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Petchauer, Emery. (2012) *Hip-Hop Culture in College Students' Lives: Elements, Embodiment, and Higher Edutainment*. NY: Routledge.

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Reviewed by Margaret A. Swanson
Delta State University

Emery Petchauer is Assistant Professor of Education at Lincoln University and an active member of the hip-hop community. In his book, *Hip-Hop Culture in College Students' Lives: Elements, Embodiment, and Higher Edutainment*, he uses his dual roles (a professor who is a DJ and a DJ who is a professor) to explore and elucidate the world of hip-hop collegians, which he defines as “college students who make their active participation in hip-hop relevant to their educational interests, motivations, practices, or mindsets” (p. 7). Petchauer explains three ways in which hip-hop is becoming relevant to higher education — the formalization of hip-hop through courses,

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the production and preservation of hip-hop knowledge by higher education institutions, and the emergence of hip-hop on campus through students and student organizations. Despite the spread of hip-hop as a legitimate area of study and an important subculture, Petchauer argues there is an “inherent conflict between hip-hop and academe” and that hip-hop as a subculture is overlooked while other student groups are studied on campus, proving their importance to the campus culture (p. 5). His work is an attempt to bridge the disconnect between hip-hop and academe by proving that hip-hop has serious and beneficial applications to higher education. Petchauer uses interviews with hip-hop collegians at three different universities to fill a void of scholarship, giving a nuanced interpretation of how hip-hop affects college students’ lives.

Petchauer approaches his study from a broad worldview framework, giving him the flexibility to examine, interpret, and understand hip-hop without the restrictions of a single rigid theoretical perspective. He adds to the worldview framework a portraiture approach, “an artistic and scientific approach that guides a researcher to focus on people acting in context: the symbols, metaphors, and refrains they use to make sense of their everyday lives” (p. 9). This method allows Petchauer to shape the stories in the book, and create a story that extends beyond the text.

For his study, Petchauer chose three universities diverse in size, demographics, location, public/private, and on-campus/off-campus hip-hop scene. He situates each of the institutions and provides an overview of the students interviewed for this study. He acknowledges that the lives and experiences of the students he interviews are not identical to students currently sitting in college classes, but argues that there are present-day college students “who share some of the same sensibilities and experiences, and needs as the ones in this book” (p. 8). Petchauer’s ultimate goal is to examine how hip-hop exists in students’ lives and how they make it relevant to their education (p. 8).

In chapters three through six, Petchauer uses the material from his interviews to highlight the important role of hip-hop as applied to higher education by hip-hop collegians. He contends that hip-hop serves as a vehicle through which hip-hop collegians can understand as well as apply their experiences in higher education. Chapter three looks

at how and where hip-hop collegians create hip and hop, from an on-campus open mic night to an off-campus internet radio show. Petchauer maintains that the “underground” spaces where hip-hop collegians create and practice hip-hop are important to their educational lives. In the next chapter, the author examines the aesthetics of hip-hop collegians that they create in the “underground” and how they fit in or don’t with the rest of campus life. A large portion of this chapter is devoted to the conflicts experienced by two hip-hop collegians at the small, predominantly white, liberal arts college called Weston College. Petchauer argues that the conflicts arose because of “a deep cultural and philosophical conflict between the Eurocentric foundations of higher education and a more holistic, African-centered approach through hip-hop” (p. 59). In other words, hip-hop culture contrasted with that of Weston College. Petchauer highlights these aesthetic conflicts to urge campus personnel and administrators to question and understand how campus culture and the structures of higher education can hinder student learning.

In chapter five, Petchauer explores how students use hip-hop and its concepts to approach their education. The author defines terms like kinetic consumption, edutainment, and sampling, explaining that the ways in which hip-hop collegians apply these concepts creates a dynamic and engaged learning experience for the students. Petchauer wants campus personnel to acknowledge and explore how hip-hop can support learning. Chapter six examines how hip-hop imbues hip-hop collegians with certain critical perspectives, critical consciousness, and questioning discourse, which they bring to campus and apply to their studies. Petchauer urges administrators and faculty to consider how students “apply critical hip-hop experiences on campus,” especially given the distrust and skepticism many students hold for educational institutions (p. 105).

The book concludes with a model Petchauer presents as a means to understand the myriad ways in which hip-hop exists in college students’ lives and how administrators and campus personnel can interpret it to understand today’s hip-hop collegians. His guide also reflects a “hip-hop academic skill set,” where Petchauer explains how the three aspects of hip-hop culture — identity, aesthetics, and habits and practices — overlap and are applied to campus

settings (p. 110). He closes by urging campus personnel to take hip-hop seriously and move toward it, thus creating constructive ways for students to experience it on campus.

Petchauer's book offers important insight into how hip-hop collegians experience life on and off campus, and how it influences their education. His carefully constructed interviews and deep personal knowledge of hip-hop culture enable him to write a thought-provoking must-read for campus personnel directly involved with shaping how higher education influences student life and learning. Overall, Petchauer's work is solid, but there is one area that could be improved — sample size.

Petchauer's sample size is quite small. He interviews only fifteen students at three different universities: six at Colonial, six at Pacific State, and three at Weston. This is problematic at both a macro- and micro-level. In the larger picture, interviewing fifteen hip-hop collegians on only three campuses is a very small group from which to charge all institutions of higher education to consider how hip-hop impacts their student bodies. At the micro-level, individual examples that Petchauer uses are too small to be applied to all hip-hop collegians. There might be any number of hip-hop collegians who in no way relate to what Petchauer has garnered from the students he interviewed.

Despite this drawback, Petchauer's work is engaging and thought-provoking. He successfully demonstrates how hip-hop plays an important role in the lives of college students. Moreover, his study highlights an overlooked topic of scholarship—hip-hop as it pertains to students' lives. Administrators, faculty members, and other campus personnel would benefit from reading this book and applying it to the institutions where they work, creating a better, more diverse educational and cultural campus experience.

About the Reviewer

Margaret A. Swanson is the Instructional Resources Center Librarian at Delta State University. Her areas of interest include teaching, higher education, technology, 19th century British history, and women's and gender history.

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Editors

David J. Blacker

blacker@edrev.info

Gustavo Fischman

fischman@edrev.info

Melissa Cast-Brede

cast-brede@edrev.info

Gene V Glass

glass@edrev.info

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