation has on one hand, benefitted from voting rights, educational reform and affirmative action campaigns yet at the same time, “they too have experienced the rapid erosion of the racial, social, and educational gains that their foreparents worked so diligently to achieve” (p. 326). Hip-Hop artists recognized and lived these opposing experiences and proselytize to a willing and eager population who regarded Hip-Hop artists as “surrogate teachers and Hip-Hop culture as alternative classrooms” (p. 326).

Hip-Hop like Transnégritude speaks to the delinking and expressive actions of those othered. Clark (2018) and Haupt (2008) write that Hip-Hop is connected to the “notion of a global black experience of oppression and resistance” in the construction of a black nationalist identity (Haupt, 2008, p. 145). Hip-Hop pedagogy speaks to its healing power and its “ability to give voice, shape, and dimension to the often ignored and disregarded sources of pain” that Black people negotiate (Bridges, 2011, p. 327). Why? Because of the implications inherent within Hip-Hop to better understand language, learning, identity, and curriculum (Petchauer, 2009). In his attempts to frame and review Hip-Hop educational research, Petchauer looks at how educational research has had to contend with the utility and significance of Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool in and outside of classrooms.

If Hip-Hop is a tool needed to explicate the lived realities of young people, then Mark Anthony Neal’s “What the Music Said,” considers the factors surrounding the birth of Hip-Hop in the mid-1970s as representative of a “concerted effort by young urban blacks to use mass-culture to facilitate communal discourse across a fractured and dislocated national community” (Neal, 1999, p. 136). Much like Césaire (1939) and Lambert (2016) evoked Benedict Anderson’s (1983) imagined community, Hip-Hop was the imagined community personified. Whereas many tend to look at the culture as merely a genre representing rap only, it is necessary to note that though rap is one part of the culture it does not represent it fully. As KRS-One (1989) is quoted, “rap is something you do, Hip-Hop is something you live.” Keyes (2004) takes KRS-One’s notion further to view Hip-Hop within the context of urban street culture, “rap is from the streets. If you don’t know what’s going on out there, you can’t do rap. You can live in Beverly Hills, but

your heart has to be in the streets" (Fee, 1998 as quoted in Keyes, p. 5) Essentially, it is important to look at the culture as a whole, that is the music, dance, visual art, clothing, philosophies, and politics that comprise Hip-Hop and its multilayered identity. And, more importantly, it is essential that we recognize the push for resistance and engagement within Hip-Hop, given the contexts surrounding its genesis.

It is now accepted that Hip-Hop has become an effective and legitimate field of study in academia (Hill, 2009 & 2013; Akom, 2009; Seidel, 2011; Petchauer, 2009). Yet, those who utilize Hip-Hop in (and especially outside of) academia, are often challenged and made to consider whether a Hip-Hop pedagogy can provide educative benefits that challenge other accepted methods. Sam Seidel (2011) argues however, that Hip-Hop's genesis and success is from its "creative collaging" which bodes well, as Jenkins (2013) concurs, for a "transformative educational" approach.

What Seidel (2011) forces us to do is, as Jenkins (2013) boldly calls for is to reconceptualize what is a school or text in order to "begin to appreciate life in itself as a form of school" (p. 12). As such, when it comes to looking at the ways in which young Ivorian or Senegalese people approach their language and identity via this transcolonial, epistemic disobedient medium, we must recognize the transcultural, socio political and economic mutations that have impacted the diaspora. What better pedagogical tool to utilize than one that highlights and espouses from its origin, a blended means of coming to know?

The study of Hip-Hop can hold its own within traditional and nontraditional academic spaces. It merges the fields of sociology, cultural and ethnic studies, history, education, politics, and the arts (p. 13). The very spirit of Hip-Hop culture Jenkins (2013)

confirms, not only informs classrooms, community programs, and educational experiences. But too, the culture “advances a spirit of healthy competition, a dedication to excellence, the act of truly listening to young people” (p. 13-14). This epistemological approach, one that embraces a critical pedagogy of “imagination, humanism, agency, and becoming,” sits at the crux of the mission statements of YEM and FESCI. These organizations above all push for a new way of becoming that emboldens young people. This is evident with the new slogans calling for “*un ivoirien nouveau*” or “*un nouveau type de sénégalais*” emphasizing agency and awareness adopted by the Ivorian and Senegalese government and local organizations. This allows me to contend then that Hip-Hop pedagogy in this case forces us to challenge the concept of school and/or schooling.

Hip-Hop as Pedagogy

What is school or schooling? What does it mean to learn? And, who is a student? I appreciate Jenkins’ (2013) definition of a school and a student, it provides a broad and objective interpretation of what it means to acquire knowledge. A school, she writes, is,

any purposeful learning community, whether for children or adults, public or private, compulsory or voluntary. I include formal institutions and voluntary gatherings, from pre-kindergarten to universities, community colleges and home-based learning... When I use the word “student” I mean anyone who is engaged purposefully in learning, whatever their age and whatever their setting (p. 12).

We can therefore situate Hip-Hop as a critical space to study transformative education, and liberatory knowledge production. The classroom must be contested in order for it to truly evolve so that we might reshape the act of learning, from a “structured, mechanized experience into a creative, imaginative, and socially conscious endeavor” (Jenkins, 2013, p. 14). This will allow for a “critical pedagogy of imagination and humanism, which concerns creating educational spaces where the educational content matters to students”

(p. 14). What ensues is therefore a literary historiography that challenges the notions of education that schooling suggests and the critical role Hip-Hop can play in transforming and informing a very powerful population.

In *Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy as a Form of Liberatory Praxis*, Akom (2009) reorients and furthers the narrative on Hip-Hop pedagogy in academia utilizing Freire's problem-posing method to carry a community based case study through youth participatory action research to promote and dissect the meaning, purpose, and function of Hip-Hop. Informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Bernal and Villalpando's (2002) counter narratives, Akom engages the five elements of CRT "to introduce an alternative instructional strategy called Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy (CHHP)" (p. 52). In doing so, Akom hopes to assess the meaning, purpose, and function of Hip-Hop within academia.

Why? The answer is two-fold: first, since its inception the culture has been influenced by socio-political transformations that have "converged to make Hip-Hop's origins multifaceted, politically conflicting, consistently debated, and highly complicated" (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002, p. 52). Thus, people of color in general and those of the Hip-Hop generation specifically, have had to contend with a rapidly evolving socio-political sphere with limited support from the very structures engendering these changes. Secondly, though the culture has had a significant presence in the classroom—through the adoption of the Hip-Hop aesthetic by young people, it is still as of yet marginalized within institutions of higher education and within scholastic research; a perpetuation of what Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2002) call an "apartheid of knowledge" (p. 53). Provided that, as Akom (2009) argues, "Hip-Hop is the dominant

language of youth culture, and those of us who work with young people need to speak their language,” how then can we as scholar-activists merge theory and practice—that is, Hip Hop and critical pedagogy—to promote an emancipatory practice for those communities long oppressed?

If Hip-Hop speaks on the socio-political aspects of marginalized people, then critical pedagogy from a Freirean perspective, builds on this notion of students viewing education as a practice of freedom, a place to build critical consciousness and social mobility – a place “where we learn to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Akom, 2009, p. 56). Freire’s problem-solving methodology uses a five step approach to challenge the dominant status quo. The steps, from identifying a problem, analyzing a problem, developing a plan, implementing the plan, evaluating the plan, is where, according to Akom, the intersection of Hip-Hop meets critical pedagogy in the “creation of a pedagogical space of resiliency and resistance developed to challenge the dominant mindset, increases engagement and achievement, and builds new understandings of the strength and assets of youth of color and the communities from which they come” (p. 57).

Should we agree that Hip-Hop is an important lens for socio-political analysis and an influential representation of marginalized communities, then CHHP should, as Akom (2009) argues, inform our understanding of the lived realities of marginalized people. Influenced by Freire’s (1970) problem-posing method and socially and politically conscious Hip-Hop, Akom writes that CHHP operationalizes what Freire termed *conscientização* in order to suggest that “transformative education for the poor and disempowered begins with the creation of pedagogic spaces where marginalized youth

become aware of how their own experiences have been shaped by larger social institutions” (Akom, 2009, p. 55). Using counter-hegemonic curricula, racial identity, social reproduction, counter-narratives, CHHP insists that “students are active agents and should analyze a diverse set of data” (p. 55). The ensuing goal for a CHHP then, is to “demonstrate the ways in which youth-driven research supports students’ long-term academic trajectories, both because of the academic rigor of the research and concurrently because of the socialization of critical intellectual identities” (p. 55). Bernal and Villalpando (2002) successfully argued that knowledge production of people of color are almost always waylaid for seeming to lack rigor or intellectual fortitude. However, the very same social, political, and pedagogical dilemmas that are currently being discussed in research institutions, have been discussed since the birth of Hip-Hop in the 1970s.

Evidence of rappers critiquing the status-quo, educational institutions, and the political dynamics affecting Black people easily flowed from various rappers in the early days of Hip-Hop. Rapper, KRS-One, also known as “The Teacher,” widely criticized the inherent Eurocentric educational influence and bias in U.S. public school curricula in “You must Learn” (1989). Or consider Hip-Hop duo dead prez’s use of Black freedom fighters in “They Schools” (2000) to project “a scathing critique of the ways in which Black folks remain mentally incarcerated if and when we rely on a Eurocentric education system rather than developing curriculum that reflects our own culture, history, socioeconomic, and spiritual realities” (Akom, 2009, p. 54). These are not published academics with a long list of chaired positions, fellowships, or other prestigious markings that signify supposed intellectual might or rigor, yet their refrains, couched within a

counter-narrative discourse, equally illustrates what other critical pedagogists have assessed within the confines of academia.

Let's not get it twisted, not all forms of Hip-Hop are emancipatory, revolutionary, or even resistive, many are not and some even the opposite. It is no wonder there is no one definition of *négritude*; these multiple definitions are what challenge, prod and push the movement forward. Akom (2009), however, is quick to note that he is mainly challenging the notion that “given the long history of socio-political conscious hip hop as a tool for illuminating problems of poverty, police brutality, patriarchy, misogyny, incarceration, racial discrimination, as well as love, hope, joy—academic institution’s under-utilization of hip-hop’s liberatory potential in the classroom is surprising” (p. 54).

Akom (2009), along with two faculty members, co-taught one of the more popular undergraduate courses in the Africana department at San Francisco State University (SFSU), in which he was able to put his CHHP into practice. Arguing that a community case study is based on the premise that “communities of color are communities of strength even though research on communities of color over time frames communities of color as problems, pathologies, or poisons rather than focusing on the communities emerging assets, agency, and aspirations” (p. 60). As such, he along with his co-teachers, sought to counter deficit approaches to research by arguing for an asset based research “grounded in the capacities, skills and assets of people and their neighborhoods” (p. 61). They utilized youth participatory action research (YPAR) for its collaborative approach, commitment to social justice, liberatory principles, and decolonizing frameworks, and its action within the research process (p. 55). As such, CHHP builds on Hip-Hop pedagogy by not only centering race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of

oppression but challenges traditional paradigms, centralizes experiential knowledge of students of color, emphasizes the commitment to social justice and encourages a transdisciplinary approach (p. 63). As Akom concludes, “CHHP challenges these assumptions by suggesting that transformative education for the poor and disempowered begins with the creation of pedagogic spaces where marginalized youth are enabled to gain a consciousness of how their own experiences have been shaped by larger social institutions” (p. 63).

What is heartening about Akom’s analysis is his commitment to Hip-Hop, his earnestness in his appreciation of the intellectual and rigorous magnanimity of the culture, and his call to social justice. He is in a privileged position to be in a geographical area and at an institution that has access to local and international Hip-Hop artists to further improve on his on case study at SFSU. Given the multicultural student makeup of the institution, a YPAR in such a space speaks to the potentialities of students’ reception to a course taught by three faculty members. However it would have been helpful to hear the voices of those students (as he suggests surveys and comments were sent intermittently throughout the semester), and their attitudes towards a pedagogy that centralizes race and racism among other things.

While from Akom we are able to understand how a CHHP allows for a transformative education, what we know less is how a CHHP would translate within an African context. Recognizing the consequences of neo-colonialism and its manifestations throughout the continent, this study seeks to contextualize how young west Africans are negotiating decolonial educational frameworks through a complex and ever evolving cultural expression such as Hip-Hop (Buffington & Day, 2018). It is interesting to note

that Akom promotes the radical idea further supported by Chang (2005 & 2006) that Hip-Hop has several origins and one of it is from the African continent. If this may seem inaccurate to some, it is his insistence that it “reflects the hip hop community’s refusal to be singularly defined and demonstrates the dynamic nature of hip hop as a global phenomenon that many in the community believe must be felt and experienced, in order to be understood and communicated” (Akom, 2009, p. 52-53). Echoing Clark’s (2018) study of Hip-Hop in Africa, this study hopes to consider how a Hip-Hop pedagogy can construct “understandings of political institutions, social change, gender, migration, and identity in Africa” (p. 2). This provides an encouraging progression to consider the international aspects of Hip-Hop and critical pedagogy within its emancipatory framework.

Hip-Hop and language

Famed rapper Nas’s debut album *Illmatic*, is considered to be one of the best Hip-Hop albums to date. Written and recorded in his late teens, Nas beautifully creates a CNN worthy documentary of life in Queens, NY. What made the album so dope was not only its front seat to the realities of inner-city youth in the 1990s, but its poetic substance and sophisticated, complex rhyme patterns or lyricism, that powerfully convey what many lived, experienced, and saw. *Illmatic* took its listeners inside the world of a young poet fighting his way out of poverty and describes “what the streets taste like, feel like, smell like...” (NPR, 2012), this is what makes the album and its content, ill, dope, perfection. Nas’s technical skills and thematic substance splice through conventional written works on urban poverty, gang violence, and drug use and provides its listeners an accessible, thought provoking language that is both familiar and unfamiliar. It is with this sentiment

that Alim's (2011) "Global Ill-literacies: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Literacy," intends to challenge literacy and literary practices among youth in both local and global contexts.

Much like Hip-Hop culture chooses to counter majoritarian norms on language, structure, and usage, so too does Alim's global ill-literacies attempt to circumvent standard English grammar to highlight Hip-Hop youth's ill-literacy. What does he mean by this? Alim (2011) purposefully chooses to use ill-literacies as a "practice of semantic inversion, whereby standard negative meanings attached to words are inverted to produce positive ones, to highlight the irony of youth described by educational institutions as semi-literate or illiterate" (p. 122). In this sense, standard English is seen as limited and Black Language as limitless as a means to highlight Hip-Hop youth's appreciation of Hip-Hop ill-literacy as a form of counterhegemonic practice against a limited version of language. As such, the *ill* in ill-literacies in this case does not refer to a lack of literacy but to the "presence of skilled literacies" (p. 122). Recognizing Hip-Hop's coded language, Alim intends to then privilege not only the politics of Hip-Hop but also its poetics within its linguistic practice.

To further explicate on the inherent coded language within Hip-Hop, Alim utilizes I.L.L. as an acronym for a new theoretical endeavor in the same vein as Tupac Shakur's encoded acronym for Thug Life—The Hate U Gave Little Infants Fucked Everybody. Alim therefore ascertains that his use of ILL, is not only to signify skill or talent but "as referring to the three major components of literacy put forth within ill-literacy studies: Literacy must be Intimate, Lived, and Liberatory" (p. 123). Alim begins his assessment of Hip-Hop ill-literacies by providing examples from youth in Asia (China, Korea, and

Japan), engaged in local and global identifications in the creation of what Chang (2006) refers to as “the sounds of the future.” His example of a Chinese rap battle in a mix of Mandarin, Cantonese, and English illustrates Hip-Hop culture’s push towards authenticity, connectedness and above all, skill.

In this sense, the verbal art of Hip-Hop, speaks to the voice of the people, disrupts hegemonic middle-class norms using vulgar language, and encourages the composition of complex “multirhyme matrices” (Alim, 2011, p. 124). In short, the myriad examples he provides from Asian Hip-Hop youth shows that not only are youth “localizing Hip-Hop literacy practices in accordance with the varying local configurations of languages, ideologies, and politics, but these complex literacy practices are pushing scholars to critique and expand even our very notions of language” (p. 124). The argument then that Hip-Hop and Black Language is unintellectual and limited is turned over on its head to challenge how academics consider language.

It is no wonder then that global ill-literacies in this context focuses on the politics of identity, language, and race and forces us to explore “how global ill-literacies present challenges for local language policies and educational institutions” (alim, 2011, p. 126). Hip-Hop language and its inherent global nature makes it such that young people have begun to see themselves through the eyes of the other and in doing so, have created ways in which language and culture form a new iteration of their identities within their social worlds. It goes to show that language in this sense becomes a “source of creative pleasure and counterhegemonic politics, both of which routinely escape the attention of educators” (p. 129). This point is further driven home with his analysis of African youth embracing Hip-Hop culture.

If Ill-literacies engender to be intimate, lived and liberatory, then the ways by which African youth embrace Hip-Hop culture speaks to and illustrates a complex history of colonialism, the struggle for independence, and subsequent neocolonial realities that tend to cast many African countries under the shadows of their former colonial masters. As such, language in this context, takes on a powerful, counterhegemonic meaning when one considers how African youth utilize local languages along with their colonized languages to, as Alim argues, perform “new, local forms of indigeneity that recast their marginalization as an empowered transnational form of identification” (Alim, 2011, p. 131). In Nigeria, for example, youth often codeswitch between Yoruba, Igbo, English and Nigerian pidgin as a “new sort of lingua franca.” What this is doing is disrupting the notion of English as the official language of Nigeria by forming what Alim contends to be a “pan-Nigerian identity” departing from the established assumption that English is the official language. This, Alim notes, “raises serious educational, political, and policy concerns” since these young people construct multilingual texts that undermine official language and educational policies that tend to view English as the dominant and sole lingua franca of Nigeria (p. 131).

Alim’s international analyses of Hip-Hop youth contends that global ill-literacies are “agentive, progressive, linguistic acts of identification and social transformation” as they clearly challenge “prescriptive, restrictive, and antidemocratic notions of culture, citizenship, language, literacy, and education” (Alim, 2011, p. 131). How then can educators appreciate and encourage ill-literacies especially when they work within dominant, mainstream, hegemonic institutions? Studies have shown that schools and educators seldom appreciate, encourage and at times hinder the creativity and ill-

literacies of Hip-Hop youth. Alim writes, that not only do educators ignore the cultural and linguistic resources young people bring into the classroom from their diverse backgrounds, but that “they...sometimes are even opposed to, youth ideologies of language and literacy” (p. 132). Alim’s analysis is therefore effective, in not providing a rich literary argument for the creative and intellectual gymnastics inherent in ill-literacies, but also equips readers with pedagogical possibilities for scholars to engage youth ill-literacies.

Educational institutions to date are at a paradox. On one hand, they demand and encourage dominant varieties of language and literacy practices from their students while at the same time researchers disregard or are ignorant of their students’ abilities. This, Alim (2011) argues, is unreasonable and leads to damaging marginalized youth (p. 134). It is then implicit for scholars who adopt and support ill-literacy to espouse its liberatory qualities by embracing young people’s lived realities and rewriting majoritarian narratives that ascribe marginalized youth experiences as lazy or unintelligent (p. 136). Classrooms informed by Hip-Hop ill-literacy must be a safe space to critically examine the world by interrogating issues such as race, gender, class, and sexuality in an intimate, reciprocal space underlined by mutual respect (p. 135 & 136). It is to be said that Alim is not without critique and admonition for those who intend to introduce Hip-Hop literacy into their classrooms.

We as researchers, Alim (2011) notes, need to be mindful not to fall trap to respectability politics and/or a white washed, sanitized version of Hip-Hop. If our goal is to consider the lived realities of young people, then we should choose to incorporate those texts that are wildly read and circulated by young people. Hip-Hop is a “rare,

democratic space where the sacred sits right alongside the profane, allowing for open discourse and prioritizing expression over the monitoring of the acceptable” (p. 138). In doing so ill-literacy studies can avoid reproducing dominant ideologies by monitoring what is acceptable or “right.” Second, he argues, we should be mindful of what values we place on Hip-Hop texts and spoken word texts. If we uphold the false binary that spoken word is intellectual and conscious and Hip-Hop as bling-bling and about nothing, then we end up promoting respectability politics by educators who “positively evaluate youth as poets when their rhymes align with institutionally sanctioned behavior and negatively evaluate them as rappers when they do not” (p. 139). Third, educators do not introduce CRT, critical literacies or critical pedagogies in their classroom even though these studies draw on these theories, that must be changed in order to forefront what is already inherent within Hip-Hop ill-literacy (p. 139).

In late 2017, December 14, 2017 to be exact, The Roots MC, Black Thought, asserted his GOAT status in a fiery, relentless, lyrical freestyle that left the Hip-Hop community shook. We all listened, re-listened, scoped out the lyrics on *Genius* and played it a few more times to cop what has been deemed to be one of the most electrifying, assertive, and intentional ten-minute freestyle, ever. Think pieces were written by NPR, the New Yorker, The Rolling Stone, etc., all expounding the freestyle’s complex, autobiographical, metaphorical, and literary content (Cobb, 2017). What this watershed moment in Hip-Hop showed to the world, once again, is its incessant dominance, maturity, and counter-narrative that at once exhilarates, obliterates, and educates.

Alim's (2011) literary analysis of ill-literacies falls in this vein in his attempt to elevate an oft maligned culture into the echelons of academia. Black Thought's rhymes earned him praise for his "wordsmith and poetry" (The Source), his casual "erudition, metaphor and poise" (New Yorker) and other accolades in a ten minute, 2,000-word rhyme that embraces the local to the global. Much as Alim makes claim to the global ill-literacies of Hip-Hop, so too does Black Thought bring it all in within a ten-minute freestyle that once again challenges mainstream, bourgeois tastes to re-acknowledge Hip-Hop's poetic and literary prowess by "draw[ing] on the ubiquitous Hip-Hop practice of semantic inversion, whereby standard negative meanings attached to words are inverted to produce positive ones, to highlight the irony of youth described by educational institutions as semi-literate or illiterate" (Alim, 2011, p. 122).

It becomes quite apparent why within an international, urban setting such as Dakar or Abidjan, Hip-Hop pedagogy and rhetoric is easily adopted and adapted to suit local educative needs. Alim's (2011) explication of Ill-literacies, firmly confirms and speaks to what Freire (1970), hooks (1994), Woldu (2010) and Jenkins (2013) have shown thus far. Challenging the notion of language, Magro's (2016) study discusses the obstacles heritage speakers face in navigating a Standard and non-Standard "native" language. Given that only 29% of the Senegalese population and 34% of the Ivorian speak French (CIA, 2019)—with the remainder speaking either Wolof, Dioula, Nouchi, and other ethnic languages—how language is used and manipulated plays a significant role in the cultural capital of young people.

What happens when the dominant language of a culture is no longer the culturally accepted standard language it replaced? Educator, Hip-Hop artist, and linguist, José

Magro's (2016) article, pushes us to investigate why heritage speakers view their Spanish as less than formal/academic Spanish. Utilizing contrasting methodological approaches to examine language attitudes in a Spanish heritage speakers Spanish class in public university in NYC. Magro uses a "matched-guise technique with rap followed by an interview" utilizing quantitative and qualitative methodologies for studying languages and attitudes (p. 16).

Magro (2016) sees language and attitudes as epistemologically compatible since "attitudes are influenced by ideologies and both fields feedback on each other" and so, in utilizing Labov's (1966) language stratification theories, and the concept of overt and covert prestige, Magro hopes to use his triple positionality, as sociolinguist, teacher and insider in Hip-Hop, to assess Spanish heritage speakers' response to formal or informal Spanish. Sociolinguists argue that "prestige is the respect granted to a specific language variety within a particular speech community in relation to other varieties" as such, Magro, building on work with Spanish heritage speakers who view their language as lacking prestige, attempts to dissect how Hip-Hop circumvents these notions of race, class, and accepted Spanish linguistic varieties (p. 16). In doing so, the study was carried out in a Spanish heritage language class at a public university in NYC and participants were Dominican or Dominican descent belonging to low or middle-income families so as to maintain statistical efficiency (p. 16).

Hip-Hop's glocality is reimagined from within New York's urban setting. Since moving to NYC in 1999, Magro (2016) started a program of Hip-Hop within the Latin community through concerts, festivals, recording sessions, meetings, and other activities and has also built an educational program which articulates Hip-Hop with critical

thinking and literacy (p. 17). These programs were open to all Latinos but were mostly populated by Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Mexicans “who were first and second generation immigrants” (p. 17). Young people in these contexts, he argues, are drawn to Hip-Hop because it speaks “to the experience of the Spanish speaker and his/her identity” (p. 18). Much like what one sees in Africa, Asia, and Europe, young Latinx in NYC re-configure Hip-Hop to represent their lived identities. As Alim (2009) notes in *Hip-Hop Nation Language*, “Hip-Hop style does not impose a homogenized “one–world” culture upon its practitioners,” rather “the global style community of Hip-Hop is negotiated not through a particular language, but through particular styles of language, these styles are ideologically mediated and motivated in that their use allows for a shared respect based on representin’ one’s particular locality” (p.18; p. 106).

Hip-Hop is about authenticity, “keepin’ it real,” (Low et al., 2013; Adjapong, 2017), and being true to the local,” this idea of authenticity, Magro (2016) argues, “is linked to specific linguistic varieties” thus, “membership in a global community of style may have as much to do with ideologies of language and transidiomatic practices, as it does with local forms and share linguistic systems” (p. 18). Thus, if Hip-Hop and authenticity is about embracing street varieties of language as a form of “resistance vernacular,” and if this resistance vernacular has now obtained “symbolic capital” a variety of prestige in pure Hip-Hop, then, if these vernacular varieties can achieve some social capital so too, Magro asserts, can Spanish be used as a “resistance tool in the public space of the United States” (p. 18).

And so, the study was carried out in a heritage language speakers Spanish class, with heritage Spanish speakers between ages 18-31. Magro uses a mentalist research

study to look at language attitudes and the techniques used (semi-structured interviews) of students. In using a matched-guise – recording rap rhymed in two varieties of Spanish followed by a questionnaire/test “adapted to the semiotics of HIP-HOP culture,” Magro (2016) is able to utilize a medium that is both appealing to his subjects and centers his authenticity as a Hip-Hop insider to better dissect the nuances in the recordings (p. 20). Participants in the class were asked to listen to four raps (two male, two female) and asked to identify where each person’s language variety placed them geographically.

What he found aligned with previous studies of Latino Hip-Hop youth. As “Hip-Hop heads,” the participants were able to “demonstrate their agency when identifying the proper ways of speaking in different contexts, recognizing their own dialect, sociolect, and register of Spanish as an authentic way of speaking within the context of Hip-Hop” (p. 24). Sadly, and necessary for this study, participants also showed a bias and perceived prestige towards Standard Spanish varieties that were not their own, thus building on the stigmatization of “linguistic behavior” by curriculum developers or even the general population which may lead to a complete abandonment of their language variety entirely. As will be illuminated in my findings chapters, YEM and FESCI make considerable use of Wolof (YEM) or Nouchi (FESCI). Though widely spoken, both languages have proven at times to be controversial in academic and professional settings. Provided our understanding of how Hip-Hop challenges accepted ideations of language, schooling, and knowledge production, I argue next that we need to examine how this impacts identity generally, and specifically, for young people in West Africa.

Hip-Hop and Identity

Research that falls within Identity studies have often been criticized for at times being simplistic, reductionist, or overtly deterministic politically (Fraser, 2000 and Young, 1990). What has been challenged however, is the oversight in recognizing the power wherein a particular group is subjectively centralized within the larger social fabric. Morgan and Warren (2011) articulate how Hip-Hop is interwoven with the politics of identity, ethnicity vis-a-vis Aboriginal youth in Australia. In this study, the authors want to situate discussions of identity and identification. Identification, they argue, is “the processes by which particular identity positions come to achieve a subjective centrality, to operate as master codes in shaping social actors and their public roles at particular moments” (p. 926). This of course is not a given goal but rather something that “requires the performance of identity work in the fields of culture and politics” (p. 926). Hip-Hop, can be easily associated with identity work and can serve as a powerful tool in helping to negotiate between tradition and modernity as is evidenced with the studied Aboriginal youth in Australia.

Though there has been much written on aboriginal youth cultures, there has been little discussion on the “complexities of identity work and the politics associated with this creative practice” (Morgan and Warren, 2011, p. 929). What was found however, was that Hip-Hop played a unique role in centering and espousing Aboriginal identity among young people. Why Hip-Hop is able to not only relate to but transform colonial views of their identity, is due in part, as the authors quote Hip-Hop’s “incorporation of traditional rituals and practices into more global techniques such as MCing, breaking, and freestyling” (p. 928).

Morgan and Warren (2011) conducted an ethnographic study on “six young aboriginal hip hop enthusiasts” using semi-structured interviews from participants and supplemented by interviews with a number of older aboriginal community leaders/activists, and members of the pre-Hip-Hop generation in Redfern-Waterloo (RW/outside of Sydney) and Norwa (p. 929). What they found was that Hip-Hop was crucial in developing “patterns of mentoring, informal pedagogies, through which global cultures are grounded in indigenous expressions” (p. 931). This was particularly evident when the authors provided a juxtaposition of the sociopolitical experiences of Aboriginals in RW and Norwa and why Hip-Hop resonated deeply with the population.

Young people in RW and Norwa eagerly embraced West Coast rap for its ability to provide an account of oppression similar to their lived experiences in Australia. Among Aboriginal people in RW there are very high levels of addiction, family breakdown, incarceration, mortality and unemployment. Indigenous youth unemployment levels are particularly high and low levels of workforce participation hide a much more substantial problem of long-term unemployment and welfare reliance (Morgan and Warren, 2011, p. 932). Unemployment, the authors write, “also results from an inability to form individual narratives of aspiration, to see pathways into the adult world” (p. 932).

West Coast rap profoundly resonated with young people in RW because it proved to be more than a “fad [and] naive and uncritical consumption of imported youth subculture,” rather, it provided a clear and raw account of “urban racism, police persecution and the sense of living in a ghetto. It revealed that Black men elsewhere had a similar experience with state authority and fought against it” (p. 934). This was not the first time that “youth culture built a symbolic bridge between Afro American and

indigenous Australia,” rather it enforced and validated the experiences of young aboriginal men who suffered more under the region’s “zero-tolerance policing” more so than women (p. 934). It was from these visualized and explained shared moments of hardship that led to a communal organizing of young Aboriginals.

RW and Norwa share a similar trend in established arguments of the difficulties facing Aboriginal youth, mainly employment, out-migration, and dependence on welfare. Hip-Hop in this sense is a gathering place, a means utilized “via networks, and practices, supported through a local youth center, tutoring and informal pedagogies from experienced indigenous rappers...simultaneously informing ideas of what it means to be a young Aboriginal person in a disadvantaged urban setting” (Morgan and Warren, 2011, p. 937). This was particularly needed as young people in Nowra and RW had become alienated from, and resistant to, formal pedagogy experienced at school. Thus:

hip hop and its practices evoked solidarity and brotherhood between young Aboriginal men facing urban disadvantage and stigmatism. The role of mentorship by established and credible Indigenous performers and rappers then became crucial, crystallizing notions of, and identification with, Aboriginality as cultural brotherhood, in the process connecting youth with parent generations (941).

Young people who choose to become a part of these mentorship programs, do so after having lived a life of hardship. The patterns of recruitment utilized were easily adopted in contrast to the legal and institutional compulsion associated with formal education and allowed “creative endeavors [to] arise from existing informal networks” (Morgan and Warren, 2011, p. 935).

Creative and informed endeavors are easily adopted given the shared experiences within young people. This is due in part to three factors, first, young Aboriginal men who resisted formal educational thrive in informal settings, particularly because they are

“participating in communities of practice with their peers. Second, youth cultural projects are more successful when they draw on subcultural/street culture enthusiasm. These projects provide forms of institutional support for cultural production (equipment, payment for teachers/mentors) and they constitute gathering places for young people that contrast with the rigid compulsions of schools. And, they provide alternatives to dangerous street activities, illegal, or both. Finally, “cultural brokers” encourage young men to see hip hop not just in its Black American form but as a “vehicle for handling the contradictions in their own lives. They nurture the symbolic expression of Indigenous resistance and survival, teach about the history of struggle and encourage stronger identification than the young Aboriginal men might otherwise experience” (Morgan and Warren, 2011, p. 936). Through Hip-Hop, these mentorship programs encourage self-expression through the sharing of lived experiences between Blacks in America and Aboriginals in RW and Norwa.

The adoption of Hip-Hop culture in Australia can be attributed to a “transnational black culture” that has resonated throughout the world amongst marginalized groups. In their discussions of Hip-Hop’s international reach, Warren and Evitt (2010), consider how its global language can be articulated and “flush[ed] by local experiences for the articulation of aboriginal identity based on the valorization of blackness” (p. 143). What is evidenced is, much as Seidel (2011) speaks of “creative collaging,” Aboriginal rappers developed their own ways of doing Hip-Hop. Aboriginal underground rappers in Norwa, for example, used computer programs instead of DJ equipment, as it was cheaper and allowed them to work on their music and share it with a wider audience. Because Hip-Hop is a fusion between the traditional (language, cultural stories, histories and dance)

and contemporary (equipment, software and technologies), much like Hip-Hop, Aboriginal Hip-Hop, Warren and Evitt (2010) surmise that “is ‘creative’ because it is concerned with being artistic, resourceful and innovative” (p. 156).

In his study of Somali refugee students in a North American high school, Forman (2001), looked at how students negotiated their Somali-ness and blackness through symbolic creativity” (p. 959). In this way, Forman calls upon us to conceptualize “Hip-Hop not as a text to be analyzed or included in a curriculum but rather as a set of aesthetic practices containing and producing situated ways of doing (and being)” (p. 961). Which brings us to consider certain implications for research, mainly, how the physical and mental can support or harm educative practices and movements towards social justice. By conceptualizing Hip-Hop as a “community of practice and social networks with localized language, ideologies and epistemologies” allows for an intricate analysis of the ways in which this pedagogical expression can be utilized by West African youth to promote social change.

Hip-Hop and engagement

Given a history of single party systems, civil war, coup d’etats, economic instability, young people today are enjoying the liberties of democracy, social media, and interconnectedness never before seen (Kazeem, 2020; Spencer, 2012). And for many, they are choosing to speak up, tired and overwhelmed by the seeming stagnation of their communities. Though recognizant of the obstacles facing them, young people are also becoming more and more vocal (Lambert, 2016; Gueye, 2013; Clark, 2018). They are beginning to recognize their power and the role they can play as “stakeholders in the reconfiguration of society and the political project of a nation” as more and more seek to

“claim [their] rights and representation” (Abbink, 2005, p. 23). Spencer (2012) agrees, though speaking of Sierra Leone, his words resonate throughout the region when he writes, “[t]he auspicious space created for free expression in the new democratic dispensation... has helped broaden the base of participation in governance to include more youths, who have not only seized the opportunity to express their political views freely through music, but to dominate elected local councils, increase their number in the legislature, and establish an array of civil organizations” (p. 79). Young people are pushing for self-determination and transformation as they figure out their sociopolitical role on the global stage.

In the last few decades, there has been an upsurge of music as a form of protest and discontent in West Africa. Some of these musicians blend both African and imported western rhythms to create an aesthetic that is uniquely African (Spencer, 2012, p. 83). As many African countries are navigating post-war societies, there has been a push, though “grudgingly” to “give primacy to freedom of expression” as a push to implement “good-governance recovery” programs (Spencer, 2012, p. 72). For young people who have not had much say in governance, this is a “welcome opportunity to make known their views and influence political decisions” (p. 72). Young people in Sierra Leone have enthusiastically embraced the right to free expression, which has been “manifested in the singing of songs with political undertones” that decry bad governance and a need for urgent change (p. 74). Because they tend to stay abreast of “democratic developments taking place elsewhere in the world,” and recognizing the “discouraging state of affairs,” young people embraced Hip-Hop for its vulgarity, audacity and violence (p. 74; Gueye, 2013; Lambert, 2016; Clark, 2018).

As Fredericks (2014) notes, the “radicalizing discursive geography of rap” makes it a “democratically accessible, unbridled critique which shatters traditions of propriety and rules governing who is allowed to speak for the community” (p. 132). Artists sang about sociopolitical and economic issues but were also “open-minded and honest enough” to condemn the rest of the populace “who through their own laziness, indiscretion, and political passivity allowed themselves to be manipulated into collaborating with treacherous politicians” (p. 75). As such artists sang about citizens reorienting their thinking and attitudes in order to “bring about economic recovery and political stability” (p. 75).

One of the reasons why Hip-Hop has been so eagerly adopted in West Africa, is as Fredericks (2014) notes, that it serves as a “language of contestation globally...[by] facilitating new discursive spaces of self-expression for those who may not otherwise enjoy such outlets” (p. 136). Through Hip-Hop, young people are able to assume leadership roles to influence “not only their generation, but their communities, city, even nation” (p. 136). This is rather affronting especially in countries such as Senegal and Cote d’Ivoire with a “strongly hierarchical age-power system.” Young people assuming the role of spokesperson is radical not only because it counters the “conventional delineations of who is allowed to speak for the community” but also, “rap as a mode of speaking out of turn, embodies a rejection of the status quo that is the core of a sort of generational revolt” (p. 136). As previously stated and repeated here for emphasis, Smith (1999) notes that when self-determination is present in the goals of a movement, it becomes more than a political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice involving the processes of “transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as peoples” (p. 115).

Young people have an urgency, a unique tactic, and a motive that underlies their push to engagement and social justice.

Young people in a quagmire

As we consider the impact of Hip-Hop and young people in West Africa, let us examine the situation of young people on the continent. Though there have been gains made in education, migration, and job opportunities, Africa's rapid population increase and limited resources within failing state contexts have "led to a relative decline in the well-being and social advancement of young people in Africa" (Abbink , 2005, p. 1). Jon Abbink (2005) firmly asserts that young people in Africa today, "are facing tremendous odds and do not seem to have the future in their own hands" (p. 1). To illustrate, Abbink provides the facts: young people, he argues, "are growing up in conditions of mass unemployment and are facing exclusion, health problems, crisis within the family due to poverty and the AIDS pandemic, and a lack of education and skills" (p. 1).

The changing social makeup of the traditionally well-integrated society into a more disjointed and divided society has "led to a large proportion of youth having no well-defined place in society and being vulnerable and dependent, especially in urban conditions" (p. 2). This has created social paradox amongst young people in Africa. On one hand, children are valued by adults, but as they grow, the "ability, and perhaps even the interest," to care for them Abbink argues, decreases as they age. This, he concludes, is a result of poverty, violence, disease, and the breakdown of the family" (p. 2). Is it truly so bleak for such a group given the rise in innovation, arts, and politics?

How can we write about youth in Africa without as Abbink (2005) suggests, "falling back on the bleak picture of crisis, crime and violence?" (p. 3). Is this a problem

of perception? As a Congolese-American woman, I wanted to know why being young in Africa brings with it a “consistently perceived problematic essence”? International organizations utilizing statistical data tend to show African youth as problematic and embroiled in violence. Doesn't this view end up prejudging and overburdening youth without fully understanding context? What we as scholars should understand, as Abbink narrates, is the “manifestations and causes” that have caused the generational conflict in Africa (p. 3).

It is very obvious that young people in Africa are a formidable group. And, the “chronic” problems that they face can have significant political impact. Young people today, are eager and willing to address their own issues and can also be easily recruited by both positive and negative forces for their own purposes (Abbink, 2005; Lambert, 2016; Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi (2013). And, though the media, through the complicity of international organizations and NGOs, highlights the negative forces youth may be susceptible to, let us not forget the willingness of young people to engage in positive movements. Before discussing the challenges and opportunities young people face manifesting themselves in a plethora of ways, let's first inquire into how we look at and identify youth or, my preference, young people.

Defining “young people”

How do we define young people? How much of what we consider ‘youth’ is socially constructed? For example, is a man in his 30s considered part of the youth population if he is unemployed, under-educated and cannot raise a family? Don't they, as Abbink (2005) argues, “ideologically resemble the biologically younger people with whom they share a way of life defined by poverty and deprivation?” (p. 6). Is it political

in who gets to define the term and its limitations? There does not seem to be a universal definition of young people. The United Nations defines “youth” to be those between the ages of 15-24; the African Youth Charter (2006) classified “youth or young people” from 15-35; Gyimah-Brempong and Kimenyi (2013), write that several African countries, including Ghana, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Swaziland range their young people as low as 12-39 (p. 3). Is youth just a notion of time; a mood, a space, an identity?

Difficulties in naming and defining the term “generation” or “youth” shows the difficulty we have with how we understand time. Arnaut (2005) utilizes Spencer’s (1990) view of time as historically and flowingly embedded in our day to day, saying that “it allows us to see how people mobilize the metaphoric of the ‘routine transitions of life,’ that is birth, youth and age-cohorts, adulthood and death – in the way they label, experience and/or context ‘historical transitions’ in terms of rebirth or infantilization, rejuvenation or senescence, and such like” (p. 117). Youth therefore forefronts age not as a trajectory but as an identity “where identity is intended to invoke neither...adolescence as a prolonged ‘search for identity,’ nor a rigid and essentialized concept (p. 117; Bucholtz, 2002, 532). This therefore allows us to accentuate “youth agency and identity” (p. 117). Which is necessary in order to consider the youth identity category as a “temporal and local outcome of hegemonic struggles of subjectification and power distribution” (p. 119). As such, a definition defining young people must incorporate an inclusive and objective characterization that emphasizes their diverse identity expressions.

My definition of young people is drawn from Lambert (2016) and Spencer’s (2012) fluid understanding of young people, that is not “bounded by age parameters.” Lambert

envisions, young people, as an “imagined and gendered category, much in the spirit of Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities” (Lambert, 2016, p. 35). For Lambert, young people are a category that “cannot and should not be reified;” they are “imagined to be so” and as such are “situational, amorphous, unbounded, and understood to be of shifting composition” (p. 36). Drawing from Durham’s (2000) definition of youth, Spencer (2012) approaches youth as a “relational, historically constructed social category that is context specific” (p. 132). For Spencer, much like Abbink (2005), the category of young people is “deeply tied up with power; knowledge, rights, and notions of agency and personhood” (p. 132). Recognizing the political and epistemological weight inherent within the term, Lambert wishes to decenter the category; to extrapolate on the dynamics and lived experiences of a shared identity. This is the definition I will employ to contextualize young people in Cote d’Ivoire and Senegal.

Young people in context

Let us contextualize the Africa that young people are living in today. What young people have inherited in Africa generally, is a long and varied sociopolitical history that has severely impacted their lives (Abbink, 2005; Schumann, 2012 and Lambert, 2016).

Abbink (2005) lays it all down as he conjures:

A long historical process, shaped by authoritarian colonialism, post-colonial state failure and a generally problematic engagement with material modernity has yielded the conditions of crisis and upheaval under which youths in Africa are growing up. State failure and the peculiar nature of the African bureaucratic bourgeoisie that are living on ‘rent-seeking’ not productive investment, dubious Cold War alliances and a lack of economic initiatives have played their role (7).

After centuries of slavery and its gruesome effects on the social and political fabric of African communities; followed by the devastating consequences of colonialism which essentially dissolved the social make up of African communities, and severely interrupted

the “transmission of social capital and indigenous skills and knowledge” (p. 7). This interruption played a crucial role in transforming adult and youth relations leading to feelings of shame and humiliation inherent among today’s young people. Abbink writes that young people feel that “adults have given up on them or have reneged on their social and moral obligations towards them” such that the perceived lack of guidance contributes to those feelings of shame and humiliation.

This youth problem is not an African specific problem, it very much is a global issue affecting many societies. “Virtually everywhere on the continent,” Abbink (2005) notes, “youth, while forming a numerical majority, are in a situation of dependency, economically marginalized, and feel excluded from formal power and prestige, even when the time has come for them to become part of established society” (p. 11). These issues are evident in both rural and urban settings and the challenges they face echo the challenges we hear from students and members of YEM and FESCI.

Writing about why a rural pastoral community in East Africa has generational issues, he argues it is because in these communities where age is used as a “social distinction and power marker,” there is difficulty among the older population in “absorbing the challenges and problems of modernity” (Abbink, 2005, p. 12). As such, young people “are faced with processes of economic exclusion, unmediated commercialization, wrong-headed state policies and so-called development schemes that do not enhance interaction, cooperation or well-being, but rather the reverse” (p. 12). It is these struggles, he writes that have led to the massive recruitment and involvement of young people in revolutionary or insurgent movements since the 1970s. These groups recognize young people as members, give them a sense of belonging and a promise of

social change, justice, or at least some loot (p. 12). Clearly, there are egregious violations of rule of law and social cohesion to lead to such a sharp contrast.

When we further investigate closely African politics in the post-colonial era, we see a period marked by “immobility and the monopolizing behavior of the elites in power, sustained by often surrealistic and ruthless methods of intimidation” along with an exploitative relationship with the West that frequently hindered the economic and political potential of the continent (p. 13). We see these examples with Mugabe’s rule in Zimbabwe, Nujoma in Namibia, or Mobutu in the former Zaire. Moreover the crippling effects of the Structural Adjustment Programmes led by the World Bank and IMF not only impacted social services and trade relations but created new and informal “power configurations and criminalized elite activities” which precluded youth from benefiting from any such reforms (p. 14). What becomes clear is that it is necessary to look at the experiences of young people in relation to the social, political, and economic spaces they navigate.

In politics and in conflict, the political structure has often stifled or censored young people into entering politics. Often this censorship was violent and terribly oppressive. Abbink (2005) points out that it is not that African youth are prone to violence but that social conditions have created a shift towards violence that has become normalized in everyday realities. In the 1990s, for example, due to social and political changes internally, young people played a major role in armed conflict at times voluntary, via recruitment either willingly or through manipulation (p. 14). This resort to conflict is often one the most “frequent responses to a situation of stagnation and a lack of future prospects” coupled with an element of revenge (p. 16).

When looking at discussions surrounding autochthony, researchers place it within globalization, democratization, and socio-economic development but, as (Ngugi (1987), Smith (1999), Mignolo (2003 & 2009), and Arnaut (2005) argue, we must also consider the “long national history of categorizations of people along different lines (ethnic, religious, political, in terms of nationality) because it rearticulates existing categories into power dynamics between those who yield it and those who function with it” (Abbink, 2005, p. 140). Young people therefore play a crucial role in the politics of history and of hegemonic struggles of “subjectification and power distribution.” They hence are a “powerful instrument” in encompassing a privileged role in the rupture, inclusion, and exclusion of social power dynamics (p. 119).

Concluding Discussion

The ensuing precis provides a glimpse into the potential and the power of Hip-Hop pedagogy as a critical, educative tool. Hip-Hop’s ability to create epistemic assessments of lived realities propels those fellowshipping within its tenets to not only take ownership of the geo-and body-politics of knowledge production but to its transmission. When contextualized within a West African context, we see Hip-Hop as a challenge to traditional schooling. Hip-Hop thus, provides a door, a motive, and a purposeful tool to unite, teach, and learn from those who have chosen to learn outside the traditional course. What we see with organizations such as YEM and FESCI, is this sense of urgency in sharing and learning within this transformative educational tool.

The following chapter introduces my methodological application of Vavrus and Bartlett’s (2017) Comparative Case Study (CCS) in the study of YEM and FESCI. CCS provides a multiscalar approach to this study and allows for a nuanced investigation on

how young people in Dakar and Abidjan negotiate their identities through Hip-Hop. Acknowledging Touré (forthcoming) and Mignolo's (2003, 2009) understanding of the transcolonial, shared struggle of colonized people; I will illustrate how YEM and FESCI members see themselves as a "lost" and marginalized population who are drawn to Hip-Hop's counterhegemonic aesthetic. As I elaborate on Low et al., (2013), Magro (2016), and Adjapong's (2017) consideration of authenticity and "keepin' it real," I will analyse how FESCI and YEM's adoption of Hip-Hop pedagogy is a means to demonstrate authenticity and engage in epistemologies of resistance and disobedience. Finally, Mignolo (2003, 2009) and Ngugi's (1987) epistemic disobedience and decolonizing approach informs how YEM and FESCI use language, forms of socialization, and identity formation as counternarratives, to delink and liberate from imperialism.

CHAPTER 3

MORTAL THOUGHT: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss my methodological considerations for examining the role of Hip-Hop, schooling, and civic engagement in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. I base this research on the transnégritude implications of Hip-Hop culture (Touré, forthcoming; Appert, 2015 & 2016; and Fielder, 1999) to consider what the culture vis-a-vis civic movement groups mean when confronting *authenticity, knowledge making, and transformation*. Just as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1987) pleads for a decolonization of the mind, so too did Afrika Bambaata (1977) and KRS ONE (1989) urge for Hip-Hop heads to consider achieving liberation through knowledge of self as detailed in chapter 2.

In Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, there has been a push to reclaim a sense of authenticity and transformation, either through political and economic means, in the countries' economic development and higher education policy plans (*Plan Sénégal Emergent, 2014* and *Politique Nationale pour l'Enseignement Supérieur de la Côte d'Ivoire, 2017*) but also by young people through activism and civic engagement. For those students who feel they have been conditioned and trained in a system of deception and disillusionment (Abbink, 2005, Sany, 2010, Akindès & Fofana, 2011), Hip-Hop culture has become a powerful tool in their expression and their thinking, such that it begins to run counter to their appreciation of their current reality. (KRS-ONE, 1989). As such, they have adopted a culture and tradition that speaks to their realities, identities, and

their experiences. As highlighted in the second chapter, Hip-Hop culture provides a platform where young people can fully express themselves and creates a space to engender a movement that speaks to the healing and transformative power of the culture. This notion goes beyond just the musical genre of the culture, and instead influences the “processes of identity formation by which youth and young adults conceive of themselves, others and the world around them” (Petchauer, 2009, p. 947, hooks, 1994, and Bridges, 2001). Hip-Hop pedagogy in this case is both a counter-narrative and creates spaces for other counter-narratives to emerge or, as Mignolo (2009) calls it, “an apparatus of enunciation” to reclaim the social, political, and cultural reality of young people.

To this end, my theoretical and epistemological standing are informed by an epistemology of disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) seen through a post-structural and decolonizing paradigm that considers the macro—social, political and historical dynamics that have shaped and influenced young people, education and engagement; and the micro—the lived realities of students considering language, music, and culturally relevant pedagogy. As such, my work will rely heavily on what Solórzano and Yosso (2002) call “counter-stories.” Counter-stories, Solórzano and Yosso state, are a means of “telling the stories’ of those people whose experiences are not often told.” Decolonization is not only the liberation of the nation but the liberation of the self and as such, counter-stories act as a “recovery of ourselves, an analysis of colonialism, and a struggle of self-determination” (Smith, 1999, p. 7). Therefore, an ontological and epistemological framework assessing the influence of power, transnégritude, engagement and transparency is necessary for these purposes.

My goal is to provide/engage in an interdisciplinary approach in the study of epistemological disobedience, power, and transnégritude as it relates to Hip-Hop culture within West African social dynamics. Much like my ontological perspective, my epistemology “announces [my] partisanship in the struggle for a better world” and so encourages me to come to know and engage through textual analysis, individual narratives, case study, historiography, aesthetic criticism and all other options that allow full meaning making (Kincheloe et al., p. 349). In so doing, my goal is to allow for scholars and policymakers alike to consider holistic practices when it comes to implementing educational initiatives.

In the ensuing sections, I will discuss my methodological considerations and its application in my research. I will first discuss my onto-epistemological assumptions; why I chose to study the dynamics of power, transnégritude and engagement in Cote d’Ivoire and Senegal, to frame my research. I will then introduce Vavrus and Bartlett’s (2017) comparative case study and my theoretical paradigms and their applicability in this study. I will discuss my positionality and subjectivity as a Congolese-American researcher in West Africa, situate the case study sites, data collection methods and analysis. I will then conclude with my ruminations on my role as a researcher and the limitations of the study.

Onto-Epistemological Assumptions

When employing a comparative case study (CCS) informed by a decolonizing framework, it is necessary that I affirm my stance and my definitions. As Smith (1999) implores, when it comes to doing research within an indigenous context, a researcher must ask themselves some critical questions: “whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose

interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated?” (p. 10). Asking Why this research is necessary, is at the crux of a decolonizing framework. Smith (1999) identifies research as a “significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other” (p. 2). For our purposes, the study of young people’s use of Hip-Hop as a counternarrative compels us to consider what we mean by the terms colonized people, colonialism itself, and the implications of intellectual and state sovereignty (Tuck and Yang, 2012). Studying the role of Hip-Hop and civic movements in Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire provides a unique lens into examining the French colonial influence in the region and the various forms of decolonization and self-determination attempted by Senegalese and Ivorians students.

In choosing to define the terms colonized/colonizer, colonialism, and intellectual and state sovereignty, I wish to emulate Smith to be explicit about my intentions. “All words are made up,” so said Thor in *Avengers: Infinity War*, on their way to Nidavellir, in an attempt to take down Thanos. Our social politics and history give power to words thus changing and reframing new and old words to fit within geopolitical contexts. This is not to deny the power derived in naming and words but seems to weigh heavy when I try to describe a colonized people in West Africa and their seeming connection to the U.S. and beyond. When invoking the terms colonized/colonizer, colonialism, and sovereignty, I initially framed these concepts within a postcolonial narrative. I did not want to reduce and ignore the efforts of geopolitically defined indigenous groups fighting for autonomy. Invoking terms such as indigenous and native too, can carry with it certain

connotations that undermine an already marginalized group; *Africans*. But Africa is not a country, so simply stating *Africans* reduces the scope and legitimacy of my work. As such, I referenced the terms other post-structuralists such as Fanon (1963), Memmi (1965), and Mbembe (2007), use, *colonized/colonizer* to demonstrate what was revealed to me by my participants and what current sociopolitical contexts illustrate. What we do know is that Ivoirians and Senegalese were once a colonized people, under French rule, who gained their independence in the 1960s. This however, does not change the fact that many feel as though they are still colonized in some ways. Kwame Nkrumah (1969) penned this subtle difference as *neocolonialism*. Stating,

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside...Neo-colonialism is also the worst form of imperialism. For those who practise it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress (p. 5).

My research project aims to consider the perspectives of colonized people, those who, Nkrumah would argue, are still exploited today under the “worst form of imperialism” (Nkrumah, 1969, p. 5 and Tuck & Yang, 2012). For this investigation, I will be discussing the dynamics of French colonization on Ivoirians and Senegalese people specifically. Sovereignty in this context then refers to the goals of decolonization, which pushes for the reclamation of the nation state from neocolonial forces. As Fanon (1963) acutely impresses, “...how could we fail to understand that we have better things to do that follow in that Europe’s footsteps?” (p. 236). Decolonization therefore, can engender the seizure of imperial intellectual and physical space and wealth.

By engaging within a decolonizing framework, I hope to reclaim the intellectual and physical space of Western hegemony. Under colonialism, colonized people were at

once against a Westernized view of their histories and complicit with that view and so, they “have often allowed our histories to be told and have then become outsiders” as the stories were retold (p. 33). Counter-stories such as Hip-Hop, as Solórzano and Yosso (2002) call it, act as a “recovery of ourselves, an analysis of colonialism, and a struggle of self-determination” (Smith, 1999, p. 7).

Al-Hardan (2014), echoing Smith’s sentiment, speaks of the political negotiations in academia for those who identify as “indigenous” studying “indigenous narratives.” For those of us identifying as colonized scholars who intend on studying stateless or colonized peoples, Al-Hardan (2014) notes, we “have a decided disadvantage.” She continues, “This disadvantage sheds light on the colonial power relations within the academy insofar as the academy privileges colonizing epistemologies that embody assumptions about the ‘universal’ researcher for whom these epistemologies are designed, and the relationship of this presumed universal researcher to the researched other as an object of knowledge” (p. 64). However, in seeking to refer to a broader epistemology that goes beyond the Western canon and rejecting a dominant and a “colonizing ego-politics of knowledge,” a decolonized framework repositions researchers to “listen to and participate with those traditionally ‘othered’ as constructors of meanings of their own experiences and agents of knowledge” (Bishop, 2011, p. 18 and Al-Hardan, p. 69). This is crucial when looking at the shared histories of oppression of “othered” peoples.

As Smith (1999) writes, the rise of civic movements led by indigenous peoples “developed simultaneously out of the survival strategies and cultural systems which [had] nurtured people, their values and their beliefs within their own communities, reserves,

tribes and nations” (p. 108). Though each region experienced colonial oppression in various ways, what is universal was the shared dissatisfaction, leading to monumental acts of civil and epistemic disobedience by colonized peoples, born out of frustration and disenfranchisement. Much like the birth of *négritude*, the rise of FRELIMO or the notoriety of the Black Panther Party, these movements began “out of sight (of the dominant society) before bursting onto the national and international stages” (Smith, 1999, p. 108).

For social organizations such as Y’en a Marre in Senegal or FESCI in Côte d’Ivoire, these shared experiences of dissatisfaction and disenfranchisement influenced the rise of a movement that “developed a shared international language or discourse which enables indigenous activists to talk to each other across their cultural differences while maintaining and taking their directions from their own communities or nations” (Smith, 1999, p. 110). Much like bell hooks (1994) writes of a “healing pedagogy” for those confronting different forms of othering, so too does a decolonized framework speaks to the need for a liberatory, self-recovery (p. 61). Self-determination is a part of social justice. This notion of self-determination, as Smith (1999) notes, can be expressed through multiscalar ways. This is a necessary process, she mentions, because self-determination, “involves the processes of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as peoples” (p. 115).

Methodology: Comparative Case Study

To better engage in decolonizing research, I employ a comparative case study (CCS) to study the “complexity within the case, on its uniqueness, and its linkages to the social context of which it is a part” (p. 22). Comparative case study (CCS) as a

methodology promotes critical qualitative research that forces us to consider and make sense of “actions, narratives, and the ways in which they intersect” (Glesne, 2011, p. 1). What makes CCS pertinent for this study is its intersectional approach to the “bounded integrated system” of the individual, the nation, and the social structures that complicate our lived experiences. I hearken back to Denzin and Lincoln’s (2013) note to qualitative researchers, our responsibility is to “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 17).

I build on Yin (2014), Merriam (2009) and Stake’s (1995 & 2006) approaches to case study to employ Vavrus and Bartlett’s (2017) comparative case study methodology. This is a process-oriented approach that works well with this research because it combines the focus on the ‘phenomena’ or case to analyze within a larger context while recognizing the narratives and stories of those we don’t usually hear from.

Specifically, my project is informed by 23-months of field work in Senegal and Cote d’Ivoire; 13 months based primarily in Dakar, Senegal and 11 months in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. While there, I collected 210 surveys from undergraduate and graduate students at the universities of Cheikh Anta Diop (in Dakar) and Félix Houphouët-Boigny (in Abidjan) and I conducted interviews with twelve members of Y’en a Marre and FESCI (18 total interviews in SN and CI). In addition to interviews, I made sure to keep a research journal, utilize document analysis (newspapers, journals, and social media, etc.), while a participant and observer at this time.

In the sections below, I will explain why I chose to use CCS as a methodology, highlighting the concept of transnégritude, which I use to operationalize my

epistemological assumptions and data collection methods. I will then provide an examination of my case study sites and data analysis methods. I will then conclude with my positionality and subjectivity within this research, my role as a researcher, and the limitations I encountered in this study.

Power and the Case Study

Qualitative research espouses the interpreted and constructed realities of participants/topics/subjects. Case study, additionally, provides an extensive lens into a particular phenomenon in order to contextualize it within a larger narrative. It is through this lens wherein my discussion on the role of Hip-Hop in West Africa is essential. First, if we consider a vertical or “process-oriented approach” (Vavrus and Bartlett, 2017) to this topic, we have to consider the social and political implications of education, youth and engagement in Senegal and Cote d’Ivoire. And, we should examine the historical roots and role of music, and why young people are using Hip-Hop, specifically, to transform, engage, and act.

What is appealing about case study is its agnostic approach to research and lack of fixed labeling on its ontological and epistemological orientations. Much like Hip-Hop and qualitative research in general, case study is messy and hard to pinpoint but yet easy to recognize. As such, given the topic at hand, West African youth navigating Hip-Hop and engagement as a means to transform and counter social ills, it is necessary to accept the “messiness” of such a study and too the contradictions inherent within Hip-Hop culture.

I draw upon an understanding where Power operates not just within a racialized society but also within a colonized people, who after more than 50 years of independence

still feel the oppression and “bothering” of a foreign entity that seems to control their social, economic and political lives. As Nkrumah (1969) notes, “For the methods of neo-colonialists are subtle and varied. They operate not only in the economic field, but also in the political, religious, ideological and cultural spheres” (p. 12). It is within these nuances we must function and we must consider the struggle within decolonization and also hold in regard Nkrumah’s call for “Pan-African unity” as the sole means to destroy neo-colonialism. This pan-African unity, harkens back to WEB DuBois’s pan-African congress, Smith’s examination of a shared “struggle,” and Touré’s (forthcoming) analysis of transnégritude, that is the shared black experience within the diaspora.

Case Study and Transnégritude

In discussing the internal struggle colonized people endure during the process of decolonization, Frantz Fanon (1963) asserts, “Because it is a systematic negation of the other, a frenzied determination to deny the other any attribute of humanity, colonialism forces the colonized to constantly ask the question: Who am I in reality?” (p. 182)). From conversations with Young people in Dakar and Abidjan, I see that many feel as though they have been conditioned and trained in a system of deception and disillusionment, and they grapple with the dichotomy of authenticity and maintaining/challenging the status quo. This is not an issue specific to Africa, and given that our lens is through Hip-Hop, we must recognize the diasporic reach of the culture. Hip-Hop’s international reach, it’s historical/political origins, and its cultural uniqueness urges for an understanding of the transnégritude experience of blackness vis-a-vis Hip-Hop.

Informed by Touré's forthcoming dissertation, "Transnégritude: Identity Politics in Francophone African Literature in the 20th and 21st Centuries," transnégritude as a concept allows me to "explore the philosophical and literary articulations of the politics of identity in Africa and the Diaspora" (p. 9). This concept as Touré notes, is apt for studying Hip-Hop, civic engagement and schooling, because it builds on Senghor's conception of Africa transcending geography, nationhood, and space. In this regard, transnégritude, Touré acknowledges, "deals with several imagined Africas..." (p. 14). This allows for a freedom and flexibility to sway within and throughout the diaspora to make the case for Hip-Hop, schooling and civic engagement.

Vavrus and Bartlett (2017) recognize comparative case study's fluidity and its inability to be boxed in. Instead, they speak to falling into the "transversal," to reckon with all aspects of the study. Engaging in such a study infers that I must acknowledge the multiscalar scope of this research. I must therefore, consider the role "spatial politics" play in this conception. Transnégritude as such, "echoes the notion of transversality of négritude...the temporal (transgenerational) for one and the spatial for the other" (Touré, forthcoming, p. 15). Hip-Hop as a transnégritude concept then falls not only within diasporic narratives but clearly possesses its own unique creation outside it as well.

Transnégritude like CCS, allows for the "dissection of tensions," but also illustrates the links between and within the diaspora. The goal is to consider the "deterritorialization of Africa, an Africa present in the European and American continents, and differently on the African continent" (Touré, forthcoming, p. 16). All part of the same root but with overlapping and intersecting branches with their own distinct

characteristics. If we are to accept this notion of transnégritude, then we acknowledge its role as a tool for denunciation through unity.

Hence, transnégritude allows for me to think through Hip-Hop; its transnational links and its influence and use by students. It also promotes an intersectional use of the multiscalar scope of this project and the many interweaving aspects that color this investigation.

Navigating the Case Study: A process-oriented approach

Utilizing a comparative case study (CCS) analysis in decolonizing research, contributes to a better understanding of the sociopolitical nuances of Senegalese and Ivorian history, their educational policies, and the role music/Hip-Hop has played in influencing youth. Case study proves to be a useful methodology to contextualize how a group of young people have utilized a derided art form to teach, mobilize, and engage. Vavrus and Bartlett (2017), Glesne (2011), and Bray and Thomas (1995) note that researchers should approach case study as a means of contextualizing a unique event or phenomenon to the larger social systems at play. As such, data for this research came from individual surveys from university students and interviews with activists/leaders and members of Y'en a Marre and FESCI; participant observation, field notes, surveys, and document analysis in both Dakar and Abidjan.

I utilize Vavrus & Bartlett's (2017) process-oriented comparative case study (CCS) to provide a holistic analysis of a complex study of power, transnégritude, and social justice through the lens of Hip-Hop vis-a-vis schooling and civic engagement. Why this is necessary is as follows: First, Hip-Hop has proven to be a destabilizing force in international politics and specifically, in African politics, from the rise of Y'en a Marre in

Senegal, Balai Citoen in Burkina Faso, to Filimbi in DRC and now Sandaka in Sudan. This unique phenomenon has manifested itself differently in various settings and contributed to a rise in youth awareness and civic engagement throughout the continent. Secondly, a CCS approach allows me to contextualize *how* a group of young people have utilized a derided art form to teach, mobilize, and engage from a political and social context. This approach combines the focus on youth protest and engagement, analyzing it within the larger socio-political context while recognizing the narratives and stories of those participants we do not usually hear from.

A CCS approach compliments this research as it compounds specific characteristics of Merriam (1998), Yin (2014) and Stake's (1995, 2006) evolution of case study while considering too, the unbounded nature of research along with scale, time, critical awareness and the transnégritude experience. Yin (2014), conceptualizes case study research as a "realist perspective" that is bounded in time and space, or "real world setting" as a means to maintain objectivity in methodological considerations. Case study, in this sense is concerned with what is happening in the now, and as suggested by Yin, does little to marry the past to the present and instead bounds itself to a constructed objectivity.

Merriam (1998), approaches case study from the notion that reality is "constructed intersubjectively" allowing that meanings and understandings are developed socially and experientially. The goal is to provide an ordered and practical analysis, given the plurality of information at hand and the multitude dissections. Building on this "pragmatic constructivist" approach, Stake (1995, 2006), pushes for the discovery of meaning and understanding of experiences in context. Not only is the researcher's role critical in this

endeavor, but it is also interpretive. I must contend with the multiple realities and subjectivities around me and interpret those meanings and experiences through contextual and timely placement, interviews, observations, journaling and vignettes are necessary to allow for a “thick” description of findings. It is within this lens, through Yin’s (2014) rigorous “replication logic,” Merriam’s (1998) constructivist approach, and Stake’s (2006) acontextual analysis that leads me to Vavrus and Bartlett’s (2017) approach, which is process-oriented and which considers time, scale, context, translocality and critical awareness.

What we see in Vavrus and Bartlett’s (2017) process-oriented approach is the unboundedness of CCS. CCS, like Hip-Hop in this regard, is not constrained but rather relies on an “emergent design” allowing for flexibility. This methodology allows me to go against traditional case study approaches and as is crucial in critical work, encourages me to be more ‘daring’ and ‘explicit’ in my methodological decisions (p. 24, 38). Much like Hip-Hop culture, a process-oriented approach to CCS encourages me to go beyond perspectives that are bound in time and that do not allow for linear interpretations of time and space. Outside of the social and political factors, historical and economic interpretations must be taken into consideration. What of the shared experiences of those who identify as part of the Hip-Hop generation or generation Zouglou? Can we not simultaneously discuss their shared space within a transnégritude understanding while also acknowledging their unique expressions? This project contextualizes the multilayered aspects that significantly influence and impact young people from the macro—politics, economics, sociocultural nuances, to the micro—schooling, civic engagement and Hip-Hop, etc.

When considering a methodological tool for researching engagement and education in West Africa, case study has proven useful for it has been used in different traditions within comparative and international education. Crossley and Vulliamy (1984) note that case study has a common “conviction” regarding the “centrality of contextual understanding and detailed micro-level research” evidenced in comparative and international educational, among other fields (p. 96). In this regard, case study is both a methodological and epistemological approach to comparative studies arguing for the “case for the case,” noting that meaning known about one context cannot be presumed to be true in another context. This holistic approach to research they refer to as “ecological validity” illustrates the importance of examining how social, political, cultural, and economic factors interplay in various settings.

Though Vavrus and Bartlett (2006) have moved away from a vertical research approach to a process-oriented approach to comparative case study, their justification for a holistic approach to case study still holds true. Case study, if conducted well, considers both the ‘micro-level understanding’ of a specific phenomenon and a “macro-level analysis” to situate local action and interpretation within the broader social, historical, and political structure (p. 96). In their re-processing of case study to a comparative case study approach utilizing a process-oriented analysis, Vavrus and Bartlett (2017), acknowledge the importance of conducting a study that examines the interconnections of systemic structures to provide a thick description of the micro and macro contexts within the local, national, global. They note, “understanding of the microlevel is viewed as part and parcel of larger structures, forces, and policies about which the researcher must also develop a full and thorough knowledge” (p. 96). This is similar to Bray and Thomas’s

(1995) multilevel analysis, in which they argue for comparison across different dimensions and, specifically, geographic or locational levels to avoid “incomplete and unbalanced perspectives on educational studies” (p. ?).

When conducting case study through a decolonized lens, Vavrus and Bartlett (2006 & 2017) implore us, much as Smith (1999) does, to consider: whether we have sufficient knowledge of the region, if we have sufficient understanding to make the project meaningful, not to reproduce dominant/knowledge relations, and to decenter the nation-state from its privileged position to one of the many systems to analyze (p. 98). Why this is beneficial is twofold, first, a holistic case study that considers the micro and macro, places local knowledge on “equal footing” to that of “authoritative” knowledge by assessing what “ought to be,” as mandated in policy pronouncements and what is happening as is told by local actors (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006, p. 98). In doing so, the researcher is made to critically consider the “politics of knowledge production” in comparative and international education and the role they play in perpetuating research that “privileges certain ways of knowing over others” (p. 98).

If we are to contend that Hip-Hop is about authenticity and self-determination, qualitative research and CCS specifically are the perfect engines for detailing young people’s experiences with their educational training, their perceptions of their educational systems, and how they have attempted to counter these challenges with their own motivations. Moreover, though speaking about African Americans, Tillman (2002) notes, when it comes to examining and analyzing their realities, qualitative research is necessary as it is allowing for an engagement with a practice that has similar traditional and cultural roots as those seen in Diaspora. She attests that given the cultural and

historical politics of the Black experiences, it is only necessary to utilize research traditions that emphasize rather than minimize Black lives. With that said, it is clear why CCS, for these purposes, addresses the complexities of Hip-Hop, sociopolitics, and the lived realities of West African youth.

Post-structural theoretical paradigms with the goal for deconstruction

If we are to argue for a transnégritude experience of Hip-Hop culture, that is, the emancipatory practice of transformation shared within the Diaspora, it is necessary to expound on the notions of post-structural and decolonizing theories and its relevance within education and Hip-Hop as it relates to youth in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. In her groundbreaking work, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith (1999) shares this transnational sentiment when discussing the history, impact, and process of colonization and decolonization when she writes that “colonized peoples share a language of colonization, share knowledge about their colonizers, and, in terms of a political project, share the same struggle for decolonization” (p. 45). As such this research project is intended to deconstruct and disrupt majoritarian narratives and to center the voices of young Senegalese and Ivorian students.

“African, know thyself”

The creation of the “other” has played a significant role in western sociopolitical history. In his discussion of the construction of the Orient, Edward Said (1978) writes, “the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (p. 1). Looking at the social construction of the Orient, the “Occident” promoted the notion of the “other” from itself and thus dealt with it by “making statements about it,

authorizing views of it, describing it by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (p. 3). This cultural explication of the other was maintained “politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” and beyond (p. 3; Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 4).

The violence and savagery of colonialism resulted in the dehumanization of the colonized and the colonizer. Echoing Césaire (1955) and Fanon (1963), Prasad (2005) asserts, “not only does colonialism oppress and exploit entire nations, but it also turns their inhabitants into objectified commodities...this objectification, which robs people of their dignity and humanity has always equaled “thingification” (p. 264). In linking the materiality of the black body to its historiography, I argue that the “thingification” of the black body was manifested into the *beastification* of the Black body. This *beastification* can be seen as a result of the pathology of colonialism, which was responsible for the social construction of differences along racial lines and “ultimately annihilated black subjects into nothingness” (Prasad, 2005, p. 264).

My research seeks to decolonize the scholastic approach to a single experience of schooling, engagement, and Hip-Hop culture. Decolonization, Fanon (1963) wrote, is almost always a violent process one that leads to “total disorder...Decolonization is truly the creation of new men...The thing colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation” (p.2). However, if one chooses to challenge the colonial system, one must also be determined “from the very start to smash every obstacle encountered” (p. 3). Poststructuralism with its tendency to deconstruct is a relevant continuation of postcolonial thought as it challenges the colonial and neocolonial condition, its

consequences and contradictions when considering education goals as attributed by international organizations. Utilizing a decolonizing framework humanizes the constructed beast of the “other.” Hip-Hop pedagogy in this case becomes a counter-narrative method necessary to reclaim the social, political, and cultural reality of those “othered.”

Solórzano and Yosso (2002), affirm that “oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation” (p. 32). As such counter-stories can be a method used to “exposing, analyzing, and challenging” majoritarian narratives on racial privilege, young people, their agency, and methods of engagement (p. 32). What better way to challenge dominant ideals than by using a tradition that is intrinsically foreign and yet familiar? Foreign because, as the authors argue, storytelling has a rich and continuing tradition in brown communities. And yet familiar due to storytelling’s intimacy and naturalness. In my analysis, my goal was to forefront FESCI and YEM member stories in order to engage in what Strauss and Corbin (1990) call “theoretical sensitivity,” which refers to the insight and capacity of the researcher to interpret and give meaning to their data. And, “cultural intuition” as discussed by Bernal (1998) to recognize the complex processes that impacts participants and colors both participants and researchers in the research process.

What I continuously saw during my time in Senegal and Cote d’Ivoire was a response to the “othered” discourse and its implications on the local, national and international stage. Young activists in either Y’en a Marre or FESCI, it seemed, engaged in epistemic disobedience, a prism I found myself naming and from which I began to frame this research. This othering was rooted and based on a shared colonial experience

by both myself and my participants; students, that colored our outlook, our work and our interaction within our social and political circles. To wit, functioning within the prism of epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009 and Ngugi, 1987) allows us to re-examine the “colonial wound” and consider the geo and body politics of knowledge and knowledge making. The cultural attachment attributed to the ‘third world’ assumes that scientific inquiry cannot be gained from those whose previous status was to be “studied.” The goal of this research project is to illustrate how Hip-Hop can be and is being utilized as “an apparatus of enunciation” to reclaim the social, political, and cultural reality of young people.

Researcher positionality

“...for all research necessarily starts from a person’s view of the world, which itself is shaped by the experience one brings to the research process” (Grix, 2002, p. 179).

As a Congolese refugee growing up in the Midwest of the United States, my identity and social realities were in effect placed within a postcolonial/neocolonial narrative. Many refugee children coming from the continent have living relatives who lived under a colonial regime. Many more have lived and grown in communities that were and continue to be affected by neo-colonial tendencies that influence social, economic, and political climates. It is not uncommon to overhear conversations of “better times” (for some) and “crippling” times for others; each relative and friend having their own perspective of the legacies of our colonial and postcolonial legacy. But as life experiences have continuously begun to shape my identity, I have also come to accept how and why I am critical and work to deconstruct the social, cultural, and political dynamics that influence our social realities. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge

that my nationality, race, class, and gender have also played pivotal roles in my comprehension of the larger social dynamics.

I was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire). When I was six, my mother, brother and I, fled to Nairobi, Kenya to re-join my father who had escaped two years earlier from political persecution by then dictator Joseph Mobutu Sese-Seko. Back then as it is today, journalists could not freely denounce the president without fear of consequence. As a young child, I was not aware of the tensions surrounding our displacement, only that my parents' demeanor was slowly changing, and I no longer spoke French and Lingala with school mates. In Nairobi, English and Kiswahili were the lingua franca. Along with these linguistic changes, I was also learning about Kenyan culture and history. I can still sing the Kenyan national anthem in both Kiswahili and English, as we were taught in school! Four years into our new life in Kenya, we were to move once more, having received asylum status from the UNHCR. We were at the mercy of whatever foreign government who would give Congolese refugees their visas. The United States proved to be merciful and my parents could breathe a sigh of relief. We landed in Cedar Rapids, IA on a cold and windy night in March, on the first day of Spring. My refugee status, years of displacement, and eventual arrival to the U.S made me an inexplicable mutt even to other Africans.

For a long time, I hid my background and was ashamed to share. Having seen U.S. depictions of Africa, Africans, and refugees; while simultaneously being reminded of my "savagery," cemented that the continent of my birth was not a place from which to be proud. No, it was best to accept the "backwardness" of the continent and fully commit to the more civilized and progressive country that was now to be my adopted home. It

also helped that my very white, very Midwest classmates strongly encouraged this narrative. Much like Derrick Bell (1992) speaks of the cultural shame many African Americans faced of their slave history, so too was I a “subordinate and mostly shunned portion of a society....” My beloved continent, as Bell writes in speaking of African Americans, was a symbol of shame that “burdened black people with an indelible mark of difference as we struggled to be like whites” (pg. 1-2). Omission and denial, it seemed, would become my new allies to the outside world.

It is from this vantage point whereby I unknowingly began to understand and look at my social reality. Here I was: a young female refugee from central Africa, living in a predominantly white state (and country), in a low-income community, and with limited resources, trying to navigate multiple identities. Moreover, my father, a proud Lumumbist, made sure to remind us of the post-colonial realities of our beloved country. Thus, even before I could comprehend the greater forces around my 12-year-old self, I already knew that we lived in a world of great inequality, deep racial and ethnic tension, and entrenched roles; be it gender, race, class, or nationality. I knew that “refugee” was not a title one could proudly proclaim, I understood that there was a hierarchy even among us “outsiders” that was given to us by our fellow white counterparts such that when terms such as “exotic,” “intelligent,” and/or “loud” were used, I knew that ethnically and culturally, they represented and even lauded certain minorities while demeaning others. Cue: Hip-Hop.

Hip-Hop culture spoke to me when I was a teenager consumed by a cultural duality and internal conflict I could not name. Those who spoke to me most were young, loud, and angry protesters such as Tupac, Queen Latifah, and KRS-ONE, who embodied

the spirit of Patrice Lumumba and Thomas Sankara. Though my equally religious parents forbade the music, I could proudly express my truth and authenticity through my language, clothing, and artistic output—clinging to a voice I could not yet own.

The attempt to comprehend and perhaps answer these quandaries is also what drove me to my academic interests. For, at the end of it all, my research drives me to better understand myself and my world, in order to fight for social change. Grix (2002), Lincoln and Denzin (2013), Mason (2002) and Arzubaga et al. (2008) all have spoken on the personal nature of qualitative research. Because qualitative research is grounded in the tradition of interpreting our social reality and/or our lived experiences, it hearkens to the old Zoroastrian saying, “Knowledge of self, is knowledge of god.” Manifestations of deity notwithstanding, the saying does have its truth in the connection between the personal and theoretical. Before a Zoroastrian is able to fully understand their deity, they must first understand themselves, equally, before I can articulate my research problem, I must first know and articulate my truth, or how I view and interpret my social reality.

Grix writes that ontology or ontological claims are “claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other.” In short, Grix confirms, “ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality” (pg. 177). It is necessary that we understand, acknowledge, and defend our ontological position because it is deeply personal. It is, in essence, the knowledge of one’s academic/professional self.

I am aware that my personal background plays a significant role in my research interests and educational pursuits. I was a refugee immigrant from Central Africa who arrived in the U.S. at a young age, I had a varied educational background, and took on household responsibilities while attending school in order to help my family as we navigated our new lower socio-economic status. These traits have shaped my identity and colored my socio-political stance as I have been educated and reared in the U.S.

Cue: CCS.

Because CCS is unbounded in its structure and design, it marries well with the complex research process undertaken by a former refugee and naturalized Congolese-American woman conducting dissertation research in West Africa. The process is messy and at times non-linear; there are multiple streams and content to contextualize. What CCS allows for is an approach to research that considers the horizontal, vertical and transversal axes necessary for such comparison. This comparison goes beyond time and space, compares and contrasts between and within various social, political and economic contexts over time and through it.

Navigating the horizontal, vertical, and transversal axes of a multilayered study such as this requires an analysis that examines the “interconnections across dispersed locations” to provide fruitful directions for comparison (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2017, p. 14 & 102). This is essential in the “articulation and dearticulation of networks and actors over time and space” (p. 29). What Vavrus and Bartlett (2017) note is the processual gradation of various avenues, which they call axes. A horizontal axis, they argue, compares how similar policies are socially “produced and complexly connected” in distinct locations (p. 13). A vertical axis commits to a simultaneous analysis “to and

across scales,” what they call “assemblage” to provide a multiscalar examination of several factors. A transversal comparison, utilizes the horizontal and vertical axes and incorporates historically situated processes to further enhance social research (p. 99). Recognizing the multitude of experiences and locations inherent in my life and participants’ lives while incorporating these axes allows me to engage in nuanced complexities.

Researcher subjectivity and language

Conducting a research study in two linguistically varied landscapes illustrated that language is a non-neutral medium (Duranti, 2009). As previously mentioned my background and closely related narrative significantly affected how I approached and interacted with my study. I wanted to make sure that I presented students’ and activists’ voices as they chose to be heard. For example, during transcriptions, I made sure to transcribe all interviews in French first and then, after another listen, transcribing and translating to English. Such that, when I provide quotes in the ensuing chapters, the translations are placed side by side for transparency and clarity. This allows for their words to be seen as is, with limited edits to grammar, structure, and/or style.

Even with these precautions navigating language and the use of it in transcriptions proved to be challenging. First, though I spent one year studying Wolof in Dakar, I was not fluent enough to conduct interviews with participants. As such, I had to rely on French, which marked a level of differentiation between myself and Yenamarristes who spoke to each other in Wolof. In Abidjan, the lack of a local language automatically made French the focal language we used for interviews. Yet, more often than not, participants interlaced their French with Nouchi and/or other ethnic languages, making it harder to

fully understand their context. This would result in their translating and explaining to me what they meant.

Césaire (1939, 1955), Smith (1999), and Ngugi, (1980, 1987), recognize the inherent power in language and forefronting the voices of the colonized in their language. Duranti (2009) acknowledges not only the inherent linguistic biases we have assumed but also how much language socializes us (p. 16). I was frustrated that I could not fully communicate with my participants, my limited knowledge of Wolof and Nouchi emphasized my outsider status and revealed gaps in our discussions that I have yet to dissect. This means that during interviews participants translanguaged. When it came time to transcribe interviews, I encouraged my research assistants to highlight Nouchi or Wolof words but to transcribe in French while not changing any grammatical or structural nuances to read as formal French. I wondered if I was doing myself a disservice in only using French to make my research more accessible. Would Ngugi accuse me of “europhonism?”

Utilizing a CCS approach allows for me as a researcher to recognize that time and space are “closely connected” and as such I must consider the sociohistorical factors that privilege one language over another (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2017, p. 93; Ngugi, 1987). My choosing to provide both French and English is a push to demystify and expose assumptions inherent within any linguistic transaction (Denzin, 1994; Ngugi, 1987). And yet, even with this in mind, I am aware that I fall short in providing nuance with my limited mastery of Nouchi and Wolof. Which is why, I used biographical counterstories, to promote, as Solórzano and Yosso (2002) maintain, the dialogue to speak to the social, historical, and political realities and speak to the research to “creatively

challenge...[various] forms of subordination” (p. 11). Conducting semi-structured interviews gave participants and I the flexibility to talk openly and allowed participants to navigate the dialogue and their narrative.

As a Congolese-American, my background and social framework are tightly connected to my roots. I am sensitive to the plight of young Africans within and outside the continent and I continuously wondered whether this attachment would adversely affect the study. Because I have been so aware of my “otherness,” I have spent a considerable amount of time studying, analyzing, and dissecting my identity in relation to my surroundings. By navigating several academic disciplines to come to a better understanding of the social, cultural, and political implications of my journey, I have the benefit of correlating the personal and academic; a balance I think is necessary to conduct qualitative research.

Selecting the Case Study Sites

Pre-dissertation research for this study began in 2016 while studying abroad in Dakar as a Boren Fellow. This fellowship, funded by the National Security Education Program, promotes language and cultural expertise for American students as a pipeline into the federal government workforce. We were four women in the Senegal program, wherein we were to engage in intensive French and Wolof language training and courses on Senegalese history, art and culture. Of these four women, I was the sole black woman and the only one above 30 years old. Navigating racial and gendered experiences within the fellowship challenged me to consider my position and my identity. Though I was privileged to have been selected for this prestigious award, my privilege was at once challenged and celebrated. I believe that navigating these dichotomies and contradictions

acutely prepared me for the challenges I would face as a Congolese-American woman conducting research in Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal and with a majority male run organization.

After undertaking intensive Wolof and French classes and taking courses on Senegalese history, I spent the remaining eight months meeting with M23 and Y'en a Marre (YEM) members and visiting the Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD). My initial meetings and visits with these various participants allowed me to think critically about the direction in which I wanted to take this research. Upon arriving in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, as a Fulbright-Clinton Fellow, I realized that focusing my investigation on university students and civic organizations would provide an interesting contrast to this comparative study. This was feasible given my appointment as a Fellow was with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This allowed me access to public universities and their administration and considerable ease to gain access to FESCI. As such, the case study sites selected were the headquarters of FESCI at the Université Félix Houphouët Boigny in Abidjan (UFHB), and the headquarters of YEM and the UCAD in Dakar. Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire provided a rich, nuanced, and challenging landscape to assess how young people have navigated division, new political and economic power structures, civil war and social inequality.

Senegal

Why Senegal? The collectivistic nature of Senegal, creates a communal mood that sees education as the means to success and social ascendance (Babou, 2003; Banya & Elu, 2001). Yet the country is woefully constricted when it comes to the management of its social, political, and economic reality. Like many sub-Saharan countries, the

economic crisis of the 1980s, critically impaired the political and economic strength of Senegal. Relief from debt meant the reduction of spending on public services such as health care, infrastructure, and education were severely cut to allow for external aid from (mostly) western countries and/or agencies (Kane, 2010; Banya and Elu, 2001). Since then, the country has been stuck in a vicious cycle of dependency that persists to this day.

What makes Senegal unique within this context is that it stands as one of the few stable countries in West Africa surrounded by politically tumultuous states. Never having experienced civil war, Senegal has been hailed as an example of democracy in West Africa and has been one of the few countries in the region to maintain a solid relationship with the West. Yet, it too suffers its own social and political uncertainties which, compounded with weak governance in neighboring countries, creates complications for the already struggling country. Senegal's inability to fully invest in education brings a plethora of questions confronting its colonial past, its sociopolitical structure, and its current modern-state apparatus within the global framework.

Dakar.

Founded in 1857, the city of Dakar has grown to become the political, economic and social center of Senegal. This desertsic, partly modern and partly traditional city is one full of contradictions. Here, one will find chic neighborhoods catering to expats, wealthy Senegalese, and other immigrants, low-income neighborhoods, and everything in between. After the economic boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s, the city expanded at a rapid and spontaneous pace as a result of internal migration and job opportunities (Kireyev, 2013; Kane, 2010). This development, part of the "Plan Sénégal Emergent," has not only brought about economic and social growth but has resulted in massive

income inequality and continued poverty decline (Kireyev, 2013). During my time in Dakar, I was in the privileged position to live in a middle class neighborhood, but I only needed to turn a corner to find others living vastly different lives from my cozy space.

Dakar, like much of the country, is a city heavily influenced by Islam, Sufi Islam to be specific and the influence of the four major brotherhoods but it is also a modern, technologically advancing city. As such, it is not uncommon to see a young man in a fly *boubou* bobbing his head to Lil Wayne, while sporting his Yeezy's. Welcome to 'The New Africa.' Yenamarristes, university students and everyday folk around the streets of Dakar, walk around with this international patchwork that has now become part of their identity. This was the Dakar, I was first introduced to in 2016.

Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire has endured a complex history, from its heyday as the "miracle" economy post-independence and into the 1980s, to an unstable, post-war-torn country. Past economic crises and the civil war of 2002 and the post-electoral crisis of 2010-2011 have had adverse effects on the social fabric of Ivorian life. Sany (2010) writes that besides intensifying economic disparities and ethnic differences, which have impacted access, quality resources, and organization, "the conflict has had a more subtle and pernicious sociopsychological impact on individuals, particularly on students" (p. 7). According to Sany, the failure of the state to provide educational opportunity to young people, has "undermined their self-esteem" leaving them vulnerable to criminal behavior, violence, and drug use (p. 7).

Young people in Cote d'Ivoire face tremendous and seem to question their future (Abbink, 2005). Even though there has been some gains in education, migration, and job

opportunities, the rapid population increase and limited resources within a failing state context have “led to a relative decline in the well-being and social advancement of young people in Africa” (p. 1). As such, young people must navigate high unemployment, health crises, and limited education and skills to be competitive in the job market. Given Côte d’Ivoire’s distinct history and sociopolitical structure, the country is an obvious site to consider the intersections of Hip-Hop, education, and engagement.

Abidjan.

“Abidjan est doux!” That is the common phrase among Ivoirians and Francophone West Africans in general. Abidjan is sweet. Unlike Dakar’s desert, oceanlined, landscape, Abidjan is green, humid, and vibrant. Most of all, Abidjan is cosmopolitan...and they know it. The city is divided in three by the lagoons; from the sky scraping downtown Plateau, chicue Riviera, Deux Plateaux and Cocody areas and the popular areas: Yopougoun and Abobo; each of these regions having their own distinct style, personality and reputation. Though once hailed as Africa’s economic miracle, even after economic decline and the effects of the crisis, Abidjanais wear that moniker with pride.

Unlike Dakar, Abidjan is diverse ethnically/nationally, religiously, and economically. The city has both a strong Christian and Muslim presence, along with extreme income and social disparities. But, the general mood seems to be that of optimism and hope. Seven years after the post-electoral crisis of 2011/2012 and the 2010 civil war, Ivoirians and Abidjanais, specifically, hope to once again regain their status as a leading economic power in the region. Abidjan is like a dream. You can see everything and yet it is blurry all at one. but what really got me was the food and the ambiance

around food. *Maquis* (open-air restaurants) are everywhere serving cheap food and drinks. I couldn't resist the grilled fish, seasoned to perfection, served with *attieke*, grilled onions, fresh tomatoes and homemade *piment*, hot sauce; it was my first and last meal in Abidjan. But it was also through sipping cold *Ivoire* beer and listening to Zouglou or coupé décalé, that I started to learn more about this enigmatic city. This is the Abidjan I stumbled upon in 2017.

Comparing two Francophone West African countries with varied socio-political histories provides for a rich and subtle examination of the role and influence of Hip-Hop in engaging and mobilizing youth in Abidjan and Dakar. Young people have played a mixed role in organizing and challenging the State. The emergence of Y'en a Marre and the continuing influence of FESCI, illustrate radical views of engagement. What they also illustrate is the dramatic engagement of a new, young type of African espousing a new African identity while denouncing western influence in their everyday lives.

Data collection methods

Although my research looks at the sociopolitical structures of two West African countries, My focus is on two cities; Abidjan and Dakar; and two institutions; Université Félix Houphouët Boigny and Université Cheikh Anta Diop. This investigation examines horizontal, vertical, and transversal axes to provide a multilayered analysis of youth engagement in West Africa.

As previously mentioned, data was collected within a 23-month timeframe. Fieldwork for this project was conducted at the Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny (UFHB), which houses the headquarters of FESCI in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; and headquarters of Y'en a Marre (YEM) and the Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) in

Dakar, Senegal. Data collection was possible through the rich connections I made during my work with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, UNESCO-Dakar and my interactions with faculty at the UFHB, UCAD and the West African Research Center (WARC).

During my pre-dissertation work in Senegal, I had established connections and relationships with professors from UCAD and program specialists in UNESCO's Dakar office, as a student and Boren Fellow at the West African Research Center (WARC). It was during Mme. Sidibe's class, where I was first introduced to M. Mbodji and M. Ibez, coordinators of the M23 movement, during a class trip to their headquarters. That was the day that I gained firsthand background information on the student protests I vaguely remembered reading about. During that first meeting and subsequent individual meetings after, I learned about what happened leading up to the protests of June 2011. Fed up with rampant power outages and compounded with then president Abdoulaye Wade's illegal bid for a third term, young people took to the streets. Initially groups like M23, led by seasoned and influential veterans, rose as a mouthpiece for the people. But it soon became clear that young people were not only fed up, but fed up doing things their parents' way. Enter Y'en a Marre.

From this contact and my growing relationship with professors Sidibe and Sambou, I was fortunate to be introduced to other members of M23 and Fadel Barro, co-founder of Y'en a Marre (YEM). Working closely with Y'en a Marre members allowed me to see just how they worked to engage and mobilize people to oust president Abdoulaye Wade. Through participant observation and interviews with activists, I engaged with members, observed their pedagogical tools for social engagement, and

examined their influencing role within the social landscape of Dakar and Senegal. As YEM utilizes and involves Hip-Hop culture for engagement and is made up of a relatively young membership, the goal was to discuss the role of Hip-Hop and education in their social activism. Table 3.1 shows the data collection sites and methods used.

Table 3.1 Data collection used in Dakar, Senegal

Location	Data collection method	Time frame
Y'en a Marre (YEM) headquarters	Observation, interviews, photos, videos, journal	10 months
Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD)	Observation, photos, surveys, journal	3 months

As mentioned above, In Abidjan, fieldwork was sponsored under the Fulbright-Clinton Fellowship, which required a professional commitment to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Through this post, I was able to establish contacts with the administration, students and faculty at the local university and gain access with local organizations through my work at the university and connection to various ministerial departments. It is from my work at the university that I gained access to FESCI members and other student organizations at the university and around Abidjan. Through participant observation and interviews with ministers, scholars, and students, we discussed the impact of the war, social division in the country, and how education has been perceived since the conflict. I also tried to engage with organization members in order to observe their pedagogical tools for social engagement and examine their influencing role in Abidjan and in West Africa. Table 2 shows the data collection sites and methods used in Abidjan.

Table 3.2 Data collection used in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

Location	Data collection method	Time frame
Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny (UFHB)	Observation, surveys, photos, surveys, journal	8 months
FESCI headquarters	Observation, interviews, photos, videos, journal	4 months

The ambitious intentions of this study made it “too vast to interview everyone or to observe everything associated” in this research project (Glesne, 2011, p 45). To provide depth, I utilized snowball chain sampling. Patton (1990) writes that snowball/chain sampling “identifies cases of interest from sampling people who know people who know people who know what cases are information rich, that is, good examples for study, good interview participants” (p. 176). This sampling method provided variation within participants in order to “search for common patterns” if any, to investigate the social reality of students in Abidjan and Dakar. Table 3 illustrates the breakdown of participants in Senegal.

Table 3.3 Number of Research Participants in Senegal

Research method	Number of participants
YEM members (interviews, participant observation, document analysis, discourse analysis)	6 activists
TOTAL	6 participants

With this project, I was able to interview 12 participants—six YEM activists and six FESCI members. I was able to further analyze this data through participant observation, conducting semi-structured interviews, keeping a research journal and analyzing documents such as newspapers, journals and social media. Table 4 shows the participant breakdown at the UFHB/FESCI.

Table 3.4 Number of Research Participants in Cote d'Ivoire

Research method	Number of participants
FESCI (interviews, document analysis, discourse analysis)	6 activists
TOTAL	6 participants

After 23-months of active engagement with schools, ministries, and organizations, my goal was to provide a nuanced look at educational tools used in culturally relevant pedagogical outputs, the role of Hip-Hop culture, and engagement among young people in Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire.

Deconstructionism: Data analysis and validation

The strengths of a qualitative data set are firmly impacted by the “competence” with which they are analyzed (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 10). As such, when it comes to studying Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool for social engagement in Senegal and Cote D'Ivoire, my research must not only follow certain prescribed steps for rigorous analysis (Liamputtong, 2009 and Frost et al., 2010) but it must also require reflexivity and triangulation since my approach is decolonizing in nature. Frost et al. (2010) write that discourse analysis requires reflexivity because the approach “recognizes that knowledge claims are ideological, political, and permeated with values and...acknowledges that the researcher’s interpretation is a privileged one which silences possible others” (p. 444). Frost and his crew encourage us to be considerate of our privilege and position as researchers such that we are able to make meaning of multiscalar understandings. Hatch (2002) adds that, “[d]ata analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others” (p. 148). This in effect means that through data analysis,

the researcher can provide an in-depth interrogation of data to locate patterns, identify themes, recognize relationships, explain, interpret, critique, and generate new theories on collected data.

As this study is framed within a poststructural critique, emphasizing deconstruction, and utilizing a CCS methodology, I incorporated a hermeneutics of suspicion (also known as radical hermeneutics or deconstructionism) analysis as an overarching framework of analysis. A radical hermeneutics, aims to demystify, tear apart and reveal internal hierarchies within a text (Denzin, 1994; Caputo, 1987). Informed by Derrida (1987) and Foucault (1972), Deconstructionism challenges what we purport as the truth, seeks to expose assumptions, and is ambiguous in revealing meaning.

Deconstructionism is thus well suited to engage in the struggle that is dismantling majoritarian narratives and Eurocentric epistemologies, as noted by Mignolo (2009), Ngugi (1987), and Fanon (1963), “to reveal and undermine what is most invisible and insidious in prevailing practices,” in order to reclaim, respect, and listen to indigenous histories (Graham, 2005, p. 4).

A poststructural framework seeks to deconstruct our truths and assumptions, which complements deconstructionism and thus allows for me to incorporate a variety of methods to provide what Glesne (2011) calls for a “thick description.” In so doing, I chose to employ discourse and document analysis, ethnographic methods, interviews, participant observation, and surveys. I chose these methods to uncover “how the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world were created in the first place and how they are maintained and held in place over time” (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p. 6).

The goal is to find, what Vavrus and Bartlett (2017) call a “heterologous” investigation of the role of Hip-Hop, education, and young people’s engagement.

Just as CCS promotes flexibility and fluidity, so too does data analysis within this methodology follow such a malleable and transparent agenda. Given the multiscalar nature of this study, a process-oriented approach is also necessary in this analysis. Vavrus and Bartlett (2017), urge their readers to remember that data analysis in CCS “requires an emergent, iterative approach to analysis...[in order to be] more explicit about our initial data analysis plan, our intention to remain flexible as data analysis unfolds, and the logic we expect to use to process our methodological decisions” (p. 122).

In order to provide variation in my analysis, I transcribed and translated interviews, used a mix of simultaneous/embedded, descriptive, versus, narrative and pattern coding in my first and second cycles of coding to find themes, patterns and relationships in words, phrases, or perspectives (Saldaña, 2009, p.46). I also relied heavily on document analysis to provide context on the international, national, and local stage from sources such as the weekly journal “Jeune Afrique” and local newspapers. Vavrus and Bartlett (2006) call this a “vertical” approach to case study analysis that “seek[s] to disrupt dichotomies, static categories, and taken-for-granted notions of what is going on” (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2017, p. 49). Moreover, I relied on what Saldaña (2009) refers to as “analytic memos” or research journals during my time as a participant observer as a means to “dump [my] brain” about the participants, experiences, [and] process under investigation by thinking and thus writing and thus thinking even more about them” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 32).

Role of researcher

During my time in Abidjan and Dakar, I hired research assistants and student workers to help me gain access to students, to conduct interviews, collect surveys, and transcribe. In Abidjan, I hired a research assistant and six student assistants; one who had participated in the study, the rest had not. My research assistant, M. Kanate, was the department student technician and was well known and well connected on campus. Given that M. Kanate worked and had an office on campus, it was easy to meet daily and weekly to discuss interviews and survey collections. It was also helpful to have him around to navigate university politics and gendered/ethnic microaggressions I encountered or overlooked as I was busy focusing on reaching my research and academic targets. In Dakar, with the help of M. Sambou and my host brother's friends at UFHB, I was able to hire two research assistants to help in gathering and collecting surveys. M. Gaye and M. Hajj were former graduate students who now worked around campus.

Our roles were clearly defined; after meeting and having them read my shortened proposal, we went over my goals. In Abidjan, we were to collect student surveys and from there, inquire those students for interviews. We were to locate FESCI members and interview them as well. We would then call them, ask them if they were still interested and set up a time to meet and talk. Though he helped in dispersing and collecting surveys and scheduling interviews, I conducted all interviews myself and we all transcribed, myself, M. Kanate, and six student assistants. In Dakar, the objective was to hire research assistants to conduct surveys and from there ask those students whether they would be interested in participating in an interview. Just as in Abidjan, I intended to

follow up after the surveys by calling students and asking them if they were interested in being interviewed.

As a Congolese-American womyn, conducting PhD research in West Africa, even with allies such as my research assistants, proved to be a monumental experience filled with a bevy of affronting emotions. It seemed that I always functioned with my guard up, wary of the sexual politics, annoyed at the stares of my “foreignness,” and my eagerness to engage in activism work by proxy. My position as a quasi-insider, afforded certain opportunities but several obstacles. I was privileged to have post-baccalaureate degrees from U.S. institutions, lucky to have been funded to conduct research, and fortunate to have an American passport that afforded ease of travel. My assistants were always irritated when I stated I was Congolese first; having an American passport, seeming to supersede all other nationalities. I worried that my French was not up to par, or too accented to be fully understood, but aside from minor grammatical mistakes, we seemed to get along fine. But mostly, I was worried about the position I was in and conducting research on behalf of a colonizing entity, doing what were once colonialist’s methods of knowledge seeking. It was rough.

Gaining Trust and Reflections on data collection

“research is far from an apolitical and ahistorical activity; it occurs within a set of historical, political, and social relations of power. However, these power relations are encountered differently by those of us who are historically and politically positioned, and crucially, resist our construction as well as the construction of the subjects (rather than objects) of our research as the “other” of these epistemologies” (Al-Hardan, 2014, p. 63).

I have learned to be comfortable being uncomfortable. I think it is because I have spent most of my life being an outsider than an insider. Since the age of six, I have not known my home country. Even though I was raised in a strongly Congolese, Lumbubist

household, it would be fifteen years before we would see our home again. And so, I've learned to adapt. Thankfully, I'm curious and I like to eat. It would not be long before *ugali & sukuma wiki; githeri; ceebujen; runza's*; and *green bean casseroles* would become a part of my diet as much as Kiswahili, Wolof, and American Southern English, have become a part of my linguistic skills. With all this in mind, I didn't think twice about traversing to Senegal and then later to Cote d'Ivoire to conduct research.

You are not really a Congolese girl. That was the refrain that seemed to come up once my background was revealed. *Are you sure you're not just American or something?* From my manner, my dress, and my demeanor, I came to the area, a hybrid of all my experiences; frustrating some, enthralling others, and confusing the rest. It also didn't make sense, to my colleagues at the MESRS, students and professors at the universities, or participants, how I was also able to come back to West Africa just to "do research." I was an oddity even to my friends and I wondered to what degree it affected my research. Did it limit what my participants could tell me? Did my nomadic background alienate them from me? I tried to be as easy going as possible; open, curious and accepting. But, how many nomads study othered others? And for once, I was uncomfortable.

When I conducted interviews with participants, I made sure to answer and to be as open as possible about my research and my intentions. I felt it necessary that they knew that this was a means to an end and I needed their cooperation in order to achieve this. Given that many of them were students or former students, they fully understood the stress of conducting and defending a dissertation and were, for the most part, supportive of my endeavors. Of course this was always followed by an aside, *but why Africa? Why West Africa? Why us? You are in the U.S., you could do anything there!* Some said this

in confusion, many more out of frustration; as though I was squandering something great. Could I be trusted, given my ill-conceived choices? And how much of these subconscious dilemmas impacted our exchanges? I didn't realize how sensitive I would be to this dilemma.

It is usually at this juncture where “naive” researchers find themselves with limited guidelines and literature on what to do under these circumstances (Gokah, 2006; Beoku-Betts, 1994). Prevailing critical and poststructural research encourages self-reflection as a way to “alleviate some of these moral dilemmas” forcing us to challenge issues of power, privilege, ethnicity, nationality, and gender. And so, I spent a lot of time journaling and coming to terms with my fears and my concerns. I wanted to make sure that I was working towards producing nonhierarchical, nonmanipulative, and interactive research relationships that do not objectify research participants but permit them to voice their own accounts of their own lives” (Betts, 1994, p. 427).

I was aware and further made aware by participants that, after having lived in the U.S. for over 20 years, I have developed “Americanized” tendencies that at times may have alienated my participants who found fault in my actions and behavior. As such, though I pride myself in navigating the line between an insider—as someone born and raised in Africa and conversant in French, Lingala, Wolof, and Kiswahili, I also understand that because I have spent a considerable amount of time in the West, I have acquired physical traits that set me apart—my accent is no longer as pronounced, I do not dress in traditional clothes on a regular basis, and I do not practice all social/cultural customs that may potentially endear me to both male and female participants who have recently arrived to the city from rural areas. I wondered if they would not give me honest

answers or muddle the truth so as to affect the outcome of my study. As a woman who identifies as a feminist, I also became aware of the fact that my non-marital status and lack of title made it that much more difficult to earn respect from male participants who at times chose not to participate or use an invitation for an interview as an opportunity for amorous pursuits. Honesty, whether appreciated or not, was my key to survival. I made sure that with all participants, they knew my background, my research intentions, and my motivations for doing so. Many more times than not, students were receptive to my academic pursuits. Many of them having had to complete a thesis for their undergraduate or masters degrees.

Those of us who intend to research colonized or stateless others from within imperialist states' academies while upholding decolonizing commitments, have a decided disadvantage, so asserts Al-Hardan (2014) in her gripping account on "Decolonizing Research on Palestinians." This disadvantage sheds light on the colonial power relations within the academy, one that positions and elevates Western ways of knowing above and against all othered knowledge systems, seemingly devaluing and cleaving at once. It is clear that society places value on certain types of knowledge; what is considered acceptable, rigorous and valid or true. As such, research that focuses on narratives of the "other" and conducted by those "othered" is questioned, marginalized, and devalued within academia. Bernal & Villalpando (2002) call this an "apartheid of knowledge," that is, the domination of a "Eurocentric epistemology" has engendered an "apartheid of knowledge in academia" that legitimates one way of knowing and understanding of the world over others. This ideology has therefore worked to stifle, disregard, and invalidate the research of faculty of color (p. 169, Al-Hardan, 2014, p. 68). What was vexing in this

matter, however, was navigating these academic preoccupations while functioning in a state of perceived privilege as a PhD student who was funded and supported by the U.S. State Department.

Navigating Sensitive Topics

It is never easy to talk about war or ethnic violence or one's discontent for their country to a complete stranger. I took it for granted that I could easily break down sensitive topics such as war and ethnic violence in two, 30-60-minute interviews with complete strangers. Was this my colonized self imposing my will on the very people I had ensured would be heard? The conversations I willed students to have, are conversations we are told not to have at the dinner table and definitely not to discuss with strangers. I wanted to make sure that if students or administrators did not want to talk about it, we wouldn't. What helped when talking to students, was that the "crisis" as it was known throughout the country, occurred when many were young, either in elementary or middle school age. As such, the trauma that was felt or avoided by older participants did not resonate as much. However, just because we didn't talk about it, didn't mean I didn't gain a reputation around campus. This was especially evident once I started interviewing FESCI members.

It is one thing to talk about war, it's another to talk about the inner workings of a contested organization that has both positive and negative characteristics attributed to it. Initially FESCI members were open to talk with me until they learned that I was not there to sing their praises glibly but instead to figure out exactly what goes down on campus. Often I was met with hesitation or given the run-around; especially with senior members

of FESCI. Could this explain why I got so much run around from the secretary general and other FESCI members?

Limitations of the Study

My subjectivity and positionality played an integral role as a researcher. My background as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, raised in Kenya and the U.S. affected how I was viewed and accepted within certain circles. Because I have moved so much, I have become comfortable being uncomfortable. My nationality as a U.S. citizen provided me certain privileges that simultaneously created roadblocks in gaining trust as an “insider.” Additionally, given my age and ethnic background, the fact that I am unmarried, agnostic, and do not have children, grossly impacted my legitimacy as a “serious” woman even though my level of education and perceived social class perpetuated the “rich American” stereotype of those in the diaspora.

Additional limitations and challenges to the study included navigating a perceived and even named insider/outsider status as a researcher. Given certain topics discussed during interviews or casual conversation as a participant observer, I had to learn to delicately navigate sensitive topics that included war, displacement and loss of family members. I sometimes wondered too, if my gender and status precluded me from fully integrating into the two case study groups, YEM and FESCI. I was living alone in Abidjan and Dakar, with no family and few friends, but given my work and research needs, I found myself navigating male-dominated environs throughout my time in the field. As one of the few women in various settings, I encountered gender politics in the office setting or field site on a daily basis. This led to mental exhaustion and an ambivalence to working every day and interacting with participants. As a “naive”

researcher there was much to learn during those 23 months in terms of navigating “fieldwork,” but what my journals, documents, interviews, photos, and videos show, through it all, there was a desire to investigate; a passion for young African youth; and a need to get to the how.

Concluding Discussion

This chapter has attempted to illustrate why comparative case study was an appropriate methodological tool to collect and engage with my data. I argue for Vavrus and Bartlett’s (2017) comparative case study to illustrate the role of Hip-Hop, perceptions of education, and the proliferation of civic engagement among young people in Senegal and Cote d’Ivoire. Functioning within a post-structural, transnégritude paradigm, I argue that much like Hip-Hop this lens is appropriate to provide “an apparatus of enunciation” to counter the narratives often told about young people in West Africa. Are they a ticking time or an opportunity source for the continent?

In the coming chapters, I will show the conditions in which young people have approached Hip-Hop and Hip-Hop pedagogy and how they have utilized this tool as a form of engagement, resistance, and mobilization. First, I will provide context leading the creation of FESCI and YEM, then provide my findings and analyses on their approach and employment of Hip-Hop as pedagogy.

CHAPTER 4

MAD CREW: FESCI AND Y'EN A MARRE

Introduction

Young people have played a critical role in the political history of many African countries but more often than not, the image that has been projected of them by the media can be contradictory. On the one hand, young people are shown either being recruited to fight such as during the Liberian civil war, or there is an assumption of their being “puppets for warlords who have wreaked havoc” in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone (Abbink, 2005; Lambert, 2016, p, 34). These images of young people in sub-Saharan Africa portray them as being easily duped through “charisma, drugs, violence, and even food to do the bidding of some of the most nefarious adults on the continent” (Lambert, 2016, p. 34).

On the other hand, young people are seen as cultural entrepreneurs (Strong & Ossei-Owusu, 2013), innovating and challenging dominant narratives of wayward or listless youth (Abbink, 2005; Ungruhe & Esson (2017). Young Africans in this case, have been hailed as an opportunity source, an economic and political potential that can potentially alter the course of the continent. Much as Ngugi (2009) has encouraged us to decolonize our minds and detach from “Europhonism,” so too do we see Y'en a Marre and FESCI attempting to de-link and reassert their autonomy. What this chapter intends to show is that young people, specifically Y'en a Marre and FESCI, have chosen to

mobilize and engage in authentically Senegalese/Ivorian ways that are both unprecedented and challenge business as usual on the continent.

The rise of social media and the adoption of Hip-Hop, specifically, illustrates that young people have much more agency than is perceived by the Western media. And, their engagement and methods for liberation and ownership for a new type of Africa are a direct result of their cultural and sociopolitical contexts. To illustrate their engagement, I will first introduce the two organizations, FESCI in Abidjan and Y'en a Marre (YEM) in Dakar. I will provide necessary sociohistorical context to situate their origins, mission statement, and their methods of operation. I will then summarize initial themes that will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

FESCI

Social and historical roots of the organization

L'homme naît bon...et la société le corrompt -Zatto¹

Young people in Cote d'Ivoire were fed up. The “sacrificed generation,” as Schumann (2012) would call them, who had enough of the lack of representation, resources and support, rose and organized forming several student-led organizations. One such group organized by youth in Côte D'Ivoire was FESCI (Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire, or the Student Federation of Côte d'Ivoire). FESCI was initially created in 1990, in “response to repression by President Houphouët-Boigny’s government, a failure of dialogue to address the increasing demand for political freedom and rights in Côte d'Ivoire” (Sany, 2010, p. 9). Although formed in response to political circumstances, FESCI claimed to be apolitical, and carried out their struggle within and

¹ Man is naturally good but society corrupts

outside the campus of the Université Felix Houphouët Boigny, to challenge the government on political and social issues; organizing strikes and antigovernment protests (Sany, 2010).

Historically, youth have organized around perceived inequity of educational opportunity (Lambert, 2016, and Federici et al., 2000). Whether it was to challenge access to education during the colonial era or denouncing the effects of the structural adjustment programs on African universities, young people have been at the center of these movements (Lambert, p. 38). In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, education has been at the center of the country's development. During colonial rule, young black Ivorians known as the *Compagnons de l'Aventure de 1946*, were sent to France to receive their higher education since that did not exist at the time in Cote d'Ivoire. Many of these students who were educated overseas and came back, would end up working in the "higher echelons of the state administration...[thus] establish[ing] the link that connected education not only to social mobility, but also to a career in state employment (Schumann, 2012, p. 537).

By 1965, Houphouet-Boigny's PDCI party--and the sole political party at the time--, declared education "the priority of priorities" and declared "education for all" as one of the country's initiatives. To make teaching more attractive, the party provided teachers with free housing, free transportation for professors and students, and a monthly stipend (p. 537). For young people of the freedom era, these were the "good old days" of prosperity, employment, and stability.

This would change however in the 1980s, when the country's cash crop economy was severely impacted and adversely affected the university-government relationship. As

the country relied heavily on the export of its cash crops, this crisis severely limited output and profit; destabilized by unequal terms of trade and an over reliance on foreign investments (Oumar, 2015 and Konate 2003, Schumann, 2012). This in turn then led the government to turn to the Bretton-Woods institutions for Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) between 1980-1986, leading to a decrease in government spending in social sectors, a freeze in civil service salaries and employment, and an increase in prices which impacted “city dwellers and particularly the youth, a vulnerable component of the population, people with low capital” (Oumar, 2015, p.191). Young people coming of age during this time, experienced harsh realities that, compounded with the political climate, set the stage for a clash.

Though “Education for All” was an initiative promised by the government post-independence, by 1980 with the economic crisis and the SAPs enacted, the education for all initiative was severely undermined. Schumann (2012) notes that the decrease in funding in the education sector made it “extremely difficult for Ivorian youth to complete their education and leading to ever larger numbers of school drop-outs...[and] unemployment for those who made it through the education system and who had become school and university graduates” (p. 536). Students graduating at this time, carried diplomas that bore little weight, social mobility through education was now denied and became a matter of inheritance, and school drop-outs became the norm. Moreover, it was becoming apparent that the current political system was not meeting the needs of the people, and calls for democracy and multi-party systems fell on deaf ears.

On February 19, 1990, a student revolt started in the university village in Yopougon after “repeated electricity cuts” interfered with students studying for exams.

To students, it seemed as though the government cared little for their well-being or their education. Students were fed up. The protests eventually spread to campus and by February 23, 1990, a student led protest led to the imprisonment of 137 student leaders and garnered support from the teacher/professor union SYNARES (Syndicat National de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur) (Schumann, 2012, p. 538). This did nothing to quell student protests such that by March 2, 1990, the state was forced to decree the closure of all “school and university establishments, and the prohibition of all meetings and demonstrations....,” among other things (p. 538). By April, after a student was shot by a soldier, the government announced the *année blanche*, cancelling the 1990 academic year altogether. This is the stage in which the *Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire* (FESCI), was birthed. As Zatto, one of the FESCI members I interviewed quoting Rousseau would note, man is born good, it is society that corrupts him; FESCI, according to him, was born good and later corrupted by society:

Zatto: L'homme naît bon et la société le transforme. La FESCI est née bonne puisque, puisqu'elle est née à l'église. La FESCI est née à l'église. Elle n'a jamais eu d'ambition de violence ! Mais le pouvoir, je dirai, le pouvoir de dictature d'avant a commencé à mettre la FESCI...sinon les bâtons dans les roues de la FESCI. Depuis 90, jusqu'à 99... je dirai même 2000, parce que les gens ont commencé à financer les étudiants (Z, July, 2018).

Zatto: Man is born good and society changes him. FESCI was born good because, because she was born in the church. FESCI was born in the church. She has never had violent ambitions! But the power of previous leaders, I will say, began to put FESCI...began to place roadblocks in FESCI's way. Since '90 to '99; I'll even say to 2000, because people started funding students (Z, July 2018)

FESCI was founded on April 25, 1990 at the church, Sainte Famille de Cocody Riviera. Because the university was closed due to strikes, the church became a meeting

place where “several meetings, including those of the Ivorian League for Human Rights (LIDHO), [were] born in the same movement²” (Konate, 2003, p. 50). Though the PDCI, had tried to control students through the state supported MEECI (*Mouvement des étudiants et élèves de Côte d’Ivoire*, created in 1968), they were met with a population that was hostile and supported an oppositional logic. Siaba, another Fescist would contextualize the organization’s creation as such: FESCI’s birth at a church at a time during the rise of multiparty systems, by students from the *banlieu*, or low-income; working-class neighborhood, was reason for their mobilizing for students’ rights. He would continue:

SIABA: Ok, Ok. Je dirai que la FESCI a été fondée le 21 avril 1990, en 1990. C'était une combinaison de plusieurs organisations d'étudiants qui ont vu que, compte tenu de leur situation à ce moment-là, ils devaient changer leur façon de réagir aux problèmes. Parce que, à ce temps, la FESCI est venue remplacer une autre organisation. Une autre organisation appelée MEECI, MEECI à l'époque était affilié à un parti politique; PDCI/EDA. Et oui, dans 1990, en 1990, c'était ... la révolution était dans l'air, le système multipartite se préparait en Côte d'Ivoire, tu vois? Et ainsi, les étudiants, les jeunes, ils ont organisé eux-mêmes de voir désormais comment ils peuvent exiger leurs droits des autorités et leur droit de vivre simplement comme des étudiants. Ainsi, la FESCI est née dans ces conditions, aux dortoirs universitaires à Yopougon. Voilà. Donc, dans le village de dortoir de Yopougon, oui les dortoirs de Yopougon, les jeunes ont commencé à se mettre en mouvement cette nouvelle organisation qui lutterait désormais pour les droits des étudiants, c'est donc qui Je parle de la FESCI. Il a été fondé, et c'est aussi un aspect unique de sa création, FESCI est née dans l'église, dans l'église catholique Sainte Famille de Cocody. Oui. (2018).

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SIABA: Ok. Ok. I will say that FESCI was founded on the 21st of April 1990, in 1990, it was a combination of several student organizations who saw that given their situation at that time, they needed to change the way they responded to problems. Because, at that time, FESCI came to replace another organization. Another organization known as MEECI, MEECI at that time was affiliated with a political party; PDCI/EDA. And so, in 1990, in 1990, this was...revolution was in

² “plusieurs réunions, notamment celles de la Ligue ivoirienne des droits de l’homme (Lidho), née dans la même mouvance.”

the air, the multi-party system was coming into Cote d'Ivoire, do you see? And so, students, young people, they organized themselves to see from now on how they can demand their rights from the authorities and their right to live simply as students. So, FESCI was born under those conditions, at the university's dorms (quad/village) in Yopougon. There you go. So, in the dorm village in Yopougon, yeah the dorms in Yopougon, young people started to, started to put in motion this new organization that would from now on fight for students' rights, so this is who I'm talking about, FESCI. It was founded, and this is also a unique aspect of its creation, FESCI was born in the church, in the Catholic church, Saint Famille of Cocody. Yes.
(2018)

FESCI grew out of this political rush to leadership and *notoriety* and rose to become the most powerful and feared student union. FESCI would grow and publicly align itself with the *Front populaire ivoirien* (FPI) led by Laurent Gbagbo “who not only was their godfather, but discreetly assured their political training³” (Akindes and Fofana, 2011, p. 216).

After months of almost uninterrupted protests and demonstrations from February to April 1990, the PDCI party, pressured by national and international forces was “forced to accept multi-party elections, the liberalization of the press, the creation of independent (anti-government) student union FESCI, and the disbandment of the government-controlled student union...MEECI” (Schumann, 2012, p. 538; Konate, 2003). FESCI was recognized as an independent student organization and Ahipeaud Martial was named the first Secretary General.

Akindes and Fofana (2011) argue that the beginning of the multiparty system, resulted in the heavy recruitment of young people into politics. They write,

“Dans un tel contexte, la dynamique de recrutement politique concurrentiel qui s'est engagée et le besoin pour chaque leader politique de pénétrer l'espace public

³ “qui non seulement était son parrain, mais assurait discrètement sa formation politique.”

firent du monde étudiantin un champ social particulièrement convoité. Le monde scolaire et universitaire était désormais envisagé comme le vivier d'une énergie sociale politiquement nécessaire pour les luttes sociales et politiques. C'est la raison pour laquelle les campus universitaires et les établissements scolaires ont été très rapidement transformés en hauts lieux de revendications sociales, de mieux en mieux structurés sur la base des griefs liés aux frustrations nées de la réduction des transferts sociaux de la part d'un État de moins en moins social du fait de la réduction des ressources fiscales" (p. 216).

"In this context, the dynamics of competitive political recruitment which had begun and the need for every political leader to penetrate the public space made the student body a particularly coveted social field. The school and university world was now seen as a breeding ground for social energy politically necessary for social and political struggles. This is the reason why university campuses and schools were very quickly transformed into places at the center of social action, more and more structured on the basis of grievances related to the frustrations created by the reduction of social programs from a state that was less and less supportive due to the reduction in financial resources" (p. 216)

When Ahipeaud Martial entered office, "students were in the streets protesting more than they were in lecture halls and labs. Schoolchildren, pupils, university students, unionists, and workers in the public and private sectors beat the pavement to oppose measures to reduce wages ...⁴" (Konate, 2003, p. 51). FESCI's influence and power was unforeseen. With one summon Martial, the Secretary General (SG) could mobilize thousands of students to the streets, destabilizing the city. Naturally, this level of influence did not go unnoticed by leaders of new, emerging political parties, notably a former teacher at the university turned leader of the FPI, Laurent Gbagbo (Konate, 2003). It was not long before the ruling party first under Houphouet-Boigny, and then under Bédié, began to target FESCI not only for their use of violence (some would argue in retaliation to government forces) but for their reach and their support of the opposition.

⁴ "les étudiants fréquentent plus la rue et les manifestations que les amphes et les salles de travaux dirigés. Écoliers, élèves, étudiants, syndicats, travailleurs des secteurs public et privé battent alors le pavé pour s'opposer aux mesures de diminution des salaires..."

Konate writes, “The PDCI then accused the FPI of manipulating the young people of Fesci who, for their part, played the role of the hardline opposition...⁵” and those suspected of aligning with the PDCI were quickly kicked out of the organization (Konate, 2003, p. 52).

The government banned FESCI in 1991, though this had little effect and its members continued to meet. Upon assuming control of FESCI in 1995, Soro made it his mission to get the organization re-registered, a feat he accomplished despite being arrested multiple times (Corey-Boulet, 2015).

A Human Rights Watch Report (2008), noted that by 1991, FESCI would be banned as a student organization due to violent and deadly clashes against government security forces (HRW, 2008). Akindes and Fofana (2011) write that due to the government’s extreme repression of FESCI and their continuous challenge to their autonomy, FESCI grew more violent as time passed (p. 216). But their influence was irreversible and the PDCI rationalized that the organization needed to be shut down. Though many of its members went underground or were imprisoned, continuing strikes and protests on the university campus in Abidjan, “made clear that FESCI could not be repressed out of existence” (HRW, 2008). It was evident that despite their reputation, FESCI’s presence and influence on campus was unmistakable. Even with the ban Fescists continued to lead protests that challenged the lack of scholarships and overcrowding (HRW, 2008). It is no wonder that by 1997, under Guillaume Soro, the organization would be reinstated and its role as both a political tool and a student organization would continuously be challenged. This dichotomy would be tested, questioned, and dissected first during the civil war of 2002 and then after the post-electoral crisis of 2010-2011.

⁵ Le PDCI accuse alors le FPI de manipuler les jeunes de la Fesci qui, pour leur part, jouent à fond la carte de l’opposition pure et dure....”

The causes surrounding the civil war of 2002 and the post-electoral crisis of 2010 are varied and nuanced but what is accepted is that ethnic and religious differences became central (HRW, 2008, Akindes & Fofana, 2001). Much like the internal tensions within FESCI members, “In a loose way, the divisions within FESCI during the “war” took on the regional and ethnic character that has come to characterize the Ivorian crisis up through the present day, with the FPI drawing its supporters from the largely Christian south and the RDR from the largely Muslim north.” (HRW, 2008). Today, FESCI reflects the socio-political makeup of the country, both its ethnoreligious tensions and its “strong man” political methods. Part of this continues to be a result of the hierarchical makeup of the organization; many of the former and current leaders were children of politicians in the PDCI and other political parties. Siaba, for example, was quick to mention this during our interview to not only contextualize FESCI’s roots but its hierarchy.

SIABA: Je préciserai que certains membres de la FESCI sont issus de familles au pouvoir! Donc, leurs parents étaient PDCI, RDR, je parle de ... Ahipeaud Martial, dont le père était membre du PDCI, mais lui, en tant qu'étudiant, il a rejoint la FESCI et c'était quelqu'un qui était opposé au PDCI. tu vois? (Siaba, 2018).

SIABA: I will specify that there are certain members of FESCI who came from families that were in power! So, their parents were PDCI, RDR, I'm talking about...Ahipeaud Martial, whose father was a member of the PDCI, but he, as a student, he joined FESCI and he was someone who was opposed to PDCI, do you see? (Siaba, 2018).

Though FESCI has made attempts to quell their once notorious reputation, the effects still linger. Quoting former SG Augustin Mian, the Human Rights Watch 2008 report on FESCI states, “Objectively, it’s true that there have been violence and other problems...However, it’s not with a magic wand that I can get rid of eighteen years of bad habits. The international community needs to help us. I want a new, mature FESCI that

turns its back on violence.” (HRW, 2008). In 2016, this sentiment was once again echoed by the most recent SG Fulgence Assi, known as AFA. Upon assuming office in 2014, AFA promised to “reactivate FESCI” (Tiemoko, 2016; Freland, 2016). Today, FESCI is known as a “mafia” type organization able to mobilize and engage, while at the same time, extort and threaten students as well as use their might to destabilize the administration. From demanding free services from restaurants and taxis, to taxing student scholarships for their own enrichment, to control of the dorms and a levied tax for non-Fescists, FESCI continues to struggle with its past as it navigates a conflicting present (HRW, 2008).

This “mafia” type behavior as discussed in the HRW report and rumored around campus, was not the reputation FESCI members wanted me to focus on. However, it was difficult for me not to question some of their methods of engagement. But, despite their reputation, Fescists appeared to be in agreement of their relative draw and effectiveness. What was clear was this: there was a lack of educational infrastructure, scholarship, and employment opportunity and FESCI has continuously stepped in to provide these services. And, although it is perceived as a school for leadership training and transformation, these benefits can be extortive.

When I spoke with Siaba, Zatto, Angra, Mohammed, Hie and F, I started to see and hear similarities and complexities in their story. I wanted to find out why they joined FESCI, what was the organization’s mission/goals, their influence/effectiveness, and their methods. After reading FESCI’s preamble, I wanted to know why students, professors, and everyone in between, had nuanced critiques against these young folk. I was

repeatedly told that though not perfect, FESCI has been a much needed if not tolerated organization that attempts to fight for students' rights even if it benefits their own agenda.

Mission and organizational structure

Call and response: FESCI!..Toujours! (FESCI...Forever!)

Today was the meeting with the General Assembly of all FESCI student groups in all universities in the country. According to the SG, this takes place at least once a year or in special cases such as strikes, elections, etc.

Before the meeting today, I came in early to meet with the SG, and walked around campus since he was running late. As I walked around, I saw groups of men, students, I presumed, dressed in matching red t-shirts; running and chanting on campus. Then another group doing the same thing. Students on campus either encouraged them or ignored them, but since no one seemed fazed, I took this to be a normal occurrence. When I ran into M. Assi, the SG, he told me that they were in fact FESCI members and that their march through campus was extremely common before meetings to get students on campus excited in anticipation.

We were hanging out outside one of the major lecture halls while members filled up the space. It was interesting to see a young student so bold and fearless on campus. Even professors were in deference to him. All students who greeted him, did so in a sort of salute style, calling each other “comrades,” this was more so evidence once we entered the lecture hall. M. Assi and other senior FESCI members I met would refer to Mao and Stalin but I didn't want to rush into making those assumptions. Their actions and language, however, were telling.

Once we went inside, it was a loud, rambunctious crew of students who, upon seeing the SG walk in, erupted in cheers and applause. It was like the president was on campus.

The population is mostly male with a smattering of women in the organization. The meeting is extremely lively with representatives from student organizations in Burkina Faso also in attendance in support (Field notes, July 7, 2018).

FESCI, as the Human Rights Watch Report notes, is “a rigidly hierarchical organization,” which consists of a national bureau, in Abidjan, and then a number of “sections of equal rank” (HRW, 2008). Sections can be formed either by colleges within the university (ex. Criminology, modern letters, STRM), university residential complexes known as *cités*, or high schools. The national bureau is led by a Secretary General (SG), elected by FESCI members during elections, who then appoints all of the secretary

generals of the various sections. At the bottom, you have the “rank-and-file members” who are not part of the bureau of any section and are known as "antichambrists" (ATC) or "foot soldiers," these are the members “sent out as part of “mass mobilizations for protest in favor of the government, or to do the ‘dirty work’” (HRW, 2008).

Beyond the strict hierarchy, status within FESCI is often influenced by a number of informal factors. Within FESCI, there is a system of patronage whereby nearly everyone acts as protector to someone, and in turn is protected by someone else. Subordinate members who are under the political cover of a superior are referred to as a ‘bon petit.’ Being the "bon petit" of a high-ranking leader is often a ticket to a leadership position within the organization, together with the power, prominence, and often wealth, derived from the FESCI-run extortion and protection rackets that go with it. At the same time, leaders seek to maximize the number of members under their protection to extend their influence.” (HRW, 2008).

This organizational structure is not by accident. FESCI members are well aware of their organizational structure, their roles, and the impact their organization has not only on campus but on Fescists themselves. Hie, a senior member at the national office, gave me a glimpse of how the structure worked in deference to student and member support.

Hie: Hmm..eh bien je dirai que la FESCI dans son ensemble est très structurée, nous avons un secrétariat, tout comme dans la fonction publique, il y a un secrétariat, ici à la FESCI nous les appelons le secteur de la logique et de la formation, c'est un secrétariat en charge des professionnels l'environnement, ce sont eux qui dirigent la formation et qui s'entraînent même à se révolter, et puis nous avons le secteur en charge de la communication, il faut que [un étudiant] soit bien parlé, et utilise les meilleures pratiques de communication pour lutter pour les droits des étudiants, et ici nous vous formons sur la façon d'être un bon orateur public même si vous n'êtes pas votre majeur, peut-être que vous êtes dans les sciences humaines, inscrit dans l'histoire, mais à la FESCI vous êtes en charge de la communication, donc cela signifie que vous apprendrez vous-même, vous apprendrez à mener une conversation car à chaque fois que vous serez mis sur place, vous devrez communiquer, envoyer / écrire un message de telle manière que ceux qui reçoivent comprennent ce que vous disent. Donc, si vous remarquez qu'il y a beaucoup d'apprentissage auto-dirigé. C'est aussi pratique. Ce qui signifie, si on vous dit que vous êtes en charge de la communication, cela signifie que vous êtes celui qui appelle la réunion, l'ordre de la réunion, vous voyez? C'est

plus pratique. C'est pourquoi nous disons que la FESCI est une école de formation (2018).

Hie: Hmm...well I will say that FESCI in its whole is very structured, we have a secretariat, just like in civil service, there is a secretariat, here in FESCI we call them the logic and training sector, this is a secretariat in charge of the professional environment, they are the ones who man the training and who even train on how to revolt, and then we have the sector in charge of communication, it's necessary for [a student] to be well-spoken, and to utilize the best communication practices to fight for students' rights, and here we train you on how to be a good public speaker even if you it's not your major, perhaps you are in the humanities, enrolled in history, but in FESCI you are in charge of communication, so this means that you will teach yourself, you will learn how to lead a conversation because at each time you will be put on the spot, you will have to communicate, send/write a message in such a way that those who receive understand what you are saying. So, if you notice there is a lot self-directed learning. Also, it's practical. Meaning, if you are told you are in charge of communication, it means you are the one who calls the meeting, the order of the meeting, you see? It's more practical. That's why we say FESCI is a training school.

For Fescists, this is a "training school." This is more than just fighting for students' rights, but it is also a means by which to apprentice as a future politician.

Bearing in mind the political lineages of former members, was it ever possible to separate the social justice work from FESCI's political relationships? Worse yet, was this all a front to pluck future political progeny? When I examined this "school" further, I realized that it was more complex than that.

"Benefices"

Being a part of FESCI means being a part of a family-like organization that looks out for one another (Angra, 2018; Hie, 2018). Members brought this general trait up when they discussed their motivations for joining, FESCI's mission, and the influence the organization had on and off campus. Scholars have mentioned that former FESCI members cited economic incentives, including "access to free university housing, free

food, and free transportation that membership in FESCI often assures, essential commodities for survival that other students must struggle to obtain” (HRW, 2008). Additionally, FESCI garners students respect, confidence, and a way into politics (Angra, August 2018; HRW, 2008).

“In addition to economic incentives, other former FESCI members cited the respect and power accorded to members: "When I joined in 1998, FESCI was a way to express myself. Coming from a poor family of farmers, this gave me a way to organize, be respected, and try to solve problems." [77] As has been said in the context of another pro-government group, the Young Patriots, for many students FESCI constitutes a sort of "counter-society where students flunking out can be called 'professor,' and unemployed youth, thugs even, become 'deputy' or 'general,' and will be recognized as such by their peers (HRW, 2008).

When I brought these “benefits” into conversation, I was first told firmly and clearly that there were no such thing, but they would then ask me, “is it bad to do a small favor” for someone who has helped you? Zatto was adamant that these “benefits” were really a result of their work to improve student conditions. When I first asked him about the “benefits” of being a Fescist, he was a bit offended and taken aback.

ZATTO : Tu sais... quand tu dis bénéfices moi je ne suis pas d'accord, je ne sais pas de quoi tu veux parler. Parce que moi, pour le seul bénéfice que moi je puisse acquérir à la FESCI, c'est la formation.

BN : donc il n'y a pas comme qu'il y a des endroits privilégiés, dortoirs privilégiés des choses comme ça ?

ZATTO : il n'y a pas de dortoirs privilégiés, il n'y a pas de dortoirs privilégiés. La FESCI n'est jamais allé dans une administration pour dire je veux tels nombres de places, peut être ça existe. Mais à ma connaissance là ça n'a jamais eu lieu, à ma connaissance je n'ai jamais vu. Tu peux avoir quelqu'un, une amie, vous avez eu le BAC ensemble peut être qui est inscrite dans la même faculté que toi, dans la même filière que toi qui vit chez ses parents, qui vit chez ses parents, qui travaille bien à l'école. On fait admission de chambre, lui, il souhaite toujours rester chez ses parents, pourtant s'il postule, il pourrait avoir la chambre. Tu peux lui dire tout simplement de te prêter ses papiers, la chambre est en son et puis tu es dedans. Voilà. Mais certains peuvent dire, bon, comme moi je suis syndicaliste, cède moi la place je vais m'asseoir. Je n'ai jamais, je n'ai jamais, moi je n'ai jamais ... si je suis arrivé dans le bus, je rentre dans le bus, et je vois que je mérite la place, je m'assoie. Mais dit à lui-là non faut te lever je vais faire chose... mais

c'est... il est quand même bon, il est quand même bon de rendre un petit service aux gens qui ont, qui ont, qui ont décidé de lutter pour toi. Tu sais ça non ? (2018).

ZATTO: You know ... when you say benefits, for me, I do not agree, I do not know what you want to talk about. Because the only benefit I can get at FESCI, is training.

BN: So there are no privileged places, privileged dorms, things like that?

ZATTO: There are no privileged dormitories, there are no privileged dormitories. FESCI has never been in an administration to say I want such numbers of places, maybe it exists. But to my knowledge, it never happened, to my knowledge I never saw. You can have someone, a friend, you went to high school together, who is enrolled in the same department as you, in the same way that you who lives with his parents, who lives with his parents, who works well in school. One has housing but he still wishes to stay with his parents, nevertheless if he applies, he could have the room. You can just tell him to lend you his papers, the room is in his name and then you're in it. That's it. But some people can say, well, like me I'm a unionist, give me your place [on the bus] I'm going to sit down. I never, never, never, if I get on the bus, I get on the bus, and if I see that I deserve the place, I sit down. But to tell someone to get up, I'm going to do something ... but it's ... it's still good, it's still good to... to do a small service to people who have, who have, who decided to fight for you. You know that, right? (2018).

It seems as though Zatto was trying to bypass a known reality. No, he affirms, FESCI does not receive any sort of privilege or extort any form of payment from students/administrators. But, he demurely inquires, does it hurt to take care of those that support you? There is a certain disconnect in the work and the application in their justification for *des petits services*. Take the example of the bathroom wars in the Earth Sciences department (STRM).

Today, I spent the day on campus on the STRM side of the university doing data entry, calling students, and conducting interviews with the help of M. Kanate. ...We maintain an active intellectual/political conversation on the plight of the modern day African, as we speak in both local and pan-African terms. He is always quick to note the laziness within the Ivorian population, and the apathetic nature of doing nothing while expecting to be paid. This is the reason he uses to

justify closing the bathrooms for the entire department. We get into a heated discussion on his closing the use of the toilets for students.

As I was walking towards the department and his office especially this morning, I noticed male students urinating outside the lecture hall. I mentioned this to him in passing as I assumed the restrooms were in use. He casually mentioned that he shut them down to teach “them” (the students), a lesson. Incredulously, I ask him if he is joking. Matter of factly, he says; no. Why? I ask? Because they don't respect the bathroom, or public spaces. Here in Côte d’Ivoire, people do not respect public spaces. What? I re-ask? He says, do you want to go and see how the bathrooms are?

M. Kanate continues: I have asked and implored and made signs for students to respect the toilets. The women flood the toilets, the men treat it like a dump. It’s become unbearable and I’ve become a dictator of the toilets so I shut it down. He continued, I could have the Fescists handle and manage the toilets and it would be handled but I do not want to get them involved because they bring too much trouble. What? I ask.. . well, some departments/colleges have Fescists manage toilets by charging 50cfa per admission to toilet and this ensures its cleanliness. Even though it would make his life easier, he doesn’t like the presence of FESCI on campus. He doesn't dwell too much on that and I do not want to press him so, we move on and continue with our data entry and phone calls to participants (field notes, July 25, 2018).

I didn’t want to believe that the university was also not providing adequate janitorial support around campus such that students were taking it upon themselves to mobilize and clean up. It seemed to parallel closely to what young people did in Senegal in the late 1980s with the *Set/Setal* movement of neighborhood cleanliness and ownership (Havard, 2013; Nelson, 2014). Young people once again were taking matters into their own hands and stepping in where the leaders failed. When I interviewed Zatto, he knew I was going to ask him the “toilet” question. It was all over the department and parts of campus: FESCI had taken over the toilets and were charging admission for students to use. Zatto had to explain what was going down. According to him, one of the low ranking Fescists reported to him that while he was looking for cleaning materials to clean the

stalls, he saw a student urinating on the grass near one of the lecture halls. Zatto

interceded and continued:

ZATTO : ...Maintenant quand je suis arrivé, j'ai dit bon, va, va l'appelé. Il est allé l'appeler, j'ai dit ce qui... puisque lui-même il dort, l'étudiant dort, dort, il dort... comment on appelle ça ? ... il dort au sous-sol de géologie. Lui il dort à côté. Il y a un sous-sol à côté. Il dort là. Je dis mais toi tu dors ici et tu es en train d'uriner partout. Tu es un être humain quand même, ça-là ça va l'affecter demain. Il faut dire que la société pour l'entretien de l'espace universitaire ne fait pas son boulot. Il y a des toilettes ici, tu es une fois arrivée là-bas ? Très, très sale ! Il y a deux toilettes, très, très sale ! Là-bas au moins il n'y a pas, il n'y a pas truc, y'a pas porte. Tu peux aller toi-même tu vas voir. Comme les toilettes qui sont en haut, sont au milieu de la faculté. Si... on ne prend pas soin de ça, puisque à chaque fois on envoie des mots à la SIMDCI, la société qui s'appelle SIMDCI. On envoie des mots à cette dernière pour l'assainissement des toilettes. Mais rien ! Quand tu vas débarquer dans le bureau du Boss, ils vont dire que tu es violent. Bon... nous, nous on a décidé comme ça, nous on a décidé comme ça de ne plus les emmerder. Puisque depuis début, début 2017, jusqu'en avril on a décidé comme ça de prendre les toilettes en mains. Puisque ça y est au milieu. Sur les sols aux urines commence à faire chose-là, ça va, ça va polluer l'aire environnementale. Donc on a préféré ... prendre les choses en main... On se connaît, nous étudiant-là, on sait que si on ne te dit pas fait chose-là, tu vas venir uriner-là, t'as pas versé l'eau. Tu ne me crois pas là, demain matin, à 6h, tu vas t'arrêter devant les toilettes, toi-même faut essayer de pisser, tu vas voir ce qui est dedans. Or quand on verse l'eau, on nettoie, les gens viennent gêner. Ton camarade étudiant qui fait ça-là, tu lui donne quoi ? la FESCI ne paie pas, la FESCI ne paie pas. Donc de façon volontaire, si on te dit de donner une pièce de 25f pour pouvoir aller au toilette pour uriner, si tu vois ça en mal, bon... je ne sais plus comment on va te traiter. Je ne sais plus comment on va te traiter.

ZATTO: ... Now when I arrived, I said good, go, go call him. He went to call him, I said ... since he sleeps here, the student sleeps..... what is it called? ... he sleeps in the basement of the geology department. There is a basement next door. He sleeps there. I told him, you sleep here and you are urinating everywhere. You are a human being, this will affect us tomorrow. It must be said that the university custodians are not doing their job. There are toilets here, have you seen them? Very, very dirty! You can go yourself you will see. If ... we do not take care of that, since each time we send words to the SIMDCI, the company called SIMDCI. We send word to the latter for the sanitation of toilets. But nothing! When you go to the President's office, they'll say you're violent. Well ... we, we decided like that, we decided like that not to annoy them anymore. Since early, early 2017, until April we decided to take the toilet issue in our own hands. Because that's in the middle of campus...on soil with urine which affects it..it will pollute the environmental area. So we preferred ... to take things in hand...We know each

other, we study here, we know that if we do not say you do something, you'll come pee there, you did not pour water. You do not believe me there, tomorrow morning, at 6am, you'll stop in front of the toilet, you have to try to pee yourself, you'll see what's inside. But when we pour water, we clean, people come to spoil. Your fellow student who does that, what do you give him? FESCI does not pay, FESCI does not pay. So voluntarily, if you are told to give a 25f piece to go to the toilet to urinate, if you see that as bad, well ... I do not know how we will treat you. I do not know how we will treat you (2018).

It makes sense, according to Zatto, that your fellow student, who spends his time and energy cleaning up after you; fighting on your behalf, should be somehow compensated. Zatto brings up a lot of factors: the university's custodial support was lacking, students did not have enough lavatory facilities, his comrades monitor the area for him and present any news. Is this the different type of school they mean? How then do they envision school and what purpose does it serve Fescists? For whose struggle are they fighting?

Concluding discussion

Fescists, today are in a complex position. On one hand they maintain they are fighting for the rights of young people, on the other they consider the organization a training ground for leadership, identity formation, and one of beneficial exchange. Despite their 28 years of existence, there are hints of FESCI using the “old way” of doing things as a means to gain control and influence. Y'en a Marre is also struggling with growing pains, fighting for the rights of young people, while navigating Senegalese sociopolitical structures.

Y'en a Marre

Social and historical roots of the movement

“...Au Sénégal, ce sont les jeunes qui ont mis Wade au pouvoir. En Indonésie, c'est la jeunesse qui a combattu le dictateur Suharto. Il en a été de même au Mali

où les jeunes ont chassé Moussa Traoré du pouvoir. Aujourd'hui, qui peut dire que ce n'est pas la jeunesse qui a combattu et fait partir Bédié? Et surtout la dictature de Gueï. On a pensé qu'avec les armes, on pouvait avoir raison du peuple. Mais nous avons montré qu'avec les mains nues, on peut changer un pays" (former FESCI SG, Blé Goudé, as quoted in Konate (2003), p. 70).

"... In Senegal, it is the young people who put Wade in power. In Indonesia, it is the youth who fought the dictator Suharto. It was the same in Mali where young people chased Moussa Traoré out of power. Today, who can say that it is not the youth who fought and sent away Bédié? And especially the dictatorship of Gueï. We thought that with weapons, we could be right of the people. But we showed that with bare hands, we can change a country " (former FESCI SG, Blé Goudé, as quoted in Konate (2003), p. 70).

Senegal, a paragon of political stability in West Africa, was placed in an unprecedented situation in June 2011. It seemed like the country was on “the precipice of social rupture” (Bryson, 2014, p. 33). Citizens took to the streets in anger, protesting then president Abdoulaye Wade’s attempt to secure a third term. In retaliation, law enforcement, struck back; firing tear gas, arresting civilians, and violently dispersing people (p. 33). It would take a group of rappers, journalists, and students, calling themselves Y’en a Marre ([We’re] Fed up), who “succeeded in arousing the dormant social consciousness of Senegalese society through community organization, written manifestoes, social media, thundering oratory, striking visual imagery, and unifying hip-hop anthems, attracting enough followers to ensure Wade’s defeat and his peaceful exit from office” (p. 33).

When I met with Fadel, Aliou, Thiew, Thiat, Sophie, and Moriba, they discussed how the genesis of the movement came about organically. Much like in Abidjan, young people in Dakar (and across the country), experienced the consequences of a single party system, first under Leopold Senghor and then his chosen successor, Abdou Diouf.

Moreover, the economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, severely impacted social sectors including healthcare, infrastructure, and education (Bryson and Enz, 2014). Y'en a marre would develop as a result of these deficiencies to become an alternative school to teach leadership, democracy, and ownership.

In Senegal as in Cote d'Ivoire, political power was consolidated under a strong president, Leopold Sédar Senghor and his political party Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (UPS) (Lambert, 2016, p. 36). Senegal, a rare exception in West Africa, was neither plagued by military rule or coups d'état, and as such was heralded as the “Senegalese exceptionalism,” even though, “it would have been difficult to herald this small nation as a full democracy, as neither legal opposition nor contested presidential elections were allowed by the constitution from 1966 to 1976” (p. 36). In 1974, under pressure Senghor slowly introduced a multiparty system when he allowed Abodoulaye Wade, among others, to form the Parti démocratique sénégalais (PDS) (senegalese democratic party) while changing UPS to the *Partie socialiste* (PS) (p. 37). Though these changes seemed sufficient in the eyes of the government, they proved to be more for show than political efficacy, as it became abundantly clear during the economic crash of the 1980s.

Facing economic decline, political discontent, drought, and debt, Senghor stepped down and ceded the presidency to Abdou Diouf, his prime minister “whom Senghor had groomed for more than a decade to assume the presidency...” (Lambert, 2016, p.37). As Senghor's successor, Diouf faced the consequences of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) adopted by many African countries during this time, which led to a decrease in government spending not only on the arts but also on government services such as health, education, culture, and sanitation, “resulting in the deterioration of the

city, massive urbanization, an increase in prices, election corruption and university strikes on campus” (p. 42).

By 1988, the impact of the austerity measures enforced by the IMF and World Bank was felt everywhere especially by students as the “informal educational contract that the state had long respected, which provided government employment to students who managed to earn a university degree in Senegal’s education system,” was no longer a viable path to social mobility or economic security. This was especially “jarring for students, particularly those who were preciously close to earning this prize” (Lambert, 2016, p. 38; Bryson, 2014). Given that the university in Dakar was seen as a “site of political mobilization” and students organized and aligned with organizations and political movements that centered on reforming educational infrastructure, it was evident as Lambert notes that students had a “vested interest in the status quo and wanted to secure jobs in the ever expanding administrative apparatus” (Lambert, 2016, p. 38).

The austerity effects were palpable and widespread. From 1975-1984, the annual growth of Senegal’s civil administration shrunk from 6% to 2.5%, at the same time, enrollment at the University Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD), went from 1,012 students in 1960, to almost 15,000 in 1988, constricting the already limited resources available (Lambert, 2016, p. 38). Much as in Abidjan, whereby there was no discernable difference in academic achievement or dropping out, so too did Senegalese students, after the late 1980s, recognize that “[t]he contraction in state employment opportunities meant that university students often did not perceive themselves as having economic prospects that differed significantly from those of their generation who did not have the same access to educational opportunities” (p. 39). Young people were fed up.

Rising inflation, stifled multiparty political expression, and cuts to employment and opportunity saw the emergence of youth as “politically salient and disruptive,” and made Senegal, for the first time, look like other West African countries (Lambert, 2016, p. 39; Bryson, 2014). Lambert (2016) argues that it is no wonder that “Senegal was not alone among West African nations to see youth projected as an increasingly disruptive political force” (p. 39). This is also where we see the eventful rise of Abdoulaye Wade even more so than before.

Bryson (2014) writes that the postelection protests of 1988, “enhanced [his] political stature,” he was arrested and convicted for his part in “postelection disturbances” (p. 39). This also happened to coincide with the university’s *année blanche* where once again, student protests heavily destabilized the state forcing the university to be shut down for the entire academic year. From that day until his election to the presidency in 2000, Wade and his PDS party came to be seen as the “political face of Senegalese youth” (p. 39). His slogan, *Sopi* (Change), became a “rallying cry for youth and an expression of frustration with the stagnant economy and the Socialist Party” (p.39).

When Wade was elected president in 2000, the *alternance* was heralded as a victory from over forty years of one-party rule and a victory for the young voters who had supported him. The irony, however, was not lost on anyone that the “candidate who was seen to represent the hopes and aspirations of the youth was no less than seventy-three years old, and most believed that he was much older than that” (Lambert, 2016, p. 43). However, despite Wade’s constant call for change and overt courting of young

voters during the 2000 elections, these same young citizens were the ones who would eventually turn on him ten years later (Bryson and Enz, 2014, p. 3).

Senegalese citizens were shocked and disappointed by how Wade handled the country's social, cultural and economic policies. Though he called for *sopi*, his administration brought anything but change. Lambert (2016) asserts that Wade did little to move Senegal forward politically, during his time in office, instead “[he] returned Senegal to the old party politics of the Senghor era, in effect undoing some of the democratic political reforms that had been enacted during the second half of Diouf's presidency” (p. 44). In his attempt to separate himself from his predecessor, Wade committed to investing heavily in the arts, something that dramatically diminished under Diouf (Bryson and Enz, 2014). However, instead of concretely supporting the arts, Wade used “hollow rhetorical maneuvers and unfeasible plans of cultural construction” to consolidate his power and to enlarge his personal coffers.

Early in his first term he announced seven *grands projets culturels*, of which only two were ever completed during his twelve years in office: the expansion of roads throughout parts of the country and the controversial *Monument de la Renaissance Africaine*. (Lambert, 2016, p. 44). These projects seemed to primarily benefit wealthy elites, while many Senegalese went without work, confronted daily power outages, crumbling public utilities, and several other problems (p. 44). Though Wade “attempted to mask his failure to create jobs by promoting wrestling, dance, and music, which are extremely popular, especially in urban areas,” smoke and mirror show, unfortunately, did little to hide the glaring inconsistencies happening in everyday lives and the construction of and spending on the monument was an affronting reminder to these injustices (p. 3).

Lambert (2016) writes that because of the monument's prominence, it became a particularly easy target to attack from a variety of directions (p. 44). People did not care for the "scantily clad figures, the use of North Korean labor in its construction, its cost, and the claim that Wade had made intellectual property rights to the monument that would have given him rights to 35 percent of the profit generated by it" (p. 44). To add insult to injury, the man who had promised change, was now trying to secure a "patrilineal transfer of power" in which his son Karim would assume the presidency" (p. 44).

In trying to prime his son, Karim to take over after him, Wade had him run for Dakar's mayoral race, where he crushingly lost. Undeterred he then appointed Karim to the position of Minister of State for International Cooperation, Regional Development, Air Transport, and Infrastructure. At one point, "Karim held the largest portfolio ever by a minister in Senegal, estimated at 46 percent of the national budget" leading many to call him the "minister of heaven and earth" (Lambert, 2016, p. 44; Gueye, 2013, p. 27).

As the 2012 elections drew near, Wade proposed some disconcerting changes to the constitution. First, he proposed lowering the percentage of votes a candidate needed to win in the first round from 50% to 25%, ensuring his first round victory. Second, he created the new post of vice-president, which many assumed Karim Wade would inherit. Lastly and most egregiously was that although he added term limits when he was elected president to two terms, by his second term, he argued that "he could run for a third term because term limits were not in effect when he was elected to his first term" (p. 45; Gueye, 2013, p. 26). To wit, Senegal's Constitutional Council affirmed his right to run

for a third term and therefore setting the stage for a showdown. Senegalese were fed up and had had enough of the same old ways of doing things.

Mission and organizational structure

“Y’en a marre de moi”⁶

Y’en a Marre, like many civic movements, “developed simultaneously out of the survival strategies and cultural systems which [had] nurtured people, their values and their beliefs within their own communities, reserves, tribes and nations” (Smith, 1999, p. 108). During another power outage, a group of friends; some journalists, musicians, and students, were hanging around in an apartment in Parcelles Assainies (a popular *banlieu* of Dakar), drinking tea and talking.

Fadel (2018) told me that that night, the conversation came from a place of “despair.” There had been a power outage, again, and once again Fadel and his friends, were talking. Except this time, the talk became louder and more urgent. The conversation changed from “denouncing” what had been going on “doing something” about it.

Dans la nuit du 15 au 16 janvier 2011, dans une chambrette de la Villa n°07 du quartier populaire des Parcelles Assainies de Dakar, des jeunes ont décidé de rompre d’avec le fatalisme : deux Artistes engagés (Thiat et Kilifeu du groupe Keurgui de Kaolack), deux journalistes (Fadel Barro et Aliou Sané), un étudiant (Elh Hadj Abdoulaye Niassé), une cadre de banque (Marie Ndella Guèye), une technicienne en informatique (Denise Sow) et Amath SECK. Autour du thé, l’idée de créer un mouvement social du nom de « Y en a Marre » fut arrêté au bout de plusieurs heures d’intenses débats sur la situation du pays (yenamarre.sn).

On the night of January 15th to 16th, 2011, in a small room of the Villa n ° 07 of the popular district of Parcelles Assainies Dakar, young people decided to break with fatalism: two committed artists (Thiat and Kilifeu of the Keurgui group of Kaolack), two journalists (Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané), a student (Elh Hadj Abdoulaye Niassé), a bank executive (Marie Ndella Guèye), a technician in computer science (Denise Sow) and Amath SECK. The idea of creating a social

⁶ “*Fed up with myself*”

movement called "Y'en a Marre" happened during tea time, and stopped several hours of intense debates on the situation of the country (yenamarre.sn).

When interviewed by Gueye in 2013, Fadel noted that the creation of the movement was a “cathartic idea, which emerged” as they sat in his apartment waiting for electricity to return after a “twenty hour blackout” (Gueye, 2013, p. 25). They had had enough and after debating, journalists versus rappers, it was clear that both sides needed to do something. As Fadel recalled to me, of what use were they, rappers and journalists, denouncing things when they didn’t even have electricity?

Y'en a Marre was co-founded in January 2011 by Cheikh Omar Cyrille Touré aka Thiat (the last born), and Mbessane Seck aka Kilifeu (the authority/elder), from the rap group Keur Gui (The House) of Kaolack, and activist journalists Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané. They were later joined by Malal Tall aka Fou Malade (Crazy Sick), from the group Bat’haillons Blin-D [Armored Beaten Rags or Armored Battalion], and other rappers, students, and activists,” including Denise Safiatou Sow aka Sophie (Gueye, 2013, p. 25; Bryson, 2014; Lambert, 2016).

When I met Sophie, I did not know what to expect. As the sole woman and co-founding member of YEM, I wanted to get a gendered perspective of the movement and why she felt drawn to it. Sophie, like so many Senegalese women, is tall and slim but unlike many Senegalese women, Sophie is a “jeans and tee” kind of girl, with long layered locs. I never once saw her in any traditional print, dresses, or with her head wrapped/covered, even on Fridays. Her participation and introduction was, much like Fadel states, organic. They were at Fadel’s apartment and as usual they were discussing, talking politics. This time however, something was different:

SOPHIE : Et j'étais là dans cette salle à l'unité 7, de l'appartement de Fadel... Et on était en train de discuter avec Thiew, Thiat, Fadel, Aliou Sané, Ahmad sef et Oumar Aladji dans l'appartement de fadel. On discutait on discutait et là je me suis senti concerné...Ce qu'on s'est dit là je me suis dit Wep, c'est vrai, à nous de faire quelque chose, c'est à nous de nous engager il ne faut pas attendre les autres pour venir le faire à notre place. Et on était toujours là à nous lamenter et tout, et regarder les vieux du troisième âge se battre à notre place...Et je me suis dit c'est lâche de notre part, à nous de prendre notre destin en main, et c'est là qu'est venu le décret... (2016)

SOPHIE: And I was there in the living room of unit #7, Fadel's apartment... And we were discussing with Thiew, Thiat, Fadel, Aliou San, Ahmad sef and Oumar Aladji in fadel's apartment. We were talking we were talking and I felt concerned ...What was said there I told myself, Welp it's true, we have to do something, it's up to us to commit we should not wait for others to come do it for us . And we were always there wailing and watching old people fight in our place...And I said to myself it's cowardly for us not to take our destiny in hand, and that's where the decree came ... (2016)

Y'en a Marre's movement above all centers on transformation. In my initial interviews with Fadel, Aliou, Thiat, Sophie, and Moriba, and Thiew, it became evident that they were fed up with the old way of doing things, fed up with their elders, and even fed up with themselves. As Aliou would relate to Nelson (2014), YEM was fed up "with the citizen who sees the problems in the community around him but stands idly by, who does nothing to change things, who takes no action to try to move forward and goad the state to act, who doesn't demand that the state fulfill its side of the contract" (p. 14). This sentiment is clearly stated in their website's mission statements:

Faire émerger un Nouveau Type de Sénégalais (NTS). Ce citoyen qui, à travers les demandes impérieuses qu'il formule et adresse à l'État, aux acteurs politiques et à l'ensemble des acteurs sociaux, devrait porter le projet de transformation sociale en vue de bâtir une société de justice, d'équité, de droit, de paix et de progrès pour tous. Amener l'élite politique à mieux prendre en compte les préoccupations des citoyens en érigeant la Bonne Gouvernance en règle de conduite dans la gestion des affaires publiques (yenamarre.sn)

To bring out a New Type of Senegalese (NTS). This citizen who, through the imperious demands he formulates and addresses to the State, political actors and all social actors, should bring the project of social transformation to build a society of justice, equity, rights, peace and progress for all. Bring the political elite to better take into account the concerns of citizens by building good governance in good standing in the management of public affairs (yenamarre.sn).

When Fadel and Aliou speak of a New Type of Senegalese, it was, as Fadel asserts to inspire Senegalese to take responsibility, question their elders/power, and adopt a heightened sense of citizenship (Fadel, June, 2016; Lambert, 2016, p. 48). This was a responsibility that Fadel and other YEM members took seriously. For Fadel, his leadership style had to also be one of exemplarity. He says:

FADEL : Mon rôle c'est de sortir le mieux de chacun pour le conjuguer en fait, énergie énergie constructif. Et c'est pour ça qu'après l'intégration, on s'est dit qu'il nous faut l'émergence d'un nouveau type de sénégalais. Dans le comportement, après le constat de Y'en a Marre c'était que l'échec vient de nous même ! Qui dénonçons mais qui ne proposons pas Et qui dans notre façon de prendre la parole n'est pas exemplaire, et il fallait être exemplaire. J'ai toujours pensé que ce pays n'a pas besoin d'argent, le pays a soif d'exemplarité. Comme tous les grand de ce monde n'ont pas apporter autre chose que de l'exemplarité.

FADEL: My role is to get the best out of everyone for... constructive energy. And that's why after the birth [of the movement], we said we need the emergence of a new type of Senegalese. Through behavior, it became clear from Y'en a Marre's perspective, that the failure comes from ourselves! Who denounce but do not propose in our way of speaking is not exemplary, and it was necessary to be exemplary. I have always thought that this country does not need money, the country is thirsty for an example. Like all the greats of this world, many brought nothing more than exemplarity.

Members often saw themselves as activists taking on the role of their elders to promote a new way of approaching citizenship. In their words and actions the members of YEM emphasized a radical shift in mentality. Members were fed up with themselves

and sought to lead by example. This was, according to Barro, one of the ways in which they could separate from their elders and adopt a new way of doing things.

Since the movement was created, they established *esprits*, “spirits,” but understood as local chapters throughout the country, and now internationally, to deal with local issues. Ideas and projects of the *esprits* are decided by their respective membership, “independent from the national leaders” (Lambert, 2016, p. 50). This was the general sentiment when discussing members’ multifaceted roles as leaders or sages “going against traditional relationships between young people and seniors,” especially with Moriba.

Citizenship and democracy

Moriba, like many of the students who got involved with the movement, was a college student, studying history when he joined. Tall, dark, with an infectious smile, Moriba is the embodiment of the NTS and of the pan-African youth I have seen throughout the continent. On any given day, Moriba can show up with cool Nikes, jeans, a tee or boubou top, and an updated Kufi cap (similar to the Taqiyah worn in other Muslim countries). He easily goes back and forth between French, Wolof, and English, at once connected to social media and also committed to his *attaya* tea hour session with the crew.

But Moriba was also very clear about why he was a *yenamarriste*. Unlike what I heard from FESCI members, YEM did not promise benefits or status, what they did espouse was authenticity, democracy and ownership. Most members still had full-time jobs on top of their social justice agenda and encouraged students to pursue their studies while holding *l’esprit* of YEM.

MORIBA : non, je suis yenamarriste parce que moi je veux régler le problème de la saleté dans mon quartier.. Tu n'es pas besoin de venir, envoyer ta carte d'identité, signer, il faut dire au QG, de formaliser, non. Tu as un problème en face, tu veux le résoudre, tu es yenamarriste, et ça, ça permet de donner aux jeunes de notre adhésion à cette nouvelle conscience citoyenne qui naissait...Le plus important, c'est que le système qui était là, a fait refuser de prendre en charge les vraies préoccupations des populations...nos états sont des états qui n'agissent pas que quand il y a campagne, on te promet, on ment mais quand il y a campagne les gens en profitent pour régler leur situation. Et 2011, 2012 c'était ça au faite, les gens ont plus adhéré parce que les étudiants n'allaient plus à l'école, les professeurs n'étaient plus payés, la santé etc, etc et ils ont dit, ok, on enlève. Et par la suite aussi les gens ont adhéré au mouvement parce qu'ils sont dits aussi, c'est une nouvelle manière de prise de parole, de prendre la parole... (2018).

MORIBA: no, I'm a yenamarrist because I want to solve the trash problem in my neighborhood. You don't have to come, present your ID, sign, tell HQ, to formalize, no. You have a problem in front of you, you want to solve it, you are a yenamarrist, and that allows us to give young people our support for this new citizen consciousness that was born. The most important thing is that the system that was there refused to take care of the real concerns of the people.. our states do not act until there is an election, They make promises, they lie but when there is an election, people take advantage of it to settle their situation. And 2011, 2012 that was it, people joined more because the students no longer went to school, the teachers were no longer paid, health etc, etc. and they said ok, let's get him out. And thereafter people joined the movement because...it was a new way of speaking.... (2018).

Moriba is clear that one becomes a yenamarriste by simply taking ownership of something that is important to them and doing something about it. It is about working and leading by example in order to raise a new civic consciousness (Fadel, 2018; Moriba, 2018). What YEM does not want to be, is another political tool; wherein they “make promises, lie” until an election. Given then that they are not elected officials, YEM is in the position to develop projects that push their agenda forward.

Since 2013, YEM has undertaken several civic and democratic projects in the *banlieu* to promote Sunu Gox (our neighborhood), dox ak sa gox (walk with your community), and Citizen Mic - all projects centered on citizenship, governance, and

community engagement (yenamarre.sn). Sophie explains this calmly, as she discusses the various projects and citizenship and democratic efforts in which YEM has engaged. It is necessary, as Sophie notes, to have Senegalese know their civic rights, know and question their elected officials, and even challenge their parents. Consider Sophie's reflections:

SOPHIE : Parce que les gens intéressés par la brutalité, les manifestations et autres... mais y'en a marre n'est pas que protestation et autre, aller s'y dans les propositions, les activités et tout ça...Et ce que veut y'en a marre c'est amener les populations à s'intéresser plus de ce qui se passe dans leur pays. C'est ce genre d'activités qu'on a lancé depuis 2012...Dans certaines localités, par exemple on a été à l'observatoire de la démocratie et de la bonne gouvernance, on est allé installer des bureaux dans des régions, et on a mis par exemple... on a organiser des... comment je dirai... des meetings entre des populations et leurs maires. Et installer un genre de dialogue entre eux... Faire comprendre aux populations que vous avez des droits de connaître ce qui se passe dans les mairies, de connaître les budgets, de parler à votre mère de ce qui ne va pas il faut que ça change ; installer le dialogue entre eux pour que travail soit mis... voilà aussi voir les députés, pour invités les députés de l'assemblée avec les populations et discuter avec eux. C'est ça que vous défendez dans l'assemblée, ça il faut que ça change (2018).

SOPHIE: Because people are interested in brutality, demonstrations and so on ... but there's not enough of it just protest and so on, go get into the proposals, the activities and all that ... and what does it mean? is fed up is to get people to take more interest in what is happening in their country. This is the kind of activity that has been launched since 2012 ... In some localities, for example, we went to the observatory of democracy and good governance, we went to set up offices in regions, and we put, for example ... we organize ... how will I say ... meetings between populations and their mayors. And install a kind of dialogue between them ... Make people understand that you have rights to know what is going on in the town halls, to know the budgets, to talk to your mother about what is wrong change; to install the dialogue between them so that work is put ... here is also to see the deputies, for invited the deputies of the assembly with the populations and to discuss with them. That's what you defend in the assembly, it must change (2018).

What is clear is this: seven years since the group helped oust Wade, YEM has sustained their tremendous momentum and have “become an intractable institution within Senegalese social, political, and cultural life” (Bryson, 2014, p. 33). To this day, the

group still maintains an informal, open house meeting to the general public in the Parcelles Assainies neighborhood, and initial headquarters of YEM on Tuesdays at 6pm (Niati, fieldnotes 2016; Bryson, 2014, p. 33). I witnessed these informal “open houses” during my first meeting with the crew, as they told me to come on a Tuesday at 6pm. That day, they had a gentleman who had a grievance with a neighbor and was seeking YEM’s intervention and a group of activists from their satellite office in Fatick requesting support, among other things (Niati, field notes, 2016).

Concluding Discussion

Like much of sub-Saharan Africa, Senegal and Cote d’Ivoire have a young, vibrant and connected population. Young people in Africa today, have asserted themselves as a “formidable political presence” using their large numbers as a destabilizing presence (Lambert, 2016, p. 34). There is no question that young people in Africa have been “exploited by a wide range of political leaders, often to questionable ends” but this notion of young people lacking agency or choosing only negative means of organization, does not tell the entire story (p. 35).

Though similar in their experiences and plight, what this chapter intended to show was that given their number and power, young people across both sites are choosing or attempting to choose positive means of mobilization and engagement. Of course, we also see how the two organizations, FESCI and YEM, deviate in their methods of engagement. One espouses non-violence, transparency, transformation, and citizenship, the other, FESCI, attempts to meet these ideals but as described to me, seems stuck in the old ways of doing things even as they move forward. This illustrates the complexity, nuance, and challenges in functioning within a decolonizing narrative while fighting

postcolonial ideals. Ngugi (1980) dedicated his powerful book, *Devil on the Cross*, “to all Kenyans struggling against the neocolonial stage of imperialism” (Ngugi, 1980). The book offers a scathing retribution to Kenyan elites and International financiers and organizations who still play a considerable role in Kenyan politics.

Ngugi’s book illustrates the challenges of postcolonial entities navigating neocolonial realities. Through the eyes of Jacinta Wariinga, we are provided with the ease, challenges and contradictions many experience in navigating these realities. YEM and FESCI seem to emulate the contradictions that Ngugi illustrated. They may espouse the same ideals, navigate similar lived experiences, but in the bus to *Ilmorog* where Wariinga finds herself surrounded by workers, revolutionaries, bosses, politicians and the like, she is able to recognize just how complicated the “delinking” process can be. If, as Touré (forthcoming) considers transnégritude to be the multiple roots of the diaspora and the imagined community that binds them, then we must recognize that these roots manifest differently given the conditions in which they are nourished. In this context, some make concessions, some outright choose to favor their donors, others consider liberation and a few even attempt it; YEM and FESCI are no different.

This chapter attempted to forefront young people’s agency and autonomy even if how it is done is highly contested. In the ensuing chapters, I will first discuss how FESCI and YEM espouse Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool and then I will further examine how they have applied this tool. Lastly, I will discuss what has been their impact and implications for approaches to non-formal schooling.

CHAPTER 5

“STOP FRONTIN”

Il faut que l’africain se soigne⁷ - Fadel Barro

Introduction

The growth of FESCI and YEM in Cote d’Ivoire and Senegal was inevitable. Young people were fed up and tired of the old way of doing things. They had come to distrust their leaders and even too, their parents. Given the continent’s rapidly growing youth population, sociopolitical changes, and economic growth, it is evident that young people will play a crucial role in the growth and development of the continent. Considering that the economic development plans of Francophone West Africa illustrate a push for autonomy and self-determination to invest on the continent (Kazeem, 2019 & Sindreu, 2019), and YEM and FESCI members push for authenticity, why not then support educational initiatives that promote self-determination, authenticity, and transformation? This and the following chapter present my findings and analyses on how YEM and FESCI approach Hip-Hop as pedagogy and how it is employed as a tool to de-link and transform.

In my discussions and interactions with members, I observed that participants continuously discussed ideas of authenticity, “keepin’ it real” and of young people being “lost;” that greatly informed their views and visions of social transformation. In

⁷ *Africans must heal themselves*

particular, both organizations espouse Hip-Hop as a transformative tool. As a result, Hip-Hop in this case was used as a means to promote socialization, language, citizenship engagement and leadership training. My analysis will first examine how YEM and FESCI approach Hip-Hop as pedagogy from their perception as a “sacrificed” (Schumann, 2012) or “lost” population. How they understand their status in society informs their views of Hip-Hop and is manifested through socialization and challenging formal schooling.

Hip-Hop culture, as manifested by FESCI and YEM, promotes a counter to schooling and education that encourages a transformative, communal, and healing pedagogy (Jenkins, 2013, hooks, 1994). The classroom, as Jenkins suggests, is contested and challenged as the ways in which young people come to know is thusly reshaped into a creative and conscious endeavor. As I will show in this chapter, Y’en a Marre and FESCI have created spaces that challenge formal schooling and access to education. Through their embodiment of Hip-Hop culture, they have become “a new type of school” that attempts to challenge the status quo as they promote a “new type of African” advocating for leadership, language, and knowledge of self, and panafricanism that is typically germane to their lived experiences.

“Lost” ones: Coming to Hip-Hop

Concert Pédagogique

For young people who feel “lost” or marginalized, Hip-Hop provides a discursive space for them to cultivate and reinforce their identity, advocate for social change, and a way to participate in “local and global debates” (Gueye, 2013, Ntarangwi, 2009, Park et

al., 2019). Though Hip-Hop has been adopted by young Senegalese who felt othered, its genesis began in a space of privilege.

Hip-Hop in Senegal had more of a top-down genesis, compared to its U.S. counterpart; mainly due to class and access. Hip-Hop came to Senegal via youth in Dakar's affluent neighborhoods who had encountered the culture through media and family members abroad (Appert, 2016, p. 237). First, they formed dance crews and battled using U.S. Hip-Hop songs before transforming and making their own groups and performing in Wolof and French. It wasn't until 1992, when the group Positive Black Soul, opened for Senegalese-French rapper MC Solar at the French Cultural Center in Dakar that brought Senegalese Hip-Hop to the masses and paved the way for international record deals and tours for other artists such as Pee Froiss and Daara J Family (p. 237).

It was in 1998, when the group Rad'Adio, from the popular Medina neighborhood, released a Wolof only album, providing a "hard-hitting social commentary that struck a chord with Senegalese youth," that is considered to be the birth or hardcore or underground hip hop movement in Senegal. Appert (2016) argues that unlike their predecessors, the majority of underground rappers hail from Dakar's *quartier populaire* and the *banlieue* (working class/low income neighborhoods), "where their experiences of their failures of colonial and postcolonial modernizing projects are all the more immediate" (p. 239).

These neighborhoods illustrate lack of access; access to education, she argues, "means that many—particularly the youngest newcomers to the scene—are not fluent or even conversant in French, the official national language, and one that would be more

accessible to international audiences” (Appert, 2016, p. 240). It is this connection, she writes, that separates Senegalese rappers from their African counterparts in Ghana or Somalia. Senegalese rappers, instead, would rather emphasize Hip-Hop’s roots in the U.S. “grounding their claim to Hip-Hop not in a sense of historical racial or aesthetic connectivity between Africa and its diaspora but rather in a keenly experiential awareness of socioeconomic marginalization and urban struggle” (p 240).

Much as Touré’s (forthcoming) *transnégritude* troubles the multiple roots of the “Afrodiaspora” stretching between oceans fighting for existence, so too does Appert posit the transnational connections of Senegalese Hip-Hop. In effect, Senegalese engagement with Hip-Hop is “much about local musical and popular culture as it is about transnational, continental or global connections” (Appert, 2016, p. 243). Appert notes that Hip-Hop in Senegal serves as a medium for young people who are disempowered by a combination of traditional and postcolonial power structures that leave them “voiceless” socially, economically and politically. Hip-Hop is therefore appealing to Senegalese youth and is reified as a culture that speaks to the struggles of underdevelopment (p. 250).

Even though today’s purists, much like in the U.S. lament that the Hip-Hop culture has lost its consciousness in favor of celebrity and financial gain, Senegalese artists, however, still espouse its pure ideals as a means to address unemployment, flooding, power outage, illegal, migration, and poverty. Hip-Hop in this sense has become an informal educative tool attracting young people in Senegal and beyond who face “processes of urbanization and modernization that have contributed to the ongoing destabilization of traditional familial structures without providing adequate educational

alternatives” (p. 251). Hip-Hop has thus been adopted in Senegal as a crucial tool for activism and engagement among young people, especially those coming from the banlieu or quartier populaire.

When I spoke with members of Y'en a Marre, Fadel, Sane, Sophie, Moriba, Thiew, and Thiat, it was noted that Hip-Hop was simply who they were and how they expressed themselves. In order to spread the word on Wade's illegal presidential bid and citizenship rights, they decided to develop “pedagogic concerts.” Why these pedagogic concerts? Because, as Fadel notes, though the young movement was financially weak, they had a panoply of artists who were not only sympathetic but members of the movement. This was their wealth and continues to be so.

FADEL : C'est quoi un concert pédagogique ? c'est un concert, seulement qui est articulé des discours, de discours citoyen, de discours de sensibilisation pour éveiller et fouetter la conscience politique chez les jeunes. Donc au-delà de la production il y'avait aussi ou n'importe quel concert d'artiste pouvait servi pour sensibiliser pour toucher les jeunes. C'était ça en fait le but des concerts pédagogique (Nov. 2018).

FADEL : What is a pedagogic concert? it is a concert...it is a concert that focuses on discourse, on citizenship, on awareness to awaken and whip political consciousness among young people. So beyond the show aspect there was also the part where any artist's concert could be used to raise awareness to reach young people. That was in fact the goal of these pedagogic concerts (Nov. 2018)

Pedagogic concerts have been, as stated by members, one of the most successful and useful tools in marrying Hip-Hop and civic engagement. Each project YEM has organized is framed within a chant/song that is introduced during these concerts and disseminated via social media (YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp, etc.) by young people as the song/chant and the message gained ground. Once small and contained to local spaces, these pedagogic concerts have grown to become an international expression

of music and civic education, as evidenced in the first *Université Populaire de l'Engagement Citoyen*, held in July 2018. This was a four day conference that saw the meeting of nine movements from eight countries come together in Dakar to discuss, raise awareness, support, and teach. YEM's innovative approach to engage, to school, and to mobilize access through the use of Wolof and French was formidable. Given that around 28% of the population speaks French, Wolof and Wolof education should be forefronted. The *Citizen Mic* competition illustrates the mix of Hip-Hop and engagement by inviting young people to battle over issues about democracy and good governance. YEM members were sure to note that these pedagogic concerts developed naturally, because, according to Fadel, it was not so much about doing Hip-Hop but also about being Hip-Hop as well that generated these concerts. Fadel states:

FADEL: Le hip hop sénégalais a toujours à mon... moi par contre je suis satisfait, en ce sens qu'ils ont toujours porter des discours contestataires, des discours revendicatifs, des discours d'éveille que j'entendais. Tu vois ça m'a toujours accompagné dès le bas âge. Tu vois, on a juste été un rappeur d'une manière ou d'une autre. Tu vois, donc c'est notre génération... Et donc le hip hop sénégalais en tout cas, a toujours porter cette préoccupation d'abord en moi à titre individuel. Elle a toujours porté ma préoccupation, d'éveiller, de sensibiliser, de revendiquer ! Tu vois, donc voilà ça c'est... donc je me considère forcément de cette génération du hip hop (Nov. 2018).

FADEL: Senegalese hip hop always has to... me on the other hand I am satisfied, in the sense that it has promoted protest speeches, speeches that awake.... You see, it always accompanied me from an early age. You see, we were rappers in one way or another. You see, so this is our generation ... And so Senegalese hip hop in any case, has always brought this concern first in me as an individual. It always carried my concern, to awaken, to raise awareness, to claim! You see, so here it is ... so I necessarily consider myself a member of the hip-hop generation (Nov. 2018)

Fadel and Thiat told me that Hip-Hop spoke to them as young children growing up in Kaolack, as it related to the lived experiences of their surroundings. It only made

sense, then, that given a platform to speak out on these injustices, a Hip-Hop based method of organizing would be utilized. As previously discussed, Hip-Hop culture not only speaks to the lived realities of its adherents but encourages action towards self-determination (Akom, 2009, Seidel, 2011, KRS-One, 1989). Fadel, along with the other founding members of YEM, much like Afrika Bambaataa espoused knowledge of self to discover the purpose of one's life, so too did YEM envision a movement that would not only decry and denounce, but also reveal and instigate change. Alluding to Ngugi's concepts of decolonization (1987), what Mignolo (2003; 2009) calls epistemic disobedience, and Medina's (2013) discussion of an epistemology of resistance, YEM pushes for both an epistemic and physical delinking. Their engagement stems from a shared epistemology; one that challenges and separates from the status quo. For young people who had grown disillusioned with politicians, Hip-Hop was the antidote. In Cote d'Ivoire on the other hand, what we see is the development of an Ivoirian tradition that parallels and challenges how we approach and view Hip-Hop.

Génération Zouglou

Echoing the origins of Hip-Hop in the Bronx, Zouglou, one of Cote d'Ivoire's popular musical styles, developed from a state of disillusionment and deterioration. In her gripping investigation of the Zouglou generation, Schumann (2012) notes that Zouglou is a cultural production birthed from the "young men who have come of age in the context of declining employment possibilities in the formal sector" (p. 535). Young people, feeling left out of the socioeconomic production of the country, felt marginalized and thus created a musical form that "created a discursive space to communicate their demands for social inclusion and intergenerational justice to a national audience" (p.

535). Once again, we see a shared struggle; one of a “sacrificed youth,” who chooses to engage through a musical style that speaks truth to power.

Zouglou was birthed on university campus housing by the “sacrificed generation,” that is young people who had been left to their fate due to a series of structural adjustment crises that severely impacted educational access and achievement, economic crises and political upheaval (Schumann, 2012). The musical style spread like wildfire throughout the city as young people (in and outside of school) were drawn to its frank, outright, and brazen lyrics decrying the state, its leaders, and the conditions in which they live. Zouglou has grown to become the “prime vehicle” for prime debates on issues deemed to be of “national importance” (p. 541). This direct approach, Schumann (2012), argues, developed an “aesthetic of urgency” and an outspoken approach to their lyrics (p. 541).

Zouglou music and its urgent lyrics has risen to become the voice of the “sacrificed generation” who are able to express their experiences but moreover, Zouglou has become a platform of “collective catharsis.” Schumann (2012) writes,

[z]ouglou artists have acted as cultural agents and as active producers of meaning, and they have become social commentators and transmitters of social knowledge...Through their music, young Ivoirians have contributed to the formation of a cultural identity, as their music went from being the art of marginalized youth to become part of Ivoirian national culture. In other words, it is Zouglou music that, as a communicative medium, has allowed the 'abandoned generation' to 'be visible, to be heard, to belong (p. 552).

Abbink (2005), Lambert (2016), and Schumann (2012) mention the “palpable social death” that excluded young people from economic and political participation and isolated from social mobility and access (Schumann, 2012, p. 542). Zouglou, Schumann concludes, is the music of this “abandoned generation,” who have been abandoned by

their elders, and politicians “becomes apparent through the many Zouglou songs sung to console such (metaphorical) orphans” (p. 542).

Given its genesis, its unique musical style and its message, I wanted to know how can we not consider this Ivorian style as a part of Hip-Hop pedagogy? Zouglou, like Hip-Hop, manifested organically from a shared struggle (Smith, 1999; Schumann, 2012), speaks to the lived realities of Ivorians, and challenges young people to be autonomous. In Abidjan, participants suggested that Zouglou was/is a necessary means by which to utilize its cultural style as a pedagogical tool for a young population who feels forgotten and disregarded.

Zouglou, as many would say, is “typically Ivorian,” and it embodies the sound, style, and mannerisms of the youth who created it. When I spoke to FESCI members, Zouglou’s genesis was framed amid the political struggle of the 1990s and the protests occurring on campus. Given its genesis, it is no wonder then, that FESCI and Fescists adopted Zouglou. This musical style would grow to become a cultural, aesthetic expression that would be aligned with a young, vociferous population that was fed up. Just as Tiken Jah Fakoly (2002) sang, people were fed up with empty promises, lack of resources, and corruption (Fakoly, 2002).

Zouglou, they attested, spoke the truth. This would all start on the bus. On their way to the campus housing village of Yopougon, students started singing about “issues.” This, as Siaba would note, was happening around the same time of the birth of FESCI. There are several parallels to the genesis of FESCI and Zouglou; these were young students who recognized the issues and took up various forms of engagement that easily married. Look at how Siaba frames the birth of Zouglou:

SIABA: Oui ... je dois vous parler un peu de la naissance de Zouglou et de la naissance de la FESCI. Nous sommes en 1990 et quand vous voyez 1990, la naissance de la FESCI, Zouglou ... voyez-vous? Donc les étudiants sont à l'église Saint Henri, ils descendaient du bus, chantaient, dansaient ... Si vous prenez le bus 86 pour Yopougon la nuit, vous verrez et entendrez des étudiants danser et chanter, les gars de ce village de dortoirs [Yopougon] chantait, au début, ils chantaient simplement les problèmes auxquels ils étaient confrontés. Ils chantaient sur les problèmes auxquels les étudiants étaient confrontés en matière de transport, de logement, etc. C'est ainsi que Zouglou a commencé (Aug. 2018)

SIABA: Yes...I have to tell you a little about the birth of Zouglou and the birth of FESCI. It was in 1990 and when you see 1990, the birth of FESCI, Zouglou...do you see? So the students are at the church, Saint Henry, they would get off the bus, singing, dancing...If you take the 86 bus [line] to Yopougon at night, you will see and hear students dancing and singing, the guys from this dorm village [Yopougon] would sing, initially they just sang about problems they were confronting. They would sing about the issues students were facing from transportation, housing etc. So this is how Zouglou started (Aug. 2018).

Innocuous, germane, and organic; this is how Zouglou was birthed, much as Smith (1999) suggests that indigenous movements are born out of various frustrations, and yet “the need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance” (p. 108; 35), much like Hip-Hop began. The cries and protests rose in song, first to God and then to “real things,” to what they were living and seeing on their daily bus rides. This marriage between young people and Zouglou seemed inevitable. Zouglou would serve as the engine that young people needed to voice their frustrations and it grew to dominate the sociocultural landscape of youth protest music.

ZATTO : Tu sais le Zouglou, en même temps qu’il décrit, il est humoristique. Il décrit l’université et reconforte. Avant que le Zouglou traverse les frontières universitaires, on dit « Zouglou CI » c’est un peu comme un journal d’une école... Ça parle uniquement de l’école. Il racontait un peu ce qui se passait dans

le campus. Donc dénonçait ce se passait dans le campus. Mais lorsqu'il a dépassé les frontières universitaires, le Zouglou a commencé à relater, ça commencé à dénoncer les problèmes sociaux que connaissait même l'ivoirien. Consoler l'ivoirien, apporter du réconfort à l'ivoirien d'après eux l'ivoirien nouveau, conseiller l'ivoirien...ce n'est pas le Zouglou de maintenant...où il y a un peu de coupé-décalé dedans, non (July, 2018).

ZATTO: You know the Zouglou, at the same time as it describes, it is humorous. He describes the university and comforts. Before Zouglou crosses university borders, we say "Zouglou CI" is a bit like a school newspaper ... It only talks about school. He was telling a little bit about what was going on on campus. So denounced what was happening on campus. But when he crossed the university borders, the Zouglou began to relate, it started to denounce the social problems that all Ivorians experienced. Consoling the Ivorian, bringing comfort to the Ivorian according to them the new Ivorian, advising the Ivorian ... it's not the Zouglou of now ... where there is a bit of *coupé décalé* in it, no...(July 2018).

As Zatto alluded, Zouglou was Abidjan's CNN. It broadcasted to all listeners the realities of campus and everyday life. It was a necessary engine to “denounce, comfort” and create a new Ivorian. All the FESCI members I spoke with, firmly stated that they were of the Zouglou generation. Zouglou was for them, by them and spoke to and about them. Echoing Appert (2016), when I interviewed Siaba, he noted that American Hip-Hop at the time, was for the upper class, as it was too expensive to buy cassette tapes. “Why buy a cassette for 3,500CFA [7\$ equivalent],” he posited, “whereas here you are at night, [making tapping noise], tapping on the drums, and that's it, you have Zouglou” (Siaba, 2018). Just as the words and sounds of Hip-Hop developed from limited resources, so too did Zouglou evolve from the *tam-tam* and grow to a unique cultural expression with its own distinct language and style.

Participants conveyed to me the power that Zouglou had over them. This culture had grown to be a source of guidance and a way to “build up” the individual (Angra, 2018). And, much like Hip-Hop, the culture resonated beyond campus housing and into the streets of Abidjan and beyond. The culture had now taken over as the people's

“newspaper” reporting on current ills. It was palpable and germane to Cote d’Ivoire in much the same way YEM embodied their own Senegalese Hip-Hop.

H: Bien sûr, le Zouglou est un style musical qui est et a été orienté pour l’ivoirien en Côte d’Ivoire, par exemple, le reggae est né quelque part, il est né en Jamaïque. C’est le style musical utilisé par les Jamaïcains pour exprimer les problèmes dans lesquels ils vivaient, au sein de la société jamaïcaine. Donc, le Hip-Hop est un style musical afro-américain, et c’était donc un moyen pour les Afro-Américains d’exprimer et de traduire leurs émotions et c’est ainsi qu’ils ont utilisé ce style. Donc, chacun a son style. Et ce style résonne. Il résonne. Et donc vous voyez, quelqu’un qui aime Zouglou, est quelqu’un qui est susceptible d’aimer Hip-Hop, le reggae ... ce qui signifie que ces styles se lient quelque part. Ils ont un trait commun, et vous voyez donc que c’est pour ça que j’écoute le Hip-Hop, j’écoute du reggae, mais mon style musical et mes préférences, je dois dire que c’est Zouglou (Aug. 2018).

H: Of course, Zouglou is a musical style that is from and was oriented for the Ivorian in CDI, for example, reggae was born somewhere, it was born in Jamaica. It’s the musical style that Jamaicans used to express the problems they were living in, within Jamaican society. So, Hip-Hop is an African American musical style, and so it was a way for African Americans to express and translate their emotions and that’s how they used this style. So, everyone has their own style. And this style resonates. It resonates. And so you see, someone who loves Zouglou, is someone who is likely to like Hip-Hop, reggae...so that means that those styles bond somewhere. They have a common trait, and so you see that’s why I listen to Hip-Hop, I listen to reggae, but my musical style and preference, I’d have to say is Zouglou (Aug. 2018).

In discussing Hip-Hop’s manifestation in different contexts, it is necessary not, as Fadel warns, to assert American Hip-Hop’s dominance on all expressions of Hip-Hop. It belittles the principles and the power of its cultural transmission (Fadel, 2017) . Zouglou was birthed amidst seeming nothingness. Those of the Zouglou generation saw themselves as belonging to a community that went beyond campus much like Césaire (1939); Magro (2016); and Opsahl & Røyneland (2016), imagine. Broken promises, failed institutions, and a lack of resources engendered a cultural shift that saw young people speaking up through makeshift instruments and dance that at once affronted their

elders and inspired masses. If we are to revisit Mignolo's (2009) discussion of a shared "wound" and its impact in knowledge making. Then Zougrou provides an excellent lens into decolonizing knowledge because, as Mignolo asserts, "[k]nowledge-making presupposes a semiotic code (languages, images, sounds, colors, etc.) shared between users in semiotic exchanges" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 18). Zougrou would allow for a new semiotic code that encouraged young people to take matters into their own hands.

Mobilizing Hip-Hop Pedagogy

A different kind of school - "une école différente"

FESCI may be many things, but FESCI is out to transform and mold a certain type of young Ivorian. As I went about talking to Fescists, it was apparent that it was not only the struggle for students' rights that got them there; though an initial draw. What kept them there, however, was the socialization, leadership training, the sense of "self," and the confidence to challenge 'elders.' In talking to Zatto and co., it was indisputable that FESCI was a school within a school, providing an avenue and training that the university seemed unable to impart. One member clearly stated the organization's mission was not only to fight for students' rights but to train the future leaders of tomorrow and to promote "socialization, political education, and professional development" (F, 2018). F told me:

F: D'accord... La FESCI a dans ses objectifs premiers, lutte pour le bien-être des élèves et étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire pour des intérêts matériels et moraux sur tous les élèves de Côte d'Ivoire ; ça c'est le début originel de la FESCI maintenant à côté de ça aussi la FESCI se veut être creusée de formation des hommes de demain et pour ce fait, il faille qu'on puisse former tous ceux qui sont militants de la FESCI parce que il y a la formation que l'on reçoit à l'école et puis il y a la formation de la vie active et il y a aussi la formation politique y a plusieurs formations donc la FESCI se veut le projet, la formation de tous les élites de demain. Voici si on veut dire le but de la FESCI (2018).

F: Okay...FESCI has as its first objective, to fight for the well-being of pupils and students of Ivory Coast for their physical and moral wellbeing, This is the original goal of FESCI, now besides this FESCI also delves into training of the men of tomorrow and for this, it is necessary that we train all those who are FESCI members...because there is the education that we receive at school and then there is socialization, and there is also the political education... there are several professional development [projects that] FESCI promotes, the training of all the elites of tomorrow. If we want to say the purpose of FESCI (2018).

Recognizing the organization's reach and influence, it was evident that FESCI members stayed because of the potential benefits to which membership afforded. It made me wonder whether students registered to university to actually "enroll" in FESCI? When I spoke to Angra, Zatto, and Hie, those were the reasons they noted for joining FESCI as high school students "I saw what they were doing..." they would say. They appeared to be effective. And moreover, they were respected and heard. For some coming from the "sacrificed generation" (Schumann, 2012), FESCI could be everything. They could be the "elite," the "leaders of tomorrow," as F told me. But more so than that, as Hie would describe to me, they were training the future leaders of tomorrow to combat the "injustices directed towards students." Hie would continue:

Hie: Tout d'abord, je parlerai de son contexte existentiel: la FESCI est ici parce qu'il ya des injustices envers les étudiants, la FESCI est ici parce que le système éducatif n'est pas à la hauteur / performatif, je peux donc dire que nous aidons le gouvernement à perfectionner système éducatif, mais en plus de cela, la FESCI est une école / terrain de formation, où nous enseignons à nos étudiants nos valeurs, telles que l'art de parler en public est enseigné ici, la gestion d'une organisation ou d'un groupe, est enseignée ici, donc pour nous, nous disons que la FESCI est une école de formation, où les gens viennent apprendre de la FESCI, car aujourd'hui, la FESCI a formé tant de personnes, aujourd'hui, la FESCI est devenue une référence en termes de mouvements d'étudiants, grâce à toutes les personnes qu'elle a formées. Beaucoup de gens sont passés par la FESCI et sont aujourd'hui sur la scène politique, et d'autres encore... En fait, nous sommes un peu partout aujourd'hui, vous pouvez voir que de nombreux étudiants s'intéressent aux méthodes de la FESCI et qu'il y a beaucoup d'autres organisations qui essaient de nous imiter.

Hie: First, I will talk about it's existential context for being, FESCI is here because there are injustices directed towards students, FESCI is here because the educative system is not up to parr, so I can say that we help the government to perfect the educational system, but on top of that, FESCI is a training school/ground, where we teach students our values, such as the art of public speaking is taught here, the management of an organization or a group, is taught here, so for us, we say that FESCI is a training school, where people come to learn from FESCI because today, FESCI has trained so many people, today FESCI has become a reference in terms of student movements, because of all the people it has trained. Many people have passed through FESCI and today they are in the political scene, and others...really, we are a little bit everywhere today, you can see that many students are interested in the FESCI ways, and there are a lot of other organizations who are trying to emulate us (2018).

With such a pedigree, how could one not attempt to enroll in such an exclusive institution? FESCI, for many students, is the school the government and the university should have provided. An institution that teaches critical thinking, vocational training, and liberation. This evokes Jenkins (2013) discussion of school and schooling and the potential for a transformative educational approach (p. 14). This sentiment was stressed by all Fescists but especially Zatto, who was adamant that FESCI was a necessity in order to function in the real world. FESCI, he would reiterate, was a “different type of school,” one that was necessary for graduating to the real world. FESCI, Zatto would add, would “wake you up,” he continues:

Zatto : Je dirai une école différente de l'école où elle se trouve. Pourquoi je dis différente ? A l'école, on te donne que la formation académique. Tandis qu'à la FESCI on réveille ton leadership. La FESCI te permet de sortir de toi-même, de parler à des milliers de personnes sans avoir peur. La preuve en est que Soro le fais bien n'est-ce pas ? C'est la FESCI qui l'a formé. Charles Blé Goudé le fais bien ? C'est la FESCI qui l'a formé...Cette école donne une formation autre que la formation académique. Là-bas tu as les diplômes, et ici tu as une formation, un esprit de gestion. Car tu peux avoir des diplômes et si on te confie un groupe de personne, tu ne pourras pas gérer. Car tout simplement parce que tu n'as pas fait la FESCI (2018).

Zatto: I will say a school different from the school where it is. Why do I say different? At school, you are given only academic training. While at FESCI we

wake up your leadership. FESCI allows you to go out on your own, to talk to thousands of people without fear. The proof is that Soro does it well, does he not? It's FESCI that trained him. Charles Blé Goudé does he do it well? It was FESCI who trained him....This school provides education other than academic training. There you have the diplomas, and here you have a training, a management spirit. Because you can have diplomas and if you are entrusted with a group of people, you will not be able to manage. Because simply because you did not attend FESCI (2018).

If you did not “attend” FESCI, how could you be “entrusted with a group of people” to manage and lead them, inquired Zatto? FESCI, for Zatto, was a necessity if you wanted to develop your leadership, public speaking, self-directing skills. Additionally, he mentions FESCI’s most divisive leaders, Guillaume Soro and Charles Blé Goudé, the former, is currently the president of the National Assembly and second to the presidency, the latter, a former Minister of Youth and Sports and currently being held at ICC for crimes against humanity.

I vividly remember the first time I went to FESCI headquarters. Their headquarters is on campus, near the university residential village in Cocody; across from the office of student disabilities and a large open air cafeteria. That day, I met with Fulgence Assi (AFA), then Secretary General, other members of the cabinet and his ‘comrades’ as they are called. I waited outside while they conducted their meeting, once they were done, I was invited in, introduced and given permission to conduct interviews with members. This is how I met Hie.

Hie was extremely kind and accommodating. It seemed his eyes were always smiling even when he was not; this did not mean his words did not come with a punch. At 35 years old, Hie is pursuing his Master’s degree in psychology and also serving as the secretary of professional development and entrepreneurship. His job entails him

working to help other students find internships and employment during their studies and after graduation (Hie, 2018). Not only is this position satisfying but it allows Hie to develop his leadership skills in the process. I asked him if there was an office that should be in charge of this, as FESCI's version of career services, should not be their responsibility.

Hie: Je trouve des stages pour des étudiants qui le souhaitent, j'en ai trouvé à la SOTRAC, au COPEC, même si c'est le système qui devrait en organiser.
NBN: C'est ce que je pensais, ce n'est pas ton travail, non?

Hie: Ce n'est pas mon travail. Lorsqu'un étudiant termine ses cours, il doit se rendre dans une entreprise pour effectuer un stage afin d'ajouter de l'expérience dans son CV, après avoir appris toutes les bases théoriques. Tu vois? Mais puisque les responsables ne le font pas, et que nous les faisons, nous devenons une nuisance et, par conséquent, les gens vont chercher des raisons et des arguments pour expliquer pourquoi nous ne devrions pas exister ... tout ça. Ça arrive. Et donc, c'était juste une petite raison pour justifier cela. La FESCI est destinée aux jeunes. Dans sa composition, la FESCI est là pour aider les étudiants, aider le système à s'améliorer, telle est sa mission (2018).

Hie: I find internships for students who want them, I've found some at SOTRAC, at COPEC, even though it's the system that should arrange this.

NBN: That's what I thought, this is not your job, right?

Hie: It's not my job. When a student finishes their coursework, they need to go to a company to do an internship to add some experience in their CV, after learning all the theoretical stuff. You see? But since the people in charge do not do this, and since we do them, we become a nuisance, and so, people will go find reasons and arguments for why we should not exist...all that stuff. It happens. And so, this was a just a little reason to justify this. FESCI is for young people, FESCI, in its composition is here to help students, help the system to improve, that is its mission (2018).

When I spoke to Hie about FESCI's work, he was very clear that all their actions and methods were in providing services and opportunities for young people because the

“people in charge do not do this.” But, therein conflict would ensue, according to Zatto and Hie, Fescists were called “nuisances” and “violent” when encroached on the responsibilities of those in charge. These negative targets, Hie would add, would support anti-Fescists sentiments that the organization “should not exist.” Hie also had a lot of connections and access for a graduate student. As I spent time with Hie, F, Zatto, Mohammed, and Angra, I noted that unlike many students I spoke with, these FESCI members had access and privileges not afforded to the average student; some had cars, many had dorms to themselves, and others could ride buses for free (Niati, fieldnotes, 2018). This further muddied the political relationship and social justice work they claimed to do.

It suddenly occurred to me why FESCI’s behavior could be considered “mafia-like” (HRW, 2008). According to members, they were providing a service they were not obligated to provide and as such, a small tithe was the least students could do to help this “different type of school” function within the university system. FESCI was a different type of school functioning within the university system while simultaneously challenging their approach to schooling. YEM works outside of the school system using their pedagogic concerts and workshops as a tool for socialization.

Socialisation

If, as Petchauer (2009), Hill (2009, 2013), and Low et al. (2013), argue that Hip-Hop is a radical form of socialization wherein youth “interpret, represent, and negotiate aspects of their sociocultural identities...” then YEM provides a space that affirms this socialization (Low et al., 2013, p. 119). When I asked participants about the educative role of their projects, many attested to the fact that YEM serves as an addendum to

schooling. If schooling, as Fadel asserts, is a place of socialization, then that socialisation must be explicit for the students' development. Unfortunately, he continues, schools have failed students and as such YEM has stepped in to not only teach but also to train and inform in a manner that is counter to "dominant" ideals.

FADEL : Si l'école faisait son travail on en serait pas là. Donc le peuple développe des réflexes pour combler les manques et considérer que y'en a marre et les mouvements semblables sont un peu dans ça. C'est des peuples qui l'ont secrété, il y'a eu des manques d'influence à des niveaux, ça c'est un. Deuxième élément, c'est que y'en a marre est forcément une école en ce sens qu'on devient un élément ou une instance dans le processus de socialisation. Vous savez dans chaque peuple, dans chaque communauté il y'a des instances de socialisation où les gens se forment. Avant au Sénégal jusqu'à présent d'ailleurs les gens se forme à l'école parce que c'est quand même une instance de socialisation, il y'a les daaras c'est des regroupements religieux qui est une instance de socialisation, il y'a les ASC les associations sportives et culturels qui sont des instances de socialisation, et aussi... voilà des associations du quartier, où souvent les gens se rendent compte qu'ils parlent de ce qui se passe et ils proposent des actions. Mais souvent c'est ce processus de socialisation là, ils sont formaté et moulé par un modèle, le modèle dominant. Y'en a marre est un petit peu haut que ça, il sort un peu de ça il propose une autre instance de socialisation. Ou on discute, ou interagit et c'est même intéressant aujourd'hui de voir la même porter au niveau africain. Ou y'en a marre est un incubateur de leader, comme d'ailleurs la plateforme Afriki université populaire de l'engagement citoyen. ...mouler d'une certaine manière différente de ce que la société à proposer jusque-là. Toute nos causeries que nous faisons dans nos quartiers, tout ça parce que nous avons une idéologie je le mets entre guillemet "différente du dominant". Et nous développons à notre niveau et mettons des jeunes en convergence, en contradiction et en synergie et c'est ça qui permet d'ailleurs à y'en a marre d'avancer (Nov. 2018)

FADEL: If the school did its job we wouldn't be here. So people are reacting to fill the gaps and consider y'en a marre and similar movements to be a bit in that. It's the people who developed it, there was a lack of influence in [our] leadership, that's one. The second element is that y'en a marre is definitely a school in the sense that it has become an element or a step in the socialization process. You know each person, in each community there are instances of socialization where people are shaped/taught. Before in Senegal until today, people are taught in school because it is still a place of socialization, there are the daaras, these are religious groupings which are places of socialization, there are the ASC sports and cultural associations which are places of socialization, and also ... there are

neighborhood associations where often people realize that they are talking about what is going on and they suggest action. But often the socialization processes there, are all formatted and molded by a model, the dominant model. Y'en a marre is above that, we move away from that to offer another form of socialization. Where we discuss, or interact and it is even interesting today to see the same support on the African level. Where y'en a marre is a leading incubator, like the Afriki popular university platform for civic engagement...[we] mold in a certain way different from what society has to offer even today. All our talks that we do in our neighborhoods, all because we have an ideology, I put it in quotes "different from the dominant." And we develop at our level and put young people in convergence, in contradiction and in synergy and that is what allows for y'en a marre to move forward (Nov. 2018).

Schools serve a functional purpose in not only providing curriculum based instruction but also in socializing young people to the sociocultural norms of a given society. Yet, Fadel clearly asserts that YEM's existence is a direct result of the failures in leadership and more specifically in educational leadership. A lack of civic education where young children "do not know the national anthem," or their constitutional rights means a lack of full participation in the democratic process. According to him and other members, it is because of these failures that YEM exists to counter and to develop informed and engaged citizens to go against "dominant" ideals.

As Sané would say, young people are "lost" (2018). Because of this, Sané would tell me that YEM was intentional in developing civic action projects that would allow young people to find their way. When I attended the final ceremony in which they announced the winners of the rap battle, they made sure to start the ceremony with Senegalese national anthem (Niati, fieldnotes, 2017). This was something that occurred at each project, conference, or workshop. They were intentional in promoting citizenship; a crucial part of the socialization that Fadel and Moriba discussed.

SANE : ... oui, en fait c'est ça, c'est l'un de nos chantier, chantier de l'action citoyenne, on se dit que le discours qu'on sur la citoyenneté qui s'adresse à notre génération ; notre génération est plus ou moins un peu **perdue**. Mais on se dit que si on veut que ce soit dans la durée et que de générations en générations on puisse aboutir à cette qualité de citoyenneté, il faut agir sur les plus jeunes. Et nous par exemple, le premier projet qu'on a voulu mettre en œuvre quand Macky SALL est arrivé au pouvoir, c'était le projet d'introduction de clip citoyen dans les écoles. Mais malheureusement comme à l'époque on avait décliné la proposition de Macky SALL de participer à la gouvernance, de le soutenir, donc n'ont pas voulu du projet, ils ont bloqué sous prétexte que y'en a marre veut rentrer dans les écoles pour endoctriner les jeunes...(Nov. 2018).

SANE: ...yes, in fact that's it, this is one of our projects, the civic action project, we say that the discourse we have on citizenship that is addressed to our generation; our generation is more or less a little **lost**. But we tell ourselves that if we want it to be long-term and that from generation to generation we can achieve this quality of citizenship, we must act on the youngest. And we, for example, the first project that we wanted to implement when Macky SALL came to power, it was the project to introduce civic educational music videos in schools. But unfortunately as at the time we had declined the proposal of Macky SALL to participate in [his] government, to support it, they did not want the project, they blocked it on the pretext that y'en a marre wants to come into schools to indoctrinate young people... (Nov. 2018)

Sané (2018), Moriba, and Fadel would assert that young people are lost and it seems as though the country's leaders wish to take advantage of this weakness (Schumann, 2012, Gueye, 2013, Lambert, 2016). YEM members felt compelled to step in and promote socialization and citizenship in schools. And, just as with FESCI, Y'en a Marre's encroachment into the government's duties, are vilified for "indoctrinating" and taking advantage of their role. As a prominent organization, YEM members were poised to enter the upper echelons of government. The current president owes his popularity and general support to YEM's organizing and engagement. And, in return, offered several founding members posts in his cabinet. They all refused. Would the government have viewed them otherwise had they joined? "We didn't do it to enter politics...we wanted to

be the example that could do this outside of those in power and change the system,” Fadel would say (Nov. 2018). This too, was echoed by Sané, Thiew, Moriba, and Sophie. Their primary objective has been and maintains to elevate the consciousness of young people and challenge political elitism. Had they entered office, Sané alerted me, many of their projects would have come to an end.

Y'en a Marre has been intentional about their authenticity and one of the ways to promote this was to refuse requests to join the president's cabinet. Their refusal to enter politics illustrated Fadel and Sané's push to be an example and a leader to other young people throughout the continent. The intention was to promote YEM's objectives and engender a population that was aware. This however came at a price, as their refusal to join the president's cabinet resulted in their civic action music videos (akin to Channel One News in the U.S.), being denied use in schools as president Macky Sall, once a YEM supporter, deemed the videos a form of “indoctrination.” What we now see, as Thiew told me, was a generation of young people who cannot recite the national anthem and have limited knowledge of the “political life of the country” (Thiew, 2018).

THIEW : On chantait l'hymne national après, après avoir chanté l'hymne national, on se mettait en rang pour entrer dans la salle une par une. Mais maintenant tout est gâté, on ne fait pas, on ne fait plus dans les écoles. Donc souvent tu vois un jeunes par exemple qui va jusqu'à, jusqu'à la classe de CM2 et qui n'arrive pas à comprendre et qui n'arrive même pas à écrire correctement. Donc ça veut dire que, par exemple, je ne sais pas, comme le dit, la lutte, la danse, les trucs de folklore quoi, qu'on fait dans les écoles. Et puis les jeunes au lieu de s'intéresser, au lieu de s'intéresser réellement à la vie politique de leur pays, mais ils préfèrent par exemple rester scotcher à la télé pour suivre Beyonce, des Jay-Z ou bien suivre la lutte. C'est peut-être dû à ça. Donc on s'est dit qu'à un moment donné, il faut aller vers eux, il faut les sensibiliser à notre méthode, à notre manière aussi (Nov. 2018)

THIEW: We sang the national anthem after, after singing the national anthem, we lined up to enter the room one by one. But now everything is spoiled, we don't do it, we don't do it anymore in schools. So often you see a young person for example who goes up to, up to the 5th grade and who cannot understand and who cannot even write correctly. So that means that, for example, I don't know, as I say, wrestling, dancing, folklore stuff, is what they do in schools. And then the young people instead of being interested, instead of really being interested in the political life of their country, but they prefer for example to remain glued to the TV to follow Beyonce, Jay-Z or follow [Senegalese] wrestling. It may be due to that. So we said to ourselves that at some point, we have to go to them, we have to make them aware of our method, in our own way too (Nov. 2018).

Leadership, transparency, engagement, and socialization embody the ideals that were revealed to me by YEM participants. They were concerned with the coming generation and worried that dominant imported ideals hindered the progression of the country. It was necessary that YEM be more than a force of contestation but too, they needed to come with receipts. How does one teach and emit action and leadership in a field of protest and misleading facts? As Sophie would succinctly put it, YEM pushes to be proactive to teach young people to fish for themselves:

SOPHIE : ...on continue la sensibilisation, parce que dès le début, on a compris que...on s'est dit que y'en a marre n'est pas que contestation. Il est aussi dans la proposition et tout ça, et en dehors des contestations aussi, on propose des solutions, on aide les jeunes à pouvoir se prendre en charge....on mène plusieurs activités, on a même des projets ou ce sont les jeunes qui ont bénéficiés pour pouvoir pêcher leurs propres poissons.... (Nov. 2018)

SOPHIE : ... we are continuing to raise awareness, because from the start, we understood that ... we told ourselves that y'en a marre is not just protests. It is also proactive and all that, and apart from the challenges too, we offer solutions, we help young people to be able to take care of themselves. We carry out several activities, we even have projects where young people who benefited to be able to catch their own fish... (Nov. 2018)

Sophie, Moriba, Fadel, Thiew, and Sané were quick to agree that YEM worked to socialize young people to develop critical attuned and socially engaged citizens who were

self-determined. Knowledge of self is a crucial element of Hip-Hop culture and one that seems to challenge Hip-Hop heads the most; it requires the most work. And yet, even as they embark on this difficult work, much like Hip-Hop, the road ahead is messy.

In each organization there is a period of growing pains in which said organization must establish itself. Hip-Hop went through this growing pain and it forever challenged the way we looked at and approached the culture. Yet today, Hip-Hop is one of the U.S.'s greatest cultural exports. Is there hope that FESCI will evolve from their past? What about Y'en a Marre? What growing pains will they experience? And how will that change the ways in which young people engage in this new era? What about the role of women? Given women's achievements on the continent, why is it that they are not as prominent in these organizations? These are questions policymakers and educators must consider when implementing programs and policies that focus on young people, engagement, leadership, and peace education initiatives.

Concluding Discussion

In challenging the concepts of pedagogy and schooling, Akom (2009) and Jenkins (2013) encourage us to revisit how Hip-Hop cultivates “organic intellectuals” who bring theory and practice together (Akom, 2009, p. 53 & 55). Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool goes beyond lyrics and rhymes but instead is embraced as a critical pedagogy of “imagination, humanism, agency, and becoming” allowing us to reshape the act of learning, from a “structured, “mechanized” experience into a creative, imaginative, and socially conscious endeavor.” (Jenkins, 2013, p. 14). Epistemologically, a critical Hip-Hop pedagogy creates spaces for organizations such as YEM and FESCI to create counternarratives, delinking from majoritarian structures and encourage young people to

“turn their sociological gaze back toward the community and begin to solve everyday problems...” (Akom, 2009, p. 55).

The next chapter will examine FESCI and YEM’s push for authenticity; *keepin it real*, a form of epistemic disobedience that is negotiated through language, leadership training, and identity formation. Recognizing the limitations Low et al., (2013) warn of keeping it real, let us consider how YEM and FESCI negotiated authenticity given their sociopolitical contexts. Thiew would reiterate that young people in Senegal continuously aligned themselves with Hip-Hop culture, as such, they needed to “keep it real,” that is to be distinctly Senegalese. In Abidjan, Fescists noted that they espoused a “typically ivoirian” identity that was unique to Abidjan. The next chapter thusly discusses how YEM and FESCI navigated these discourses of authenticity (Low et al., 2013) through language, leadership training, and identity formation.

CHAPTER 6

KEEPIN' IT REAL

Introduction

Hip-Hop, as Magro (2016), Krs-One (1989), Low et al. (2013), and Corona & Kelsall (2016), assert is about authenticity, “keepin’ it real,” and being true to the local. This idea of authenticity, can be used as a challenge to dominant narratives and a tool of “resistance in the public space” that becomes a necessary “vehicle of expression in Hip-Hop” (Magro, 2016, p. 18). Speaking to the creative and adversarial genesis of Hip-Hop in Norway, for example, Opsahl & Røynealand (2016), look at the ways in which the global and local connect through a language of resistance and belonging to suggest that “Hip-Hop also plays a decisive role in the creation and formation of a new, multiethnolectal urban speech style” (p. 45).

This chapter provides my analysis of the discourses of authenticity as embodied by Y’en a Marre and FESCI. Let down by their elders and leaders, FESCI and YEM members kept it real as a means to counter deceitful politicians, to challenge their elders, and to develop a new identity expression that was authentically Ivorian or Senegalese. This allowed for a space of realness that was embodied in contrastive ways in these two countries. The following examination first discusses how YEM and FESCI approached and viewed this notion of “keepin’ it real” and authenticity. I will then discuss how they challenged linguistic norms by either refusing to or manipulating French and instead

using local languages such as Wolof and Nouchi, engaging in authentic Hip-Hop leadership (Wilson, 2013), and negotiating their identity through a new slogan.

Informed by Césaire’s understanding of Blackness and his expression of *négritude* as the “simple recognition of the fact that one is Black, the acceptance of this fact and of our destiny as Blacks, of our history and culture” (Césaire, 1939 as cited in Sprague, 2018), this chapter builds from this perspective, to delve into Ngugi’s (2009) challenge of “Europhonism,” of decolonizing the African mind and engaging in epistemologies of resistance that are authentically African. As we see from FESCI and YEM, their engagement is very much ingrained within their push for authenticity and in so doing, they have created spaces to demonstrate epistemic disobedience through language and identity.

Keepin’ it real

When considering the ways in which FESCI and YEM have used Hip-Hop to organize and engage young people, what we see is an ideology that centers authenticity and ownership in their promotion of leadership, identity formation and linguistic expression. Hip-Hop is about authenticity, *keepin it real* and “being true to the local.” This idea of authenticity, Magro (2016) argues, “is linked to specific linguistic varieties” and thus, “membership in a global community of style may have as much to do with ideologies of language and transidiomatic practices” as it does with local musical, artistic, and linguistic forms (p. 18). For Y’en a Marre and those who attended pedagogic concerts, Hip-Hop was the engine to promote YEM’s authenticity and a “vehicle of expression,” was easier to understand and listen to unlike politicians as Fadel would say.

In Abidjan, Zouglou, with its distinct dance and language enraged and enthralled at the same time. Young people relished in forefronting their new found strength, identity and expression through a new linguistic expression known as Nouchi. Their parents/leaders saw them as vagabonds with no direction and disrespecting traditional and standard norms. This conflict would and continues to be magnified through the development of Nouchi, a “contact language” that began on the streets of Abidjan in the 1970’s and 1980’s (Sande, 2015, p. 243).

Y’en a Marre’s push to be ‘authentically’ Senegalese in their manifestation of Hip-Hop was evident not only in how they chose to use Hip-Hop pedagogy to engage young people but also how they utilized language to reach the country. Senegal, like many African countries, oscillates within and around its colonial past. As I will discuss in the section below, the use of Wolof over French was an intentional method to once again promote Senegalese identity, de-link from accepted norms, and create knowledge that, as Smith (1999) writes, “reclaim[s] land, language, knowledge, and sovereignty” (p. 33).

Mobilizing Hip-Hop: Language

Wolof and French

As a former colony of France, French is the official language and the language of instruction of Senegal. But, Mazrui (2000) and Fal (2000) among others, argue that roughly only 28% of the population speak the language. What is widely spoken throughout the country is Wolof, which is spoken by about 80% of the population, along with other languages including Pulaar, Jola, Serer, Mandinka, and Soninke (Mazrui, 2000 and Fal, 2007). This begs the question, if the majority of the population does not actively speak French, why not work to actively promote Wolof? If Wolof can be used to raise

awareness on public health issues, why not use Wolof for civic education or K-12 instruction? (Mazrui, 2000).

When I asked participants about the use of Wolof over French, it was clear that a mistrust in leadership and more directly, the power and impact of the French influence on the country, was a source of discontent. The use of French in the political sphere made it such that many were excluded and tuned out. What my participants revealed to me was the need to be clear, upfront and not confusing like politicians who seemed to use French in such a way to complicate and mislead the general population. As Sophie, Thiew, and Sane would attest, they wanted to be sure to talk to people in an approachable, “down to earth” manner that was familiar and approachable.

Below Sophie explains her take on the deliberate use of language. She mentioned several times their deliberate use of Wolof and other local languages as a way to engage with young and old; rich and poor alike. Wolof in this instance, became a sociopolitical tool to counter standard conventional French and “politics-as-usual:”

SOPHIE :d’abord, il faut savoir qu’on leur parlait en langage terre à terre...On sensibilisait plus de clients comme ça, dans les marchés, c’était pareil, on avait par exemple des... je ne sais pas comment on appelle ça, des truc...des hauts parleurs-là, oui... , pour... voilà, sensibiliser plus de gens..., on allait aussi bien dans les maison, on faisait des portes à portes, on trouvait des gens devant leur maison..., on leur parlait et tout et on utilisait un langage terre à terre ; par exemple, on utilisait pas le langage des politiciens, qui utilisent des mots que les populations ont du mal à comprendre . Alors qu’on leur parle le Wolof terre à terre qu’ils ont envie d’entendre, et qu’ils comprennent aussiC’est le Wolof, beuuu, chaque a sa langue, mais il y a une langue que tout le monde parle dans un pays, il faut utiliser un langage terre à terre, des exemples terre à terre pour leur faire comprendre, faire accéder , c’est plus simple, ici par exemple, c’est le Wolof qu’on parle, mais quand on va au Fouta, ils parlent par exemple poular , il y a Malal qui parle poular, alors,il leur explique ça avec des mots simples en poular, pas des phrase extraordinaires, mais accessible, qu’ils puissent comprendre ce qui se passe et tout..., on s’adapte au milieu au fait, il faut s’adapter avec le milieu, parler avec les populations (Nov. 2018)

SOPHIE: ...first, you should know that we spoke to people in a down to earth language that they understood... We raised more awareness from people that way, in the markets, it was the same, we had for example, I don't know what you call them... loudspeakers, yes, to educate more people..., we went to homes as well, we went door to door, we found people in front of their house, we spoke and everything and we used a down to earth language; for example, we did not use the language of politicians, who use words that people have trouble understanding. When we talk to them in an approachable Wolof that they want to hear, and that they also understand.... It's Wolof, each has its own language, but there is a language that everyone speaks in a country, you have to use a common language, down to earth examples to make them understand, give access, it's simpler, here for example, it's Wolof that we speak, but when we go to Fouta, they speak for example Pular, there is Malal who speaks Pular, so he explains it to them with simple words in Pular, not extraordinary but accessible sentences, so that they can understand what is going on and everything..., we adapt to the environment, we have to adapt to the environment, speak with the population... (Nov. 2018).

Language is powerful. What Sophie and YEM members conveyed to me was the limitless and unbounded force of Wolof and other local languages that was not found in French. Not only did the population not fully understand French, but when complemented with political jargon and double entendres, many people felt excluded and forgotten. So, YEM members actively chose to not only speak Wolof but, as Sophie stated, they used a common Wolof spoken and understood by everyone in a jargon that was, as she notes, accessible and simpler. This intentional effort, was as Alim (2011) notes, a push for “counterhegemonic politics” that forefronted a “new type of Senegalese.”

What I heard from YEM members was this sense of being *vrai senegalais* (real Senegalese), an echo that is seeped throughout Hip-Hop belief system, that of *keepin' it real* (Low et al., 2013, and Pardue, 2013). Thiew and Sophie both mentioned the *maman* who they made sure understood their cause. And in order to do so, they made sure to talk

to her in such a way that she was not only honored but understood. From this, Thiew notes, they were able to be successful in gaining ground and attracting young and old.

THIEW : ...bon, parce qu'en fait au Sénégal, la langue qui est beaucoup plus parlée c'est le wolof...Donc pour réussir ça aussi, il fallait faire des messages en wolof. Même pour les inscriptions sur les slogans, on n'utilisait pas les slogans en français, la plupart on utilisait des slogans en wolof. Il y avait seulement le slogan « Faux! Pas Forcé! », on a... parce qu'en fait, on jouait sur les slogans pour vraiment faire comprendre aux populations. Mais la plupart, on utilisait le wolof pour que la population comprenne ce qu'on veut dire. Sinon si tu utilises le français, la plupart des gens ne va pas comprendre, on était obligé de... C'est pour cela que nos mamans ont vite compris le mouvement et que vraiment ils ont vraiment... la population a vite compris le mouvement. Voilà, c'est pourquoi ! Parce que automatiquement ils ont vraiment compris, ils ont vu à travers le message qu'on portait. Ils savaient que ce mouvement n'était pas... c'était des vrai sénégalais, de vrai sénégalais qui croyaient en eux. Donc c'est pour cela aussi (Nov. 2018)

THIEW: ...well, because in fact in Senegal, the most commonly spoken language is Wolof...So to succeed that too, you had to make messages in Wolof. Even for the signs on the slogans, we did not use the slogans in French, for most of them we used slogans in Wolof. There was only the slogan "Faux! Pas Forcé!", we have ... because in fact, we were playing on slogans to really make people understand. Most of the time, we used Wolof to make people understand what we mean. Otherwise if you use French, most people will not understand, we had to ... This is why our moms quickly understood the movement and .. they really ... the population quickly understood the movement . That's why! Because automatically they really understood, they saw through the message we were carrying. They knew that this movement was not ... it was real Senegalese, real Senegalese who believed in them. So that's why too (Nov. 2018).

Thiew emphasizes the importance of *keepin' it real* within a Senegalese context, something they felt their leaders were not demonstrating in their reliance on French and political-economic reliance on France. The use of Wolof in this context as discussed by Sophie and Thiew also highlights the continued struggle with Senegal's colonial past, class dynamics, and lack of political will to promote Wolof over French. This, to Thiew

and other YEM members, exemplified a lack of authenticity that perpetuated the old way of doing things and thus a maintenance of the status quo.

In their discussion of authenticity and keepin' it real within Hip-Hop culture, Low et al. (2013), contend that this belief system that sits at the core of Hip-Hop culture, manifests in five distinct ways: “the ‘streets,’ ‘hard’ heterosexual masculinity, blackness, the importance of representing the place and culture you are from, the importance of being true to yourself, and politically conscious, ‘underground’ hip-hop” (p. 120). During my time attending meetings, rap battles, concerts, etc., participants regularly emphasized these six traits. As members of YEM, the rap group Keur Gui represented what the authors note as politically conscious rap; members’ background from Kaolack (Gueye, 2013), acknowledged the “streets” aspect, and of course their expressions of authenticity and “keepin it real” within their mission statement, confirmed Ngugi and Smith’s (1980, 1987, 2009) “decolonizing” perspectives, Mignolo’s “epistemic disobedience,” as a means to validate and weaponize their engagement.

Nouchi and French

African youth languages have been studied in academic spaces to illustrate their resistance (Sande, 2015; Kiessling and Mous, 2004) and their global, modern, and international identities (Hollington, 2016). Nouchi, an urban language that started in Abidjan, has grown to become the lingua franca of young people, and is generally spoken by most everyone in Ivorian society. Given that 62% of the Ivorian population is under 25 years old (UN, 2019), Sande (2015) argues that the implications for its reach and influence are significant. Yet, Nouchi is not recognized as an official language in Cote d’Ivoire.

This question came up when I asked FESCI members about their use of Nouchi, their perceptions, and if they thought Cote d'Ivoire needed a secondary local language along with French. First, I was reminded, I needed to know that there were over 60 ethnic groups in Côte d'Ivoire and secondly, I needed to be mindful of the identity wars of *ivoirieté* that occurred during former president Henri Konan Bédié's tenure. These two facts were crucial in understanding why Côte d'Ivoire did not have a secondary language outside of French and to appease the masses, no ethnic language was promoted as a lingua franca. It still did not answer, for me, why Nouchi couldn't be the national language.

BN: J'ai remarquée qu'ici en Côte d'Ivoire, il n'y a pas une langue nationale en dehors du français. Comme le wolof au Sénégal ou le lingala en RDC, etc. Comment expliquez-vous cela et pensez-vous que la Côte d'Ivoire a besoin d'une langue nationale en dehors du français?

SIABA: Ok, merci pour la question. Je dois dire que dans la Côte d'Ivoire, il y a 66 groupes ethniques, 66 groupes ethniques en fait il y en a plus, il y en a certainement plus et il pourrait y en avoir plus de 66, et avoir un groupe ethnique qui supplantera tous les autres aurait été un un peu difficile. Cela aurait placé la suprématie de ce groupe ethnique sur tous les autres groupes ethniques. Je ne sais pas si vous comprenez. Par exemple, si vous prenez Bété, si Bété est la langue nationale ou la deuxième langue, cela signifie que les Bété qui sont majoritaires dans la Côte d'Ivoire, ou qu'ils pourraient dominer. Et si vous regardez l'histoire du Côte d'Ivoire avec la crise d'identité (ivoirité), les gens ont manipulé tout cela... (2018).

BN: I've realized that here in Cote d'Ivoire, there is no national language outside of French. Like, Wolof in Senegal or Lingala in DRC, etc. How do you explain this and do you think that Cote d'Ivoire needs a national language outside of French?

SIABA: Ok, thanks for the question. I have to say that in Cote d'Ivoire there are 66 ethnic groups, 66 ethnic groups actually there is more, there is definitely more and it might be over 66, and to have one ethnic group that would supplant all the other ones, would have been a bit difficult. It would have placed supremacy of that ethnic group over all the other ethnic groups.. I don't know if you

understand. For example, if you take Bete, if Bete the national language or second language, this means that the Bete who are the majority in Côte d'Ivoire, or that they might dominate. And if you look at the history in Cote d'Ivoire with the identity crisis (*ivoirité*), people manipulated all of that... (2018).

Though French is the official language in Côte d'Ivoire, only about 40% of the population is literate in the language (Djité et al., 2007). This is due in part to high drop-out rates, which result in a limited mastery of French and as such, young people manipulate Standard French with the incorporation of local languages and other vernaculars. This is how in fact Nouchi began and why it has gained notoriety within and outside Côte d'Ivoire. When asked what language could be elevated to official status along with French, many demurred on choosing one as tensions of *ivoirité* still impacted inter-ethnic tensions. So, why not Nouchi? Zatto was quick to first define this linguistic expression. "Nouchi," he started, " is a typically Ivorian language that consists of the compilation of several languages without favoring any English is there, German words are there...French comes in, Dida comes in, Dioula, Baoulé ... everything comes in..." (Zatto, 2018). He continued:

ZATTO : ...Donc c'est une compilation de langue. Ce n'est pas ce que les gens voient dans les rues aujourd'hui. « Je suis Nouchi », on est pas Nouchi, on parle le Nouchi. Il ne faut pas que quelqu'un va voir un bandit, un brigand dans la rue et le considérer comme un Nouchi. Très souvent dans les quartiers les gens le disent, un gars est sale, il est en forme et il aime faire la bagarre dans le quartier, on le traite de Nouchi. Mais en réalité, il n'est pas Nouchi, c'est un voyou. Le Nouchi c'est une

compilation de langues et donc pour ne pas qu'il y ait, je ne dirai pas problèmes en Côte d'Ivoire...le Nouchi peut être revu, recyclé pour donner un bon produit fini. Je pense bien que ce langage doit être parlé en Côte d'Ivoire.

ZATTO: ...So this is a collection of languages.. This is not what people see on the streets today. "I am Nouchi," One is not Nouchi, we speak Nouchi. Someone shouldn't see a crook, a thief in the street and consider them Nouchi. Very often in the

neighborhoods people say it, a guy is dirty, he is in good shape and he likes to fight in the neighborhood, we call him Nouchi. But in reality, he is not Nouchi, he is a thug. Nouchi is a compilation of languages so that

there is not, I will not say problems in Côte d'Ivoire...Nouchi can be revised, recycled to give a good finished product. I think that this language must be spoken in Ivory Coast (2018).

Côte d'Ivoire is in a linguistic quagmire. Though French is the desired and official language, the majority of the population is not fluent or literate in French (OIF, 2012). Additionally, the low status of dominant-African languages in the country, has also resulted in a majority of young people who do not speak their own ethnic language. How then can a country promote democracy and engagement when they are unable to reach the majority of the population?

Nouchi, on the other hand, is democratic. It favors no entity or ethnic group and is something truly unique to Côte d'Ivoire. Nouchi has also become the unofficial lingua franca in Côte d'Ivoire and has seeped itself even into the vocabulary of business and politics (Sande, 2015; BBC, 2019). In our discussions of Hip-Hop and *keepin it real*, Nouchi provides a means of expression that embodies the interconnected, multilingual and globalized youth culture that is shaping Côte d'Ivoire and West Africa, in general. In doing so, it provides a means by which all, regardless of academic background, can “find themselves.” When I spoke with Angra, he highlighted not just Nouchi’s oppositional tone but also its benefit as a unifying language. He told me Nouchi “can be used to benefit all families, even the father at home, if he has forgotten his language, if he finds himself among friends they might feel more comfortable [speaking] Nouchi...whether you are from North, South, East to West, you will necessarily speak Nouchi...” (2018).

Inherent in Hip-Hop culture is the countering of majoritarian norms be it music, art, and/or language. Nouchi, plays to what Alim (2011) Hip-Hop ill-literacy, a counterhegemonic practice against a limited version of Standard French. Nouchi, in this sense is limitless, unbounded and unrestrained. It is the language of the people and disrupts elitist norms by using a language perceived as vulgar, crass, and uneducated (Hollington & Nassenstein, 2017; Chonou, 2015). Nouchi also requires us to confront issues of classism in Ivorian society.

What Zatto and Angra revealed to me was the ways in which the politics of language and class intersected to create this new cultural expression. Because of its origins and with who it was affiliated, Nouchi, has been perceived as the language of delinquent youth and the illiterate (Chonou, 2015; Sande, 2015). Zatto alludes to this when he tries to distinguish between Nouchi the language and “thieves/crooks.” One is not Nouchi, he maintains, one speaks Nouchi. And, in that testament, he implores for its autonomy and its uniqueness as an Ivorian language. So too, does Angra promote this unbounded nature of Nouchi. Recognizing that even their parents may no longer speak their ethnic languages, Nouchi has become the “second language” of Côte d’Ivoire because everyone can “find themselves” there. Cue: Zouglou.

If Hip-Hop culture is a way by which “youth and young adults conceive of themselves, others, and the world around them” then Zouglou represents a reconfiguration of Hip-Hop in Abidjan to represent their lived realities (Petchauer, 2009, p. 947). As Alim (2009) notes in *Hip-Hop Nation Language*, “Hip-Hop style does not impose a homogenized ‘one-world’ culture upon its practitioners,” rather “the global style community of Hip-Hop is negotiated not through a particular language, but through

particular styles of language, these styles are ideologically mediated and motivated in that their use allows for a shared respect based on representin' one's particular locality" (p.18 & p. 106, Alim; Keyes, 2004; Clark, 2018). Nouchi as such keeps it real, keeps it local, and represents the emergence of a new Ivorian identity that is heavily promoted by Fescists.

The use of Wolof and Nouchi, arguably promotes what Césaire (1939) envisioned to be a cultural bridge, what Benedict Anderson (1983) ascribed as the "imagined community" and what Adjirakor (2017) called for an "African City" that is, the shared expressions and experiences of those othered, beastified, and denied their full Self (Fanon, 1952; Clark, 2013; Ngugi, 1987). Ngugi writes that those who [try] to communicate the message of revolutionary unity and hope in the languages of the people become a subversive character. It is then that writing in African languages becomes a subversive or treasonable offence with such a writer facing possibilities of prison, exile or-even death" (p. 30). Nouchi and Wolof are therefore emblematic of a shared language that is inseparable from their communities, "with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world" and are thusly used as a form of resistance and engagement (Ngugi, 1987, p. 16).

Leadership/Identity Formation - un nouveau type de sénégalais

a culture that participates in an undertaking of disorganization that is also an adventure of reorganization and of recomposition of several historical lineages...is at the heart of the creation of a new historicity...It is, at the same time, an undertaking of reorganization in the sense that it operates, through a given reserve of images, towards a task of permanent mobilization, selection, translation, and alteration (Mamadou Diouf, as quoted in Bryson, 2014, p. 45).

There is an intersecting relationship between the political actions of Yenamarrists and the cultural forms that they use to express, to instigate, and to organize their actions

(Bryson, 2014, p. 46). Words, Ngom (2016) writes, are not the only “form of representation or expression. People establish and convey meaning through clothing, dance, music, gesture, and through complex rituals which often defy verbal exegesis” (p. 7). Hip-Hop, therefore is such a cultural expression that goes beyond rap music and embodies the artistic, cultural, and sociopolitical movements of its people (p. 13).

Hip-Hop pedagogy as practiced by YEM “becomes a political forum for the sensitization of the population on their rights and duties” (Ngom, 2016, p. 13). Also, by organizing civic activities throughout the country, rappers and journalists of the movement “vie with professional politicians for the public space” (Ngom, 2016, p. 13). As Mamadou Diouf is quoted above, adventures in reorganization can be disorganizing and this can be very troubling to those comfortable with the status quo. This is at the crux of the *nouveau type de sénégalais*, a concept embodied by YEM to denote a person who leads by example, who does not steal, promotes citizenship and transparency (Fadel, 2016).

In their expression of a New Type of Senegalese, YEM uses social media, Hip-Hop culture, social and political roots of *négritude*. Bryson (2014) argues that by grounding their actions and rhetoric in “recognizable Senegalese cultural patterns,” YEM was able to “subtly and carefully introduce transgressive political and social ideas, including ones rooted in hip-hop culture, to a broad spectrum of people” (p. 36). In so doing, members urged their countrymen and women and served as “catalysts for social and political reform.” A New Type of Senegalese for Yenamarristes is one who helps themselves and “seiz[es] the opportunities that are offered to them” (p. 4).

Hip-Hop can provide counter-narratives that espouses an identity of leadership and ownership. This was expressed to me when talking with participants about their reasons for joining YEM and the benefits of YEM's anti-dominant adherence. When I spoke with YEM members about their work and their push for a new identity formation, I was constantly told of the *nouveau type de sénégalais*, a new type of Senegalese (NTS) that expected more from themselves and their elders. This NTS that the members emphasized is mentioned several times in the *Plan Sénégal Emergent* (2011), the Senegalese economic development plan which highlights this notion of the NTS. However, when envisioned and discussed to me by YEM members, this seems to run counter to what the government is actually *doing*.

SOPHIE : ...oui... un nouveau type de Sénégalais, c'est celui qui refuse de se laisser, qui refuse d'être un fardeau par exemple, un Sénégalais qui se prend en charge, qui se bat pour les mêmes choses, qui se bat pour son pays, qui n'attend rien du gouvernement ... il faut être honnête, il y a un moment dans les écoles, manque de civisme et tout ça qu'on n'apprend plus à nos jeunes frères , voilà, et ...on....le Sénégalais a plutôt tendance à être laxiste et comment dirai, comment on appelle ça encore... Dieu va donner,...s'il y a un malheur qui arrive, c'est parce que Dieu , si on....voilà, si on...(hésitation)...tout ce qui arrive, c'est Dieu, on ne fait rien pour changer cela, et c'est ce qu'on veut inculquer aux Sénégalais, c'est ce qu'on veut qu'ils comprennentAu lieu d'attendre que...voilà...de se dire que Dieu va changer les choses, Dieu va changer... c'est à eux même de changer les choses, le changement ne peut venir que d'eux-mêmes....Ils ne doivent pas attendre à ce que les autres le fassent pour eux, ou espérer à ce que les politiciens, les hommes au pouvoir le fassent pour eux. C'est une façon de leur inculquer cela... (Nov. 2018).

SOPHIE: ... yes ... a new type of Senegalese is one who refuses to let himself go, who refuses to be a burden for example, a Senegalese who takes care of himself, who fights for the same things, who is fighting for his country, who does not expect anything from the government...you have to be honest, there was a moment in the schools, lack of civic [education] and all that we no longer teach our young brothers, that's it, and ... we ... the Senegalese tend to be lax and how would we say, what do we call that again ... God will give, ... if there is a misfortune that happens, it's because God, if we ... well, if we ... (hesitation) ...

everything that happens is God, we don't do anything to change that, and that's what we want to instill among Senegalese, that's what we want them to understand ... Instead of waiting for ... you now ... to say that God will change things, God will change... it's up to them to change things, change can only come from themselves They should not wait for others to do it for them, or expect politicians, men in power to do it for them. It's a way of instilling that in them... (Nov. 2018).

What Sophie brings up is not only the push for authenticity but ownership, pride, and leadership. This, she maintains, is necessary to instill “a change” in mentality and in action. Gone are the days of waiting for leadership to change or improve your life, the onus, in an NTS mentality, is on the self. Fadel echoes this sentiment and builds on Sophie’s testament by stating that this change in mentality is necessary to be an example for oneself and to others.

FADEL : Mandela n’a pas construit l’Afrique du sud, si l’Afrique du sud en parle encore c’est l’exemplarité qu’il a montrée ! Et puis voilà c’est 26 ans en prison, de reste lui-même, de sortir et de recommander au gens de se réconcilier, c’est de l’exemplarité ! Prend ailleurs n’importe où tu veux, Patrice Lumumba n’a pas fait grand-chose... mais les exemplarités a été de dire la vérité du colon, de dire la vérité devant les gens. Nos pays ont besoins de ça, c’est ça qui construit un pays au fait. Et quand nous avons parler de nouveau type de sénégalais, c’est cette exemplarité qu’on a voulue, montrer que les sénégalais soient exemplaire dans leur comportement de tous les jours. Pourquoi, parce qu’il faut être en harmonie avec sois même, mais l’africain a connu tous ces chocs... Tous les chocs que nous avons connus fait que nous sommes dans un état bizarre...Donc il faut nous retrouver avec nous même...Donc je pense que c’est ça, quand on parle de nouveau type d’africain, cette qualité de citoyenneté est une façon d’être. C’est une façon d’être, c’est une prise de conscience de ce que nous sommes ! Donc tout ça c’est sont des formes de radicalisation mais cette fois-ci on le fait pour améliorer dans le pays, dans une forme républicaine conformément aux lois et règlements... Avec une meilleure implication, avec une participation beaucoup plus actif en étant un acteur de son propre destin... (Nov. 2018).

FADEL: Mandela did not build South Africa, if South Africa is still talked about, it is because of the example he had shown! And then here he is 26 years in prison,

by himself, to go out and tell people to reconcile, that is an example! Take anywhere else you want, Patrice Lumumba did not do much... but the example was to tell the truth of the colonizer, to tell the truth in front of people. Our countries need that, that's what builds a country by the way. And when we talked about a New Type of Senegalese, it was this example that we wanted to show that the Senegalese are exemplary in their everyday behavior. Why, because you have to be in harmony with yourself, but the African has experienced all these shocks ... All the shock that we have known means that we are in a bizarre state. So we have to find ourselves within ourselves... So I think that's it, when we talk about a new type of African, this quality of citizenship is a way of being. It's a way of being, it's an awareness of who we are! So all of these are forms of radicalization but this time we are doing it to improve the country, in a republican form in accordance with laws and regulations... With better involvement, with much more active participation by being an actor of our own destiny...(Nov. 2018).

For Fadel, this change in mentality is urgent. In order for Senegal and the continent, in general to advance, he affirms, the African must be honest with themselves and find themselves. And, much like Mandela, Sankara, and Lumumba before them, YEM hopes to lead by example by showing that they can walk their talk. Like Thiew described young people in Senegal, Africans, Fadel states, are in a state of “shock” and as such find themselves in a “bizarre” and peculiar situation. And, in order to find themselves once more, they must heal themselves. The goal is to be an example for themselves and their community. This is what Mandela and Lumumba did, and this is what YEM aims to do. This is the form of radicalization that he espouses; a fervent zeal to motivate, engage, and transform. YEM, once again is reclaiming as Smith (1999) suggests their knowledge and, as Mignolo (2009) asserts, making space for knowledge making and sharing.

As someone who embodies Hip-Hop and promotes a counter-hegemonic stance on leadership, for Fadel and YEM in general, the NTS ideal is an essential tool to advocate panafricanism and decolonization. If, as Mignolo (2009), Fanon (1965) and

Tuck & Yang (2012) assert that the goal of decolonization is physical and epistemic sovereignty, then the NTS as envisioned by YEM is an articulation of this ownership. This is not a Senegalese struggle but rather a continental one and YEM is a necessary leader and example towards this end.

FADEL : C'est-à-dire qu'on peut dire le nouveau type de panafricain ? Parce qu'à travers le Sénégal nous avons voulu donner une exemplarité pour la jeunesse africaine. Parce que ce combat ne se gagnera pas tant que nous restons confinés dans nos micro nationalisme en dessous tracé par le colon ! Aujourd'hui gambien sénégalais ça veut rien dire, nous sommes le même peuple. D'ailleurs si tu regardes l'histoire du Sénégal, l'histoire du Sénégal est récente, c'est presque une création française. A pensé le nouveau type d'africain, on pense le nouveau type de sénégalais, parce que nous voulons façonner l'africain qui va construire l'Afrique. Cheick anta Diop a dit (incompréhension) il faut donner à l'africain le bâtisseur qui sont en eux, Moi je dis qu'il est temps, c'est le moment de construire l'Afrique... (Nov. 2018).

FADEL: In other words, can we say the new type of pan-African? Because across Senegal we wanted to set an example for African youth. Because this fight will not be won as long as we remain confined to our micro nationalism outlined by the colonist! Today, Senegalese, Gambian, it doesn't mean anything, we are the same people. Besides, if you look at the history of Senegal, the history of Senegal is recent, it's almost a French creation. In thinking about the new type of African, we think the new type of Senegalese, because we want to shape the African who will build Africa. Cheikh Anta Diop said...we must give the African the builder that is in them, I say it's time, it's time to build Africa ... (Nov. 2018).

This New type of African is evident of the growing pan-africanism that informs YEM's activism and engagement. It is not just about instilling a decolonial thinking that challenges borders and nationhood, it is also about "build[ing]" a new Africa; and with the help of YEM, young people can have those tools. FESCI too espouses a new way of thinking that focuses on leadership and a change in mentality.

Leadership/Identity formation - l'ivoirien nouveau

The adoption of Zouglou and Nouchi has resulted in a new expression by Fescists that echoed the administration's push for a "new Ivorian," after the civil war. The concept has been promoted by the government with varying results and was later adopted by FESCI as a means to change its image. Through FESCI, this concept is engulfed within the ideas of "family," "leadership," and "a change in mentality" as described to me by participants. Similar to what Kouadio (2017) describes as the *ivoirien nouveau*, Hie first defined to me the concept:

HIE: Ok, eh bien... le nouveau ivoirien est un concept qui est sorti après la guerre, comme je l'ai dit plus tôt, c'est le changement de mentalité, donc le concept de ce nouvel ivoirien est d'amener les ivoiriens à changer leur façon de penser, leur conception du politique jeux, leur conception de la formation, de l'éducation, de dire que toutes ces choses qui n'étaient pas bonnes, de changer les comportements et les valeurs qui unissent la Côte d'Ivoire pour arriver à un processus de réconciliation, pour amener la Côte d'Ivoire à [atteindre] son niveau de développement. C'est le concept du nouvel ivoirien. Que chacun apporte sa pièce à la table. Que chacun, en fonction de ses compétences, de son savoir-faire, qu'il participe à la construction de l'État (2018).

HIE: Ok, well the new ivorian is a concept that came about after the war, like I said earlier, it is the changing of mentality, so the concept of this new Ivorian is to get Ivorians to change their way of thinking, their conception of political games, their conception of training, education, to say that all those things that were not good, to change the behaviour and values that will unite Côte d'Ivoire to come to a process of reconciliation, to bring Côte d'Ivoire to [reach] its level of development. That's the concept of the new Ivorian. That everyone brings their piece to the table. That everyone, based on their competencies, their knowhow, that they participate in the construction of the state (2018).

What this *ivoirien nouveau* did was to incite a sense of leadership and ownership for Ivorians. Unfortunately, Kouadio (2017) derides the government's failed attempt at pushing for this "slogan," which has come with empty promises and no follow through

(JeuneAfrique.com). Cue: FESCI. FESCI, like Zatto told me, was a” different kind of school.” In this school, students engaged in leadership training that taught them how to be. Through FESCI, members gain training that they feel the school does not provide: public speaking, leadership, negotiations, etc. This learning occurs in a “family” type environment, where they can be “transformed from a shy, timid person,” to someone who “makes decisions” and is “responsible” (Angra, 2018).

H: Oui, alors vous essayez de dire si cette organisation m'a aidé à atteindre mon potentiel ou à me sentir fort en moi? Ouais, je peux dire oui. La FESCI m'a appris à parler en public, à vivre avec différentes personnes qui ont différents niveaux d'éducation, qui voient les choses différemment, la FESCI m'a appris à assembler, m'a appris à être un meilleur négociateur. Moi, par exemple, pendant l'interruption, j'ai fait une formation au CERHAP, où j'ai appris les techniques de négociation, mais à la FESCI on enseigne comment négocier, comment traiter avec l'administration, comment traiter avec les deux entités, comment trouver des solutions pour mieux interagir avec les deux entités, donc il y a des choses que nous enseignons / apprenons à la FESCI que l'école n'a pas enseigné, donc je vais vous dire que la FESCI m'a appris beaucoup de choses (2018).

H: Yeah, so you are trying to say if this organization has helped me reach my potential or feel strong in myself? Yeah, I can say yes. FESCI has taught me how to speak in public, how to live with different people who have varying levels of education, who see things differently, FESCI has taught me to assemble, has taught me to be a better negotiator. Me, for example, during the crisis, I did a training at the CERHAP, where I learned the techniques of negotiation, but in FESCI we teach how to negotiate, how to deal with the administration, how to deal with the two entities, how to find solutions to better interact with the two entities, so there are things that we teach/learn at FESCI that the school has failed to teach, so I will tell you that FESCI has taught me a lot of things (2018).

Do not get it twisted, this assumption of leadership and ownership, did not come without benefits for Fescists. Despite their attempts to distance themselves from their past, Fescists were still eager to mention that several high ranking members of the government were “trained” by FESCI. This was unlike any other school. And it was why

it seemed to be the end goal for many members: stay in “training” until a political or another adjacent prominent opportunity arose. Is it no wonder that once his tenure was complete Fulgence Assi became executive director of a non-profit student movement?

FESCI has bragging rights. It trains the future leaders of Côte d’Ivoire and continues to do so. There is a sense of pride and ownership when Siaba relates to me just how influential membership in FESCI can be. Some of their members have risen to become president of the National Assembly, Minister of Youth and Sports; some of them have been tried for crimes against humanity and others have been president of the country. It is a sordid path to greatness, but a path nevertheless. It is no wonder many young people are drawn to the organisation and the allure of grandeur. I wanted to better understand what Siaba meant by the sense of identity and personality that FESCI provided. Was it an identity and personality seeped in the allure of grandeur or in service to community? Here is what Siaba had to say:

SIABA: Oui, oui, pour moi, oui. Parce que quand vous voyez le paysage politique des organisations de jeunesse, vous verrez que ce sont tous des gars de la FESCI, que vous parliez de ceux du PDCI, du RDR ou du FPI, de l'UDPCI, ce sont tous des gars qui ont rejoint la FESCI, cette organisation de jeunesse avec des tendances politiques. Donc, oui, la FESCI a joué un rôle dans leur autodétermination. La FESCI a permis aux jeunes Ivoiriens d'avoir une identité certaine / spécifique, d'avoir une personnalité. Avant de rejoindre la FESCI, ils viennent dire qu'ils veulent cultiver ou travailler leur personnalité / identité, par exemple, comment s'adresser à une assemblée, parler en public, comment, avant tout cela, juste pour devenir mature. Alors oui, il y a une petite partie de la FESCI qui promeut l'autodétermination, et elle a joué un grand rôle (2018).

SIABA: Yes, Yes, for me, yes. Because when you see the political landscape of youth organizations, you will see these were all FESCI guys, whether you talk about those in PDCI, RDR, or FPI, UDPCI, these were all guys who joined FESCI, this youth organization with political leanings. So, yeah, FESCI played a role in their self-determination. FESCI allowed for young Ivorians to have a

certain/specific identity, to have a personality. Before, they join FESCI they come saying that they want to cultivate or work on their personality/identity, for example, how to address an assembly, public speaking, how to, before all that, just to become mature. So yeah, there is a little part of FESCI that promotes self-determination, and it has played a big role (2018).

Was this self-determination a result of FESCI or its political affiliation? What did it mean, then, when they brought up the concept of *ivoirien nouveau*? Was it all in practice to govern or to work for the community? Were those things mutually exclusive? Trying to understand FESCI's leadership and identity formation was difficult when attempting to reconcile its past. It did not help that when it came to leadership and training, politics seemed to color the conversation. Whereas YEM members were quick to distance themselves from politics, FESCI still struggled. While on the one hand they railed against the leadership for perpetuating the status quo, on the other hand, their most influential leaders were members of the government whose methods they seemed to have adopted.

ANGRA:... Nous sommes en Afrique, tout commence par la politique, aujourd'hui, à part le président Félix Houphouët BOIGNY, le président GUEI Robert, je peux dire que tous les présidents qui ont succédé ont milité à la FESCI. D'abord quand tu rentres à la FESCI, tu as, c'est comme... Tu es protégé et ça te permet de prendre la parole en devant tes amis, d'être responsable parce que si tu vas faire lancer une information en amphi, tu vois, tu es confronté à plusieurs regards, donc, donc du coup, déjà ça te motive. Bon, aussi la FESCI, par exemple, je peux citer comme le président Laurent GBAGBO qui était l'un de leader de la FESCI, Monsieur Charles Blé GOUDÉ, SORO Guillaume, et plein d'autres..., tout ceux-là ont milité à la FESCI (2018).

ANGRA: ...We are in Africa, it all starts with politics, today, besides President Félix Houphouët BOIGNY, President GUEI Robert, I can say that all the successive presidents were FESCI activists. First when you join FESCI, you have, it's like... You are protected and it allows you to speak in front of your friends, to be responsible because if you are going to relay information in the amphitheater, you see, you are confronted in several respects, therefore...that already motivates you. Well, also FESCI, for example, I can say like President Laurent GBAGBO

who was one of the leaders of FESCI, Mr. Charles Blé GOUDÉ, SORO Guillaume, and many others..., all of them were Fescists (2018).

Just as Angra (2018) mentioned earlier, FESCI was like a family and when you were in the family, there was a sense of protection and safety. One felt emboldened to speak in front of a large group of students, to protest the administration, to demand from leadership, and to challenge. This was the new Ivorian that FESCI supported, one that both fought for students rights and yet hindered their progression. Though the participants I spoke with tried to tell me that FESCI was changing, when I would probe further, it was revealed to me that change was hard to come by when the status quo was so lucrative.

FESCI has experienced a contentious past and is still trying to reconcile its image today. Though there have been documented gains made, the organization is still struggling with its identity. Are they a student movement working for students' rights, or are they a recruiting entity for political organizations? Had I been played by their words of change and liberation? Moreover, whose liberation were they fighting for and from what?

Conversely, leadership, language and identity form the basis of YEM's Hip-Hop pedagogy as a means of engaging young people throughout Senegal and sub-Saharan Africa. Championing Hip-Hop culture and advocating its dominant ideal of knowledge of self, "overstanding," and *keepin it real*, YEM embraces an authentic engagement that celebrates Wolof, a new type of Senegalese, and an understanding of ownership. Recognizing their colonial past and continuous colonial reliance, YEM is clear that they favor true ownership of Senegal and Senegalese resources. In so doing, their panafrican

ideal, similarly upheld by the Universal Zulu Nation, is a means to “build” a new Africa, or as Césaire (1939) imagined a cultural bridge, and Adjirakor (2017) calls the “African City.” This is an Africa that is not traced by arbitrary colonial borders, nor is it linguistically manipulated or economically dependent.

Concluding Discussion

When considering the ways in which FESCI and YEM have used Hip-Hop to organize and engage young people, what we see is an ideology that centers authenticity and ownership in their promotion of leadership, identity formation, and linguistic expression. Hip-Hop is about authenticity, *keepin it real* and “being true to the local.” This idea of authenticity, Magro (2016) argues, “is linked to specific linguistic varieties” and thus, “membership in a global community of style may have as much to do with ideologies of language and transidiomatic practices” as it does with local musical, artistic, and linguistic forms (p. 18).

Within this ideology of authenticity, the two organizations diverge in how they convey their message. Both organizations maintain they are influenced by the likes of Sankara, Lumumba, and Nkrumah, but how they embody these ideals vastly differs. YEM is vocally apolitical, nonviolent and embodies a conscious Hip-Hop; an old school concept many adherents fear has been sidelined. FESCI claims to be apolitical and nonviolent but their history and current state of affairs bring that into question. Their form of engagement takes on political leanings, infuses Zouglou, and is laced with a bit of quid pro quo to ease action. And yet, young people are drawn to both these organizations in much the same way. YEM and FESCI fight for young people and

confront injustice, yet one promotes consciousness and panafricanism, the other promises a seat in government. Both have achieved results in varying ways.

In examining YEM and FESCI and their use of Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool for engagement, educators and policymakers must contend with the macro and micro queries that inform local, lived experiences of Africa's most powerful demographic, young people. What then, can the education and political sector offer to promote peace education, counter extremism, and advance civic engagement? In looking at its appeal, transformative nature, and engaging aspect, a critical Hip-Hop pedagogy may be an answer. Why? As we have seen Hip-Hop pedagogy builds on Touré's (forthcoming) transnégritude and Mignolo's (2003; 2009) epistemic disobedience. It considers the lived experiences of those coming from a shared struggle, it affirms and weaponizes Blackness and authentic Ivorian or Senegalese expressions as tools for resistance, and finally, it forefronts Ivorian/Senegalese ways of knowing, promotes leadership and identity formation.

CHAPTER 7

SLAP THEM UP: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The greatest threat to political stability, security, and economic growth in West Africa is ignoring the valuable asset that is young people. Research expounds on the lack of opportunities for youth, who are disillusioned, idle and left to question the benefits of gaining an education (Abbink, 2005; Gavin, 2007; Gow & Dijkhoorn, 2013). Due to limited resources, students have few options upon leaving school. Senegalese journalist and organizer Fadel Barro framed this dilemma as, “Y’en a Marre or Boko Haram,” civic organizing or radical extremism.⁸ Though often we tend to hear of an “easily duped” youth population (Lambert, 2016), what this study has shown is that young people “struggling against the neo-colonial stage of imperialism” have chosen to mobilize and engage in an authentic, Hip-Hop pedagogy that espouses leadership and transformation.

Consider for example, the recent release of the African Youth Survey (2020) which, despite recognizing the challenges young people face on the continent, noticed a “trend of ‘Afro-optimism’ among young people in Africa” (Kazeem, 2020; AYS, 2020). The study found that young people of today are “self-starters, pan-African, digital and media savvy, tolerant but mindful of the challenges that could blight their ‘African Century,’ such as corruption, the lack of new jobs, limited start-up capital, water scarcity,

⁸ <http://www.france24.com/fr/20160123-entretien-fadel-barro-senegal-macky-sall-civisme>

fake news, terrorism and poor education systems” (AYS, 2020). This “Afro-optimism” as described by the survey is “driven by a strong sense of individual responsibility, entrepreneurship and confidence in an African identity” (Kazeem, 2020; AYS, 2020). The influence and notoriety of organizations such as Y’en a Marre and FESCI, illustrate the impact of a critical Hip-Hop pedagogy delinking from neocolonial realities, and promoting a new shared identity that encourages leadership and autonomy.

Summary of key findings

When considering the ways in which FESCI and YEM have used Hip-Hop to organize and engage young people, what we see is the shared experience of *lost*, *abandoned*, or *sacrificed* young people who adopted a cultural expression and aesthetic to challenge their circumstances. In doing so, Hip-Hop has become not only a vehicle of expression but an educative tool that challenges schooling, encourages socialization and citizenship building; promotes authenticity and employs that sentiment and praxis through language, identity formation, and leadership training. Through pedagogic concerts, workshops, and music, young people in Abidjan and Dakar are creating spaces of autonomy and engagement that speaks to the delinking notions of Mignolo’s (2009) epistemic disobedience and the “multiple roots [of Blackness]...articulating conditions of people trapped in errant circuits,” that Touré (forthcoming) puts forth as transnégritude.

As we appreciate the dynamic and divulging ways in which FESCI and Y’en a Marre were created, my investigation illustrated the varied ways in which FESCI and YEM are caught within, what Ngugi (1980) calls the struggles against the neocolonial stage of imperialism. These two organizations represent a generation of young people who are considered lost, sacrificed, and/ or abandoned (Schumann, 2012; Appert, 2016;

Lambert, 2016). These young people were let down by the political and socioeconomic consequences of neoliberal agendas that saw a decrease in public spending leading to the deterioration in the standard of living (Schumann, 2012; Lambert, 2016; HRW, 2008). FESCI and YEM grew as a challenge to these broken promises, as a counter to the old political system and a schooling alternative whose graduates have been formidable.

Through their adoption of a critical Hip-Hop pedagogy FESCI and YEM have engendered an identity and consciousness that is authentically Ivorian or Senegalese. YEM and FESCI approach Hip-Hop and Zouglou in much the same way; birthed from a shared struggle and voicelessness (Gueye, 2013; Lambert, 2016; HRW Report, 2008; Clark 2018; Haupt, 2008). Hip-Hop is adopted and remixed to suit cultural contexts and becomes a tool of expression and mobilization through Wolof in Dakar and Nouchi in Abidjan. Through pedagogic concerts, workshops, and social media YEM and FESCI challenge the concepts of school and its purposes (Jenkins, 2013; Seidel, 2011; McMannon, 1997). Given their global reach, these two organizations provide a pan-African outlook albeit diverging approaches to the conditions of young people throughout the continent (Hie, 2018; Fadel, 2018). Clark (2018), Pennycook et al., (2009), and Chang (2006) speak of the transversal relationship of Hip-Hop in Africa and in the U.S., a connection that has crossed oceans and influenced a “global African population (Clark, 2018, p. 9; Chang and DJ Kool Herc, 2005).

Keeping in mind Touré’s (forthcoming) transnégritude and his notion of the “multiple roots” of Black identities and expressions, what we see in the utility of Hip-Hop as pedagogy when utilized by YEM and FESCI is a call for linguistic, social, and leadership autonomy that speaks to the neocolonial struggles they must navigate within

this current stage of imperialism (Ngugi, 1980). The multiple roots of identity, sociopolitical context, music, and language are “concomitantly deconstruct[ed] and reenacts the ongoing co-construction of an ostracized self and fearless other” (Touré, forthcoming, Mignolo, 2009).

Theoretical and methodological implications

Throughout this essay I employed Touré’s (forthcoming) concept of transnégritude and Vavrus and Bartlett’s (2017) Comparative Case Study (CCS) methodology. In doing so, I wanted to recognize the fluidity and multiscalar approach in conducting a wide, complex, and intersecting research study. For this study, transnégritude, “echoes the notion of transversality of négritude...the temporal (transgenerational) for one and the spatial for the other,” and as such provides an extensive analysis of young people navigating postcolonial diasporic realities (Touré, p. 15). Hip-Hop as a transnégritude concept then falls not only within diasporic narratives but clearly possesses multiple roots and identities as manifested in culturally specific contexts. Vavrus and Bartlett (2017) recognize comparative case study’s fluidity and its inability to be boxed in. As noted, they speak to falling into the “transversal” to reckon with all aspects of the study and recognize the macro; the sociopolitical contexts of Abidjan and Dakar, the glocal, and how Hip-Hop is approached by YEM and FESCI, and micro; its employment as a tool for socialization, identity formation, leadership, and linguistic autonomy.

This study therefore provides researchers with a larger theoretical and methodological framework in the fields of critical research, Hip-Hop pedagogy, development studies and comparative education. At its core, this investigation considers

how young people can and should influence policies on education and social change. Accordingly, we must take on a holistic or what Vavrus and Bartlett (2017) call a “multiscalar” approach to the policy process that considers power, human agency, culture, and social structures (Shah, 2011).

The use of transnégritude, civic education, epistemic disobedience, and comparative case study allows us to consider how these multiscalar processes interact, change, and reproduce society so that we can better examine the lived experiences of young people and link them to larger social structures. The differences I highlight as to how YEM and FESCI choose to mobilize and engage is emblematic of Ngugi’s (1980, 1987) sociopolitical discourse on decolonial struggles as he clearly highlights in *Devil on the Cross* and vividly details in *Decolonizing the Mind*. The lure of political power, financial gain, and renown while ensuring international financial support is highlighted and nuanced through YEM and FESCI as they promote their mission and goals.

Policy implications

Citizenship education has become an important feature for many countries, it is viewed as an “opportunity to begin preparing young people for their understanding of, and involvement in, the civic life of their community” (Evans, 2007, p. 272). When it comes to policy implications, we must consider not only the opportunity source that is young people, but also forefront their epistemologies, recognize their lived realities and be sensitive to their goals. It is necessary to understand sociopolitical and economic variances within Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire, as well as the ways in which this impacts young people. Though current policies highlight holistic approaches to promoting peace, citizenship, or countering violent extremist education, they tend to overlook the voices of

the young people they are seeking to develop and moreover, diminish their optimism. During my time as an intern at UNESCO, I often worked on projects and workshops that aimed to promote the organization's Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Citizenship Education campaign. We worked with prestigious institutions in the U.S. to develop curricula that would promote peace education, collaborated with international and local consultants and met with various ministries. What was missing, usually, was the active participation of young people and/or organizations who could address, challenge, and benefit from these policies.

Evans (2007) approaches the study of citizenship education from a "worldmindedness and holistic understanding, multiple and cosmopolitan citizenship, and action for justice (p. 277-279). This is a point he hopes will entice those working in International Development Agencies, Non-governmental Organizations, and other agencies/organizations to view young people as an opportunity source who are "taking on the work that governments and social institutions are meant to do without adequate resources but with great creativity (Strong, 2020 as quoted in Kazeem, 2020).

As such, it is imperative we forefront the voices and experiences of youth and activists as one of the tools to determine policy changes and international aid. We should, as Bishop (2011) says, position our approach to policy to "operationalize self-determination," to encourage optimism, leadership, and entrepreneurship (p. 21). This is necessary if we are to consider how these "diasporic educational spaces" disrupt notions of identity and provide spaces for counter-narratives and knowledge-making that go beyond accepted norms (Shirazi, 2019). Engaging with processes of identification and civic education in west Africa provides nuance to the field of comparative and

international education and may provide a glimpse to understand how “educational practices and spaces are implicated in articulating” identification, belonging and agency (Shirazi, 2019, p. 498).

Civic education, in the context of the global South, is more about “the right to have rights” rather than about individual rights, which may produce uneven outcomes but can also build “crucial practices of resistance” to unresponsive states (Lieres, 2014, p. 49). Citizen action, Lieres continues, speaks to those moments whereby people mobilize to confront the state not as individuals but as ‘rights-demanding citizens with public claims’ (p. 50). This form of engagement as illustrated by YEM and FESCI is rarely straightforward and its efficacy is never guaranteed. As I noted in Chapter 2, organizations such as YEM and FESCI face a “possible disjuncture” between the practices of democracy and advocacy and the realities of clientelism, patronage and authoritarian politics (p. 52). This forces us to consider the ways in which YEM and FESCI navigated these very real challenges.

Through the lens of Hip-Hop, we can consider how YEM and FESCI face the dichotomy between democracy and clientelism. Pennycook (2007), acknowledges that the Hip-Hop concept of “keepin’ it real” represents the “quest for the coalescence and interface of ever-shifting art, politics, representation, performance and individual accountability that reflects all aspects of youth experience” (p. 103). Pennycook views authenticity as a “dialogical engagement” with the community. Authenticity, Pennycook surmises, cannot be defined without the relational social context, moreover, authenticity goes beyond the self and instead is about “being true to ourselves, is recovering our own ‘sentiment de l’existence’ then perhaps we can only achieve it integrally if we recognize

that this sentiment connects us to a wider whole” (p. 103). Within the global context, civic education and keepin’ it real is about defining the Self while recognizing and understanding the relationship of the Self to the larger context (p. 104). Through this lens of consciousness, self-determination and autonomy, developing tangible and pertinent policies that center young people can be a powerful tool.

Programmatic implications

This analysis hopes to contribute to programs that highlight youth empowerment, peace education, and alternative schooling when developing policies and programs on youth education. Acknowledging the role young people play in the evolution and reconstruction of their communities engenders a consideration of their impact vis-à-vis international development. Take for example UNESCO’s (2019) report on “Strengthening the rule of law through education: a guide for policymakers,” which was developed to assist policymakers and educational professionals in developing policies and programs that promote the rule of law through education and to fill the knowledge gap between the education and international sectors. As a result, the guide attempts to provide opportunities for the education sector to “leverage its transformational power” to encourage and support young people to be positive, active members of society (p. 9).

The role of education within international development challenges us to consider the purpose of schooling and development. The UNESCO (2019) report calls for a holistic and inclusive approach to encourage teachers, parents, cultural leaders, government institutions, etc., to encourage engagement and understanding of the rule of law and other human rights endeavors. What an engaged pedagogy such as Hip-Hop can do is provide the tools for self-actualization and consciousness raising, which can have

dramatic impact for a disenfranchised yet optimistic youth population. This is crucial if we are to implement educational initiatives in regions to curtail the influence of extremism and instead engage young people to be an effective population in fighting for political and economic stability. The global movement towards citizenship education carries with it important comparative lessons, first, it brings with it a transnational, alternative educational thought. And, this transnational alternative educational discourse contributes to the evolving discussions of democratic education and engagement (Levinson, 2005, p. 337).

Limitations and recommendations for future research

This analysis contributes to discussions centering Hip-Hop pedagogy, comparative studies, and youth engagement in West Africa. However, given the scope and diversity of subjects, I recognize the limitations in this study. Moving forward, my goal is to further develop discussions on women and their role in YEM and FESCI, student perceptions of these organizations, and nuances between Hip-Hop and Zouglou.

Given that YEM and FESCI are mostly male dominated organizations, I naively did not anticipate the role of women in these organizations and their impact. My goal is to further delve into the role of women in these organizations and provide a comparative analysis of their seeming invisibility yet prowess, much like women in the civil rights movements. Why?

When I brought up the role of women in Y'en a Marre or FESCI, our conversations further cemented the ways in which Hip-Hop culture is still contending with how to recognize and validate women. Our discussions further challenged how Hip-Hop is viewed as both oppressive and empowering (Petchauer, 2009; Rose, 1994).

Women within these organizations occupied a very interesting role. There were very few women in the core leadership of YEM, but many were involved in the *esprits*, local branches throughout the country. When I probed further, I was told that this was due to the “African mentality” that still relegates women to the household, but, Sophie, would state, things are changing. She continues:

Sophie :c’est la..., non c’est, ça c’est la mentalité africaine. C’est carrément africain, parce qu’en Afrique, les femmes, c’est au foyer, la cuisine, le ménage, les enfants, et ce sont les hommes qui vont au boulot, qui ont le droit de dire ceci, qui ont le droit de voilà, crier leur rôle et tout, la femme elle est soumise. C’est ç la mentalité africaine, mais on voit que, au fil du temps, on voit qu’il y a un réel changement, on voit des femmes qui s’activent de plus en plus, qui sont au-devant de la scène, qui prennent des décisions et tout çaje crois qu’il y a un réel changement ... (2018).

Sophie: this is the ..., no it is, this is the African mentality. It's downright African, because in Africa, women are at home, cooking, cleaning, children, and it's men who go to work, who have the right to say this, who have here it is, shouting their groans and everything, the woman is submissive. This is the African mentality, but we see that, over time, we see that there is a real change, we see women who are getting more and more active, who are at the forefront, who make decisions and all that.... I believe there is a real change... (2018).

When I asked about the role of women in YEM, participants were quick to mention that they recognized this “weakness” but stated that this was due to “sociological factors.” Fadel told me, “What is certain is that for me the participation of women in public action is one of the great weaknesses of our societies. There is no exception. It’s a great weakness, you have to recognize it and work on it. But it is also linked to several sociological factors...” (Fadel, 2018). Sophie reiterated this and went further noting that the nature of their organization; the protests, the perceived aggression, parents did not want their daughters associated with this. Moriba and Sophie argue further that this is due

in part to sociological factors that perpetuate the submissive role of women (Moriba, 2018; Sophie, 2018; Fadel, 2018). YEM has tried to boost women in leadership roles-- Sophie, Fadel added, was too shy and chose to stay in the background--but they actively wanted to change this. At FESCI, the narrative was a bit more complex.

When I attended FESCI's General Assembly, I often saw a group of women sitting together, at times equally vocal other times sitting calmly looking on. They were known as "amazons," by Fescists and they were FESCI's female "soldiers," who bring a "gentle and kind" approach to their activism (Siaba, 2018). Siaba and Angra both spoke to me about Amazons and their essential role in FESCI. But, whenever I tried to approach them or interview them, I was told I had to go through FESCI's leadership to get access to them. After several attempts, my access to the amazons proved to be unsuccessful. This made me question just how autonomous and vocal these women really were. According to Angra, amazons also organized activities and utilized their position in FESCI to report any unwanted "male coercion" (Angra, 2018). FESCI may have been proud of their female representation but given their barred access, I was left to mull over Sophie's words on the current accepted roles for women.

SIABA: Il faut dire que les amazones sont un bras militant de la FESCI. Oui, outre le fait que ce sont des femmes, c'est pourquoi nous les appelons des amazones, il n'y a pas de différence entre ce qu'elles font et les hommes. Ouais. Avec les Amazones, vous savez que partout où il y a une femme, il y aura une touche de douceur / gentillesse, l'approche sera différente. On peut dire que les hommes sont violents, mais quand vous venez, vous vous approchez d'une femme membre de la FESCI cela vous fera un peu hausser les sourcils. Oui, donc il y a des filles qui jouent un rôle important. En fait, cela a donné aux gens une autre impression de la FESCI, une autre impression...(2018).

SIABA: It should be said that the amazons they are a militant arm of FESCI. Yeah, besides the fact that they are women, which is why we call them amazons,

there is no difference between what they do and the men. Yeah. With the Amazons, you know that wherever there is a woman, there will be a touch of gentleness/kindness, the approach will be different. We can say that men are violent, but when you come, you approach a woman who is a member of FESCI it will make you raise your eyebrow a little bit. Yeah, so there are girls who are, who play an important role. In fact, it gave people another impression of FESCI, another impression...(2018).

The differences in engagement between these two groups exemplifies the contradictions inherent within Hip-Hop culture. In her seminal work on Hip-Hop culture, Tricia Rose (1994), presented the dichotomy of these “prophets of rage” who were at once marginalized, oppositional, and soldiers of social justice and also vulnerable to reiterating the eurocentrism, patriarchy, and sexism they are working against (Kun, 2002; Rose, 1994). This is made explicit when we look at the ways in which FESCI and YEM approach women and politics.

As much as FESCI members spoke of political autonomy, nonviolence, and women empowerment, they also revealed that their desire for autonomy conflicted with their political aspirations and the benefits they received as allies with political parties. Women in FESCI were relegated to the sidelines, confined to traditional gender roles. YEM, weary of “political games” was adamantly apolitical, nonviolent, and worked to promote gender equality. Though they may not have reached gender parity, their ongoing projects and protests, demonstrate their commitments to social consciousness and economic emancipation.

Moving forward, I wish to problematize Hip-Hop’s dichotomy as an engine for engagement and social justice but also a culture that marginalizes, deletes and mischaracterizes women’s role in black cultural production (Rose, 1994). Though as Davis (1990) asserts that any attempt to understand the “evolution of women’s

consciousness within the Black community requires a serious examination of the music which has influenced them--particularly that which they themselves have created” (Davis, 1990, as quoted in Rose 1994, p. 153). One can surmise that women were not only present but also made significant and meaningful contribution to the conceptualization and mobilization of these organizations, as university students on campus, at the genesis of Zouglou and FESCI much like Sophie was hanging with Fadel and who would later become the founding members of Y'en a Marre. And still, women's presence in both these organizations is minimal and their impact yet to be felt. When evoking the notions of “keepin’ it real,” Low et al., (2013) accepted the limitations within the “discourse of authenticity” among their case study. Utilizing Henry Louis Gates’ (1988) “trope of signifying,” Low et al., reconcile Hip-Hop’s ironic and satirical style to “celebrate the multiplicity and even chaos of meaning making” to further complicate the “notion of a static, knowable ‘real’” (Low et al., 2013, p. 133). Challenging and dissecting the multilayered approaches to Hip-Hop, women, and engagement in West Africa is crucial as we further understand this opportunity source.

Bearing in mind that FESCI and YEM are both young organizations, it is necessary to also consider perceptions of university students in general, especially those at Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) and Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny (UFHB), on YEM or FESCI, their approaches to Hip-Hop and/or Zouglou, and their lived experiences as it relates to the socioeconomic and political dynamics explained to me by Fescists and Yenamarristes. Clark (2018) considers the intersections between Hip-Hop and the migrant experiences of Africans in the diaspora. These are avenues I hope to

follow as I situate this discussion within the larger scope of comparative studies, Hip-Hop pedagogy, international development and education policies.

Final thoughts

A nuanced qualitative study of any group of people will always leave us with more questions than answers, more problems than solutions, and more frustrations than contentment. This is the struggle within the Comparative Case Study and a broad research that seeks to interpret the lived experiences of people through a critical Hip-Hop pedagogy. However, what this study has attempted to illustrate is that Hip-Hop pedagogy has engendered a sense of identity, ownership and leadership that cannot be stifled. We should consider the contributions of this young cultural expression just as we should elevate the conditions and resources of young people in West Africa who, despite grim statistics concerning population growth and infrastructure and policy development, remain “bullish” about their own prospects (Kazeem, 2020). Their time is now. Why not hear them out?

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