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# Incorporating Community Cultural Wealth in a Community-Based Organization

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University of San Francisco

**Incorporating Community Cultural Wealth in a  
Community-Based Organization**

A Field Project Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in International Multicultural Education

By  
Henriette Ako-Asare  
May 2015

# Incorporating Community Cultural Wealth in a Community-Based Organization

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

by

Henriette Ako-Asare  
May 2015

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

Monisha Bajaj

May 3, 2015

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

Throughout U.S. society, especially in educational institutions, people of color have often been described using a cultural deficit model. The cultural deficit theories, first developed in the 1960s, attribute underachievement of students from lower income communities and students of color to deficiencies within students and their families, cultures, and communities (Ladson-Billings, 2006). In particular, cultural deficit theories are used in an attempt to explain the academic underachievement of many Black students. The theories are rooted in “powerful historical, political, and social forces that developed and sustained a narrative of [B]lack inferiority, which most recently has manifested itself in the form of an ‘achievement gap’” (Horsford & Grosland, 2013, p. 154). Cultural deficit theories stresses racial/ethnic minority students do not achieve as well as their White peers in school and life because their family culture is inherently dysfunctional and lacks important characteristics compared to the White American culture (Horsford and Grosland, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006). In other words, the achievement gap is used to place blame on youth of color by using language that insinuates their failure to succeed can be blamed on individual and community limitations rather than structural critiques of oppressive systems.

Negative stereotypes as Horsford and Grosland (2013) put it, are like *badges of inferiority* that impact how youth of color are perceived, how they are treated, and also how they see themselves. They also state, “While some teachers are consciously working to remove badges of inferiority from their students, others are replacing those badges of inferiority with new ones” (p.159). In many cases, youth of color encounter resistance

from counselors and teachers when they try to enroll in honors and AP courses, advising that the content will be too challenging for them (Jayakumar et al., 2013). Furthermore, youth of color are often not provided the information and resources to ensure that they are on a path of academic and long-term success (Jayakumar et al., 2013).

As a woman of color, I am aware of the racism that exists in our society. However, as an early academic achiever, I was shielded from many of the cultural deficit attitudes since they did not apply to me, and I was treated as an exception. Nevertheless, I soon noticed how my friends and family members were immediately put into the category of the low achiever. I began to notice that some of my friends were not given information about college prerequisites, college preparatory programs, and other opportunities to pursue higher education.

One friend of mine, Richard, was a Black foster kid who was extremely artistic. Many of his past foster family experiences had been traumatic, but when we met, he was finally with a family that treated him with love and respect. Despite moving often due to his foster care reassignments, Richard had managed to get decent grades in school and was on track to graduate. As the college application process started, I asked him where he was planning to apply to college and if he wanted to go to an art school. He replied that he was not the college type and could not go even if he wanted to because he did not have family financial support and, therefore, could not afford to pay for it. I insisted there were resources and that he could go. Richard quickly shut me down telling me that his counselor had already told him he would be better off going to a trade school or getting a job after he graduated from high school. As I persisted in my attempts to seek out resources for him, I was disappointed that no one at our school cared and that they had

told him he should not even try to attend college. Richard's story is unfortunately one of many disheartening examples of the impact racism and cultural deficit theories have on youth of color.

I have seen firsthand, through my friends and through my family, how damaging cultural deficit theories can be to youth of color. I have seen too many people of color in my life feel that they did not have the potential to succeed in anything, and often that feeling either stemmed from or was reinforced in school. Harper (2008) notes, "It is reported that one's ability to acquire and activate social capital and leverage access to information networks has enduring economic implications" (p. 1034). Too many youth of color are not being given access to information. Consequently, they are suffering the consequences, both educationally and economically. This historical exclusion of youth of color in academic settings has also become more and more evident in the lack of youth of color pursuing studies in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).

As a Bay Area resident, I have witnessed the ever-evolving influence of technology, both in my personal life, and in my professional life. In many ways, technology has become another way to highlight the disparities between low-income communities of color and mostly White affluent communities and this newest gap has been coined as the *digital divide*. A consistent definition of the term has not been conceptualized since the first use of the term in the 1990s (Hilbert, 2011). However, for the purposes of this project, I use the definition coined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCED). The OCED defines the digital divide "as the gap between different individuals, households, businesses and geographical areas at different social-economic levels with regard to their opportunities to access IT and their use of the



Internet” (as cited in Kouadio, 2007, p. 1). As the Internet’s importance has transcended into all aspects of daily life, there has been a growing concern about the patterns of digital inclusion and exclusion across the population (Hargittai, 2003, p. 824). However, it is critical to note that while the digital world is not a level playing field, recent research shows that youth of color are in fact the most active mobile and social media users (Smith, 2014).

The lack of people of color in the technology industry has attracted increased attention and prompted community-based organizations like Hack the Hood, based in Oakland, California, to develop entrepreneurship, leadership, life and technological skills that are becoming increasingly necessary. Hack the Hood is an award-winning non-profit that introduces low-income youth of color to the technology ecosystem by hiring and training them to build websites for small businesses in their own communities. Hack the Hood, founded in 2012 aims to address the cultural deficit theories that low-income youth of color face by teaching youth skills that empower them to be viewed as valuable community members. Hack the Hood builds on the *community cultural wealth*, a concept elaborated by scholar Tara Yosso (2005) to highlight the strengths in communities of color, the youth bring into the program and simultaneously addresses the lack of access to information and opportunities these youth have by introducing them to an ecosystem they have largely been excluded from. Because of the success of Hack the Hood, it is imperative to highlight the ways it is engaging low-income youth of color to challenge cultural deficit theories and empower themselves.

### **Purpose of the Project**

This project examines how Hack the Hood, a community-based organization is working with low-income youth of color to change these cultural deficit narratives by acknowledging and building on their community cultural wealth to acknowledge the resources marginalized communities bring to the educational process in and outside of schools (Yosso, 2005). By analyzing how Hack the Hood builds on the assets that low-income youth of color have, I highlight ways in which their curriculum is successful in increasing the types of community resources and *capital* youth build on in the program. The aim is that this analysis will provide other programs examples of how they can better integrate the community cultural wealth model into their work with low-income youth of color. The ultimate goal of the project is to provide other community-based organizations with tools to build different types of capital within the community cultural wealth model.

Additionally, I aim to highlight the unique aspect of Hack the Hood's interactions with low-income youth of color and with local small business. This model provides an intergenerational and broad community lens that I believe provides additional insights and lessons for other community organizations. While the real world learning and community focus are encompassed in the community cultural wealth model, it is also important to show the importance of building a bridge between various communities within the larger community.

### **Theoretical Framework**

For this project, I chose to use Critical Race Theory (CRT) and community cultural wealth as my theoretical frameworks. Both of these frameworks provide context for the challenges low-income youth of color are facing and also emphasize the need to

incorporate voices of communities of color to counter the dominant narratives. CRT is a critical examination of race and racism in society, rooted in legal studies (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Harper, 2008; Yosso, 2005). CRT was developed out of frustration that Critical Legal Studies did not adequately address the struggle of Blacks in the US in the post-Civil Rights era (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Howard, 2008; Yosso, 2005). Specifically, CRT in education, as defined by Leonardo (2013), “proceeds by unmasking apparently nonracial phenomena as precisely racial in their nature” (p. 19). There are five tenets of CRT:

*Centrality of Racism:* CRT’s core premise is the belief that race and racism are a normal, endemic part of US society that has been built into its foundation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Leonardo, 2013; Yosso, 2005).

*Interest Convergence or Material Determinism:* Another hallmark of CRT speaks to Derrick A. Bell’s theory that Whites will only support racial justice to the extent that they will also benefit. In layman's terms, Whites will only further racial equality if it happens to align with their own interests (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Leonardo, 2013).

*Race as a Social Construct:* Another core tenet of CRT is that as science has proven, race is a social construct and not a scientifically based fact. Thus, CRT scholars accept that while race is not based in scientific truth, the social adoption of race has created a social reality where people are treated differently based on the understanding of perceived racial differences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Leonardo, 2013).

*Intersectionality and Anti-essentialism:* While race is at the forefront of CRT, it also purposefully accounts for the intersections of other identities like sex, class, national origin and sexual orientation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2013). CRT scholars aim to take account of how multiple identities may be operating simultaneously (Ladson-Billings, 2013). On a related note, anti-essentialism speaks to the CRT perspective that one person may not represent everyone in his or her identity group, i.e. because one is Black does not mean that one perceives a situation the same as all Blacks.

*Voice or Counter-Narrative:* “Voice is the striving to exist in a condition wherein people of color struggle for human status” (Leonardo, 2013, p. 24). CRT scholars strive to change the dominant narratives that often only tell part of the story by incorporating counter-narratives, the stories of people of color that are often ignored or left out. Thus, storytelling becomes a powerful tool within CRT to provide a voice that illustrates racial justice principles (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

This CRT framework distinguishes CRT theorists from scholars who examine race as part of their work, but do not prescribe to the aforementioned tenets in their work.

CRT in education has been extremely useful “as an analytic tool for understanding school inequality” (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995, p. 48). CRT analysis has provided educators with an additional resource to disrupt race and racism in educational structures (Brown and Jackson, 2013; Howard, 2008; Yosso, 2005). In education, CRT can be a powerful tool used to examine education achievement inequalities from a context of racism; which often includes asking important questions about research variables and counter-narratives (Brown and Jackson, 2013; Howard,

2008; Ladson-Billings, 2006). CRT has provided scholars with language and tools that “refutes dominant ideology and White privilege while validating and centering the experiences of people of color” (Yosso, 2005, p. 74). I chose CRT as the main theoretical framework for my project because it is of extreme importance to me that the work I am doing is seen from the perspective that racism is enigmatic and that the voices of youth of color need to be validated and brought forth.

CRT scholars like Tyrone Howard (2008), Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000, 2006), Tara Yosso (2005), and Dolores Delgado Bernal (2002) have questioned whose culture has value in the US and whose does not. The work of theorist Pierre Bourdieu (year) was rooted in explaining the academic disparities between children from different social classes. He hypothesized that upper class children are born into families with greater cultural capital, thus allowing for greater social mobility. Bourdieu also noted children of lower class families lacked cultural capital, but could attain it through formal education. Yosso (2005) interprets his work as depicting, “White, middle class cultures as the standard, and therefore all other forms and expressions of ‘culture’ are judged in comparison to this ‘norm’” (p. 76). This concept has often been used to support deficit cultural theories about people of color *lacking* cultural capital and, therefore, being innately disadvantaged (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Donner, 2013; Gillborn, 2013; Horsford & Grosland, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Leonardo, 2013; Valenzuela, 1999; Wiggan, 2008; Yosso, 2005).

Yosso (2005) challenges the traditional application of Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory by providing an alternative concept, community cultural wealth. She outlines how CRT can be used as a lens to critique the historical application of deficit theories on

communities of color. Yosso examines how deficit theorizing is one of the major modern forms of racism in US schools today in that it blames students and families of color for their academic failures. This blame is generally rooted in the belief that students of color enter school without cultural capital and that families of color do not value academic success. Furthermore, Yosso focuses on how deficit thinking perpetuates racist stereotypes and allows educators to believe that the problem lies with communities of color and not with the education system.

In examining which skills are generally seen as valuable in educational settings, Yosso (2005) demonstrates that the cultural capital students of color bring to school is not recognized as having value. Yosso (2005) draws from the concept of wealth as outlined by sociologists Oliver and Shapiro (1995) to articulate cultural capital as one of many aspects of wealth. She builds on this idea of cultural capital being a portion of wealth by incorporating the work of anthropologists Moll and Gonzalez's (2004) "concept of 'funds of knowledge,' wherein marginalized communities bring with them a multitude of resources that schools ought to recognize and legitimize" (as cited in Leonardo, 2013, p. 20).

By applying the concept of "funds of knowledge" to CRT, the focus of value shifts from the normative White middle class culture to that of people of color. Yosso (2005) incorporates the work of scholars Delgado Bernal (1997, 2001); Auerbach (2001); Stanton-Salazar (2001); Solorzano & Delgado Bernal (2001); and Faulstich Orellana (2003) to postulate that CRT provides a lens that 'sees' various types of cultural wealth that communities of color nurture (as cited in Yosso, 2005). She uses this research to build on the CRT framework and to introduce the concept of community cultural

wealth, which becomes an umbrella for various types of capital that communities of color differentially possess and nurture. Yosso (2005) outlines community cultural wealth as a collection of the following: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital. Drawing from both Yosso's (2005) and Jayakumar et al.'s (2013) framework, a more in-depth analysis of the forms of capital ascribed to community cultural wealth follows:

*Aspirational capital* is the resiliency to hold on to hope for the future despite the reality of the grave inequalities communities of color face. Communities of color nurture this aspiration that it is possible to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals.

*Navigational capital* refers to the ability to negotiate systems that were not created for communities of color to prosper in. For example, communities of color cultivate skills and strategies to navigate schools and workplaces where they must negotiate microaggressions and discrimination.

*Social capital* speaks to the social support provided by one's social network and community. Communities of color have long created and maintained deep social networks to support one another.

*Linguistic capital* acknowledges the social skills that are built through communicating in more than one language and in different social contexts. An oft used example of linguistic capital is the child that acts as a translator for one's parents, providing a unique set of cross-cultural skills.

*Familial capital* refers to the cultural knowledge nurtured through kinship, which is an expanded sense of community beyond that of a traditional family.

*Resistance capital* refers to the ability to use negative stereotypes as fuel to resist the dominant narrative and as motivation to be successful. Jayakumar et al. (2013) specifically describes resistance capital as being able to “oppose the status quo and strive for success” (p. 569).

Together, CRT and community cultural wealth provide important context for this project. CRT has given my project deep historical context, while community cultural wealth has provided metrics to fuel the project.

### **Methodology**

The project used qualitative research methods to gather background information on Hack the Hood. Specifically, I interviewed the co-founders of Hack the Hood to better understand the context in which Hack the Hood was created. I used open-ended questions when I formally interviewed one of the co-founders, Mary Fuller, to get the origin story of Hack the Hood. During the hour-long interview with Mary, I recorded our conversation and took written notes for key points I felt were poignant and also topics I wanted to ask her for more information about. I then transcribed Mary’s responses and re-wrote them and incorporated them into Chapter III. I had more informal interviews with the other co-founders, Susan Mernit and Zakiya Harris to fill in additional information into Chapter III. After my initial draft was complete, I asked all three of the co-founders to review my draft and provide me with any feedback or edits. All of the co-founders were comfortable with the completed draft and I proceeded with the project.

The other major research source for this project was a document summarizing research on Hack the Hood’s program by the Winnow Research Studio in 2014. This research was made possible through a grant from the Workforce Accelerator Fund



through the California Workforce Investment Board with the goal of identifying new approaches for connecting disconnected youth to work. This human-centered research was the result of interviews with disconnected youth, Hack the Hood alumni youth, Hack the Hood staff and other community members. Given the extensive work of Winnow's research, it provided me with a significant base to apply the community cultural wealth analysis to.

### **Significance of the Project**

This project is aimed at a primary audience of educators and community organizers that are working with youth of color. This project is intended to provide educators and community organizers with an additional theoretical framework to apply to their praxis. The secondary audience of this project is low-income youth of color, as the aim of this project is how community programs can acknowledge and value the cultural assets they already possess. While this project has been written with educators and community organizers in mind, the intent is that young people of color will reap the benefits of this project.

Viewing low-income youth of color as inferior and not providing them with access to information and resources further stigmatizes them and minimizes their ability to navigate educational and career pathways. In order to address this issue, low-income youth of color must be provided an opportunity to participate in culturally relevant education and training that will provide them with the skills and tools needed to make informed decisions about their education and careers. Low-income youth of color specifically need access to information about STEM careers, educational pathways that lead to those careers, and navigational and social capital to pursue those pathways.

Without support, low-income youth of color are more likely to be unaware of opportunities and/or certain opportunities are unattainable without support. It is critical that youth are provided with culturally relevant tools as outlined by the CRT and community cultural wealth frameworks.

#### **Definition of Terms**

1. **STEM:** Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
2. **Disconnected Youth:** for the purpose of this project, this is defined as young people between the ages of 16 - 24 who are not currently employed full-time nor are they enrolled in school full-time.
3. **Digital Divide:** for the purposes of this project, I use the definition coined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCED). The OCED defines the digital divide “as the gap between different individuals, households, businesses and geographical areas at different social-economic levels with regard to their opportunities to access IT and their use of the Internet” (as cited in Kouadio, 2007, p. 1).

## CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

This literature review aims to examine counter-narratives to the cultural deficit language of the achievement gap by examining the positive impact community cultural wealth has on communities of color, specifically as it relates to education. The genesis of this literature review began after I read Ladson-Billings' 2006 AERA Presidential Address on changing the language of the "achievement gap" to an "educational debt." Her address was eye-opening and truly helped me understand and recognize how negative the language used to describe the disparities in standardized test scores between Whites and people of color. Reading Ladson-Billings' piece forced me to reflect on society's use of negative language when describing people of color's educational differences and also my own participation in perpetuating the deficit mode of thinking.

As a woman of color, I was particularly struck by how unaware I had been to conversations discussing all of the ways people of color do not "measure up" to White educational standards. As my journey of reflection continued, I made a conscious effort to examine the use of my own language and ways in which I could resist this predominantly negative rhetoric. Some time after this, I was introduced to Critical Race Theory and more specifically to Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model. Yosso's model not only informed my own awareness as a woman of color, but it has given voice to a powerful counter-narrative to the historical interpretations of cultural capital as coined by Bourdieu (1986).

This literature review explores literature associated with community cultural wealth and transformative resistance to social inequalities as it relates to education. Therefore, this review literature focuses the impact of community cultural wealth on youth in communities of color. The aim is to use the CRT framework and the community cultural wealth model to review literature that examines how various research on communities of color fits into Yosso's (2005) model. In closing, I will also examine recent social movements propelled by social media and sparked by students of color in higher education to examine how youth are using technology to build community cultural wealth across the country.

### **Community Cultural Wealth & Transformative Resistance**

Building on the understanding of what CRT is and how it has informed the view of community cultural wealth, as discussed in Chapter 1, the following literature review aims to highlight research that has been done on community cultural wealth and transformative resistance in various communities of color. While some of the literature reviewed focuses on specific communities of color, the intent is to examine how community cultural wealth is nurtured in different communities of color. This review aims to contrast several studies of communities of color to examine how their examples of capital compare and contrast with one another. A brief summary of each study reviewed will provide more detailed context prior to the analysis of their examples of capital.

The first study reviewed, Jayakumar et al. (2013), is one of the few studies that have been done which directly outlines the connection between a community program that builds community cultural wealth and the impact on the education trajectory for

students of color, specifically Black students. Jayakumar et al. (2013) demonstrate how the Young Black Scholars (YBS) program helps students build community cultural wealth and promotes critical consciousness, and empowers them during the college-going process through fostering transformative resistance. Jayakumar et al. (2013) demonstrate Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model by examining how YBS "served to value, leverage, and nurture community cultural wealth" (Jayakumar et al., 2013, p. 568). In examining the lived experiences and voices of Black student participants, their research is able to contrast the college support (or lack thereof) Black students receive at their schools with the community support they receive at YBS. In fact, student testimony articulated that YBS played a more significant role in the college-going process than their schools, families, or peers.

Of particular relevance is that the student sample was based on high achieving Black students in high resource school environments, which remains a demographic often overlooked in research (Jayakumar et al., 2013; Howard; 2008). This research context is of note due to the overall lack of studies on that demographic and the overall assumption that middle and upper class Blacks have less challenges accessing higher education pathways than lower class Blacks. As Ladson-Billings (2000) puts it, "Effective teaching of African American students almost always involves some recognition and attention to the ways that race and racism construct and constrict peoples' lives" (p. 461). To that point, Jayakumar et al.'s work not only highlights community cultural wealth, but also recognizes the need for programs that build cultural capital and provide Black students at all economic levels with access to it.

By examining this research clearly connected to community cultural wealth model, it became evident that other research on Black high achievers had examples of community cultural wealth without labeling it as such. In the second study, Harper's (2008) research on high-achieving African American male undergraduates focuses specifically on the impact social capital has had on their success. Harper (2008) cites Yosso's community cultural wealth model, but his research focuses specifically on social capital as defined by Bourdieu's social capital theory; though he purposefully rejects the oft-cited cultural poverty framework associated with it. Harper's (2008) qualitative study of 32 successful Black male undergraduates from six different campuses provide specific insights to the impact of social capital, but also gives clear examples of other types of capital referenced in the community cultural wealth model.

Another area of research around academic success in the Black community specifically examines the role of social capital at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). As in Harper's (2008) work, the third study by Palmer and Gasman (2008) focus on social capital, but use language that clearly falls into the CRT framework of the community cultural model. Palmer and Gasman's (2008) qualitative study also focuses on high achieving Black males college students; however their participants are exclusively from one HBCU. The findings of the study focused how the relationships participants had on campus contributed to the participants' academic success.

In the fourth article, Burciaga and Erbstein (2012) focus their study on how *testimonios* from a group of six Latina/o high school "dropouts" highlight the community cultural wealth they contribute to their communities. Their analysis discusses specific examples from the participants' *testimonio* and how they align with the different types of

capital in community cultural wealth. Burciaga and Erbstein (2012) use the community cultural wealth model to highlight how the youth did not perceive their lack of high school completion as dropping out and in fact many of them displayed resistance capital to being labeled as dropouts. Many of the *testimonios* bring to the forefront the challenges they faced in their schooling experiences and their efforts being overshadowed by the challenges they faced.

The fifth study by Liou, Antrop-González, & Cooper (2009) provides an analysis of how Chicana/o and Puerto Rican high school students draw community cultural wealth from their community both in school and in church to sustain their college-going networks. Liou et al. (2009), similar to Jayakumar et al.'s (2013) study focuses on how low-income youth of color interact with their communities and the impact their community has on their college-going identity. Liou et al. (2009) bring attention to the strong relationship many communities of color have with church, a large community influencer that is not often referenced in community cultural wealth research.

### **Navigational Capital**

All the literature reviewed showed that navigational capital is often nurtured in similar ways across different communities of color. The main reference to navigational capital seen in the literature was how students were able to leverage their skills to locate resources, information, and key people in order to help them succeed in their desired educational pathway (Harper, 2008; Liou et al., 2009). One participant in Harper's (2008) research speaks addressed how he received this type of navigational capital from older Black students on campus and how, "Thanks to them, I know a lot more now about how to navigate this place and locate all of the resources need to be successful" (Harper, 2008,

p. 1041). This participant's quote speaks directly to Yosso's (2005) view that navigational strategies are needed by people of color to negotiate racist educational institutions and become high achieving students in spite of the obstacles of the system. This navigational capital was also referenced as the participants leveraged the skills they acquired navigating their campuses to applying and interviewing for jobs and post-graduate studies (Harper, 2008). These examples point to Williams' (1997) view that navigational capital "also connects to social networks that facilitate community navigation through places and spaces including schools, the job market and the health care and judicial systems" (as cited in Yosso, 2005, p. 80).

Jayakumar et al. (2013) and Burciaga and Erbstein (2012) both had different examples of navigational capital in their work. Jayakumar et al.'s (2013) participants highlighted how YBS provided them with the tools to navigate educational spaces and more importantly the reality of what it means to do so as a Black student. One participant referenced the preparation he received from YBS, "it's a common phrase, that when you're Black you have to be two steps ahead to be on the same level as everybody" (Jayakumar, 2013, p. 567). In contrast to Yosso's (2005) emphasis on navigational capital being a tool for sustaining high levels of achievement, Burciaga and Erbstein's (2012) participants demonstrate how they used their navigational capital to as a form of resistance.

One participant in Burciaga and Erbstein's (2012) study explained how he used his experience of navigating educational institutions to be an advocate for his younger brother who was being unfairly placed in a special education class due to a learning disability. The young man had learned that he had to be vocal with teachers and



administrators to get his brother out of a special education class. Since his parents could not be there due to work reasons, the young man navigated the system on behalf of them and his brother. This example does not completely negate Yosso's (2005) emphasis on achievement since the young man was successfully able to navigate the system on his brother's behalf, but it is also of note that the young man was not able to successfully navigate his education (high school) through to completion. This opens up an interesting area of research on how navigational capital is acquired and applied to other members of the community.

### **Aspirational Capital**

Most of the research reviewed referenced examples of aspirational capital in the context of educational and career aspirations (Burciaga and Erbstein, 2012; Jayakumar et al., 2013, Liou et al., 2009; Palmer and Gasmen, 2008). Jayakumar et al.'s (2013) research findings found that YBS provided students with aspirational (and social capital) by providing an environment where seeing themselves as college students was the norm, not the exception. In addition to the aspirational capital participants built on from their peers, Jayakumar et al. (2013) and Liou et al., (2009) also emphasize how access to social networks and college-attending role models in their community helped build on the participants' aspirational, familial, and social capital. Palmer and Gasmen's (2008) participants specifically highlighted the empowerment, encouragement, and high expectations they received from their social network at their HBCUs as contributing to their aspirational capital. They directly spoke to the impact it had on their own personal academic work, but also the impact of how they viewed their career and post-graduate trajectory.

### **Linguistic Capital**

Overall, the research reviewed had a good amount of overlap in the examples and how they related to the different types of capital; however, linguistic capital was one area where the research did not align as closely. Burciaga and Erbstein's (2012) participants' testimonios referenced how they built linguistic capital as they translated for their parents both in English and Spanish, and in one case to American Sign Language. Burciaga and Erbstein's (2012) participants built linguistic capital through translating in a variety of cross-cultural settings. Jayakumar et al. (2013) found that their participants built linguistic capital by learning how to be critically conscious and being able to name the oppression and inequities they faced. Liou et al. (2009) saw their participants building on their linguistic capital through their multi-cultural friend network. Many of the participants referenced how their friendships with peers from other cultures and language abilities provided them with linguistic capital in other situations they encountered.

### **Social and Familial Capital**

As Concha Delgao-Gaitan (2001) points out, "Families transcend the adversity in their daily lives by uniting with supportive social networks" (as cited in Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Since the literature reviewed showed a deep overlap between examples of social capital and familial capital, these two types of capital are analyzed together. Burciaga and Erbstein (2012), Jayakumar et al. (2013) and Liou et al. (2009) all provide examples of familial capital in the ways siblings, parents, and extended family members offered their emotional support, encouragement to persist, desire to make their families proud, and help with homework. In contrast, Harper (2008) and Palmer and Gasmen (2008) identify the emotional support of peers and faculty with the same descriptors of familial support,

showing how these other relationships often overlap as members of an extended family and social network.

Harper's (2008) findings begin with an examination of how social capital built on the participants' university campuses provided them with access to "key people and privileged information about scholarships, internships, awards, and various opportunities" (p. 1039). While Harper's (2008) example of social capital clearly could fall into Bourdieu's social capital theory, the differentiating factor that speaks to Yosso's community cultural wealth model is best expressed by the finding that participants gained access to this social capital directly through their older Black male peers, their community (Harper, 2008). This finding is extremely powerful and further substantiates the positive impact community cultural wealth has on the Black community as it relates to education. The participants in Harper's (2008) study also touch on the social capital in form of emotional support their community of peers provided them as they learned to navigate their campuses. The examples of emotional support the participants received clearly fit into the community cultural wealth categories Yosso (2005) describes as social, navigational, and familial capital.

As in Harper's (2008) findings, Palmer and Gasmen (2008) found that students referenced the empathy and support they experienced from their peers, faculty, and administrators as significant in their success. The type of support participants referenced fall into both social and familial capital as outlined by the work of Foley (1997) and Morris (1999) around communal bonds in the Black community (as cited in Yosso, 2005). "At the HBCU in this study, the depth of social capital includes the entire campus

community, which reinforces the adage that 'it takes a village to raise a child'" (Palmer and Gasmen, 2008, p. 65).

### **Resistance Capital**

Jayakumar et al. (2013) and Liou et al.'s (2009) participants both demonstrated transformative resistance in opposing the negative stereotypes of being low achievers through their intentional pursuance for academic success. This example aligns closely with Wiggan's (2008) analysis that, "rather than rejecting academic success, many students [of color] see high achievement as cultural agency and resistance against White supremacy" (p. 321). One unique finding in Jayakumar et al.'s (2013) work was that part of the participants' transformative resistance was rooted in their linguistic capital; which gave them the language and tools to address and name the inequality they experienced.

Harper (2008) also touches on the transformative resistance students built by actively participating and applying for opportunities presented to them via their community. This was further substantiated by the participants' acknowledgement that their experience as Black males was not the norm and that their out-of-class engagement in the high achieving community provided them with access to information they would otherwise not have been privy to. While this does also speak to the problematic aspects of inclusion and exclusion within the Black community, Harper (2008) purports this as an example of the need to more actively engage all Black undergraduates in high-achieving involvement both in and outside of the classroom.

As shown in the examples, the research that has been done on community cultural wealth model and the positive impacts on communities of color remains limited.

However the analysis of the literature shows that there are clear examples of the model in

other research on high achieving students of color that may not have framed their work through community cultural wealth. Also evidenced by the literature is the importance of having spaces that provide support, resources, and access to information and networks.

### **Community Cultural Wealth in Social Media**

In addition to the academic literature review of community cultural wealth, it is also essential to highlight recent youth-led social movements that have sought to build transformative resistance by providing counter narratives for people of color in higher education. The inclusion of these social movements serves to show how technology has contributed to demonstrating that community cultural wealth can build capital both in the micro community, but also in the macro community. The first of these social movements was the Being Black at University of Michigan Twitter campaign in 2013, which was prompted by the Black Student Union request to tweet to have Black students tweet about their experiences with the hashtag #BBUM (Lee, 2014). This campaign inspired the 2014 “I, too, am Harvard” photo and video campaign and also a play of Black Harvard University students raising awareness about their experiences.

The “I, too, am Harvard” campaign gave Black college students an opportunity to share their counter narrative and oppose the White student experience, which is often seen as synonymous with being a Harvard student. In addition, it helps create aspirational capital in the larger Black community by providing hope to others that they too, can be Harvard. The Harvard campaign not only sparked a national discussion about the experiences of students of color, it also inspired a larger campaign, now referred to as the “I Am” movement. The “I Am” movement sparked students at several universities both

in the U.S. and in the U.K. to create their own photo campaigns highlighting the experiences of students of color on their campuses.

In addition to the aspirational capital these campaigns built on, they also serve as examples of resistance capital. By providing a counter-narrative to what students at certain universities look like, as well as offering younger youth of color models of how to operate in higher education with assimilating or being silent about discrimination, students are actively working to resist the oppressive nature of those stereotypes. These counter stories are an essential part of critical race theory and are described by Ladson-Billings (2013), “Critical race theorists use storytelling as a way to illustrate and underscore broad legal principles regarding race and racial/social justice” (p. 42).

### CHAPTER III

#### THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

##### **Description of the Project**

This field project was designed to contribute to existing, but limited work on how community-based programs are combating culturally deficit narratives of youth of color by building on the community cultural wealth that they already possess. The project focuses specifically on the organization Hack the Hood to demonstrate how they are already using the community cultural wealth model in their work. The second part of the project provides an analysis of the types of capital Hack the Hood builds on in their curriculum. The third and final part of the project provides workshop outlines for organizations interested in building on specific types of capital with the youth of color they work with.

##### **Development of the Project**

The project was developed out of my interest in changing the cultural deficit narratives that are often associated with people of color. The negative stereotypes of people of color have bothered me my entire life, but recent events have exacerbated this desire to create change. As I delved deeper into CRT and the community cultural wealth model, I knew that I wanted to focus on the often-overlooked strength and positivity that communities of color possess. Simultaneously, I became more entrenched in the growing conversation around the lack of racial diversity in the technology industry and in STEM careers.

Around this time I began my job search in the education technology (EdTech) field, as I was hoping to find a way to apply my research interests and passion to create change in my professional life. I accepted a job at Hack the Hood and a few weeks in, I had an epiphany--the work that Hack the Hood is doing is a clear example of an organization that is recognizing the community cultural wealth that already exists and building on it. The more I thought about it, the more excited I became. I had not only found an organization I was passionate to work for, I had found an organization that is doing the work that I was so eager to bring to the forefront.

In the words of the great writer, Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Once you make a decision, the universe conspires to make it happen." When I first decided to focus my research on community cultural wealth, I had no idea that I would stumble across an organization that was already doing the work without having the terminology to call it that. I believe that the universe has conspired to bring me to Hack the Hood and it is my goal to help inform their work by contextualizing it within CRT and the community cultural wealth model. Ultimately, I hope that this project will result in more youth programs using the community cultural wealth model in their work with youth of color.

### **The Project**

Since my project is informed by the work that Hack the Hood has been doing, I feel that it is essential to provide some historical background on the organization and why its co-founders decided to create it. Through my conversations with the co-founders of Hack the Hood Susan Mernit, Mary Fuller and Zakiya Harris I was able to get a clearer understanding and context of why they founded it, what the original mission of the organization was, and how it has evolved into what is today.



### **Community and Historical Roots of Hack the Hood**

In order to understand how and why Hack the Hood started, it is important to tell the story of Oakland Local. Both Oakland Local and Hack the Hood are projects of the non-profit organization, Center for Media Change. One of the co-founders of the Center for Media Change, Susan Mernit, was deeply moved by the lack of inclusive media covering the 2009 police shooting of Oscar Grant in Oakland and the riots that followed. In order to address this inequity, Susan co-founded Oakland Local to “amplify and elevate the voices of the local community, which usually does not have an opportunity be represented in mainstream media” (M. Fuller, personal communication, February 3, 2015). Oakland Local was covering everything from education changes to the rapid expansion of the technology industry; however, they were also covering a great deal of negative things happening in Oakland; like the high unemployment rate and increased crime.

For Hack the Hood’s co-founder, Mary Fuller, the negative things that were happening in Oakland in 2009 directly correlated with the city’s history. She specifically attributes the shutdown of many Oakland factories in the ‘60s and ‘70s and the building of freeways in mostly Black neighborhoods as ways the Black population in Oakland was marginalized. Mary likens what happened in Oakland to a western example of the “Rust Belt,” the postindustrial economic decline that occurred in the Northeast and Midwest and caused urban blight. “Of course there are other factors as well, but those dynamics were definitely at play. These and many other factors resulted in a large scale drug cartel in Oakland and the associated issues” (M. Fuller, personal communication, February 3, 2015).

All of these historical events contributed to the jobs problem Oakland has and continues to face. Over the last six years, Oakland has been experiencing the reverse of White flight; largely the result of the influx of technology companies in the Bay Area and the high paying jobs they provide their mostly Caucasian employees. The inundation of technology money on the tail end of the Great Recession and the resulting gentrification have significantly impacted the widening income disparity in Oakland. These events were all happening around the time that Oakland Local was formed; as were several large Civil Rights cases against the police after countless victims of police brutality surfaced.

Susan was aiming to help combat some of these things by starting Oakland Local, but she started to feel that as much as journalism is critical to change, she wanted to do more. She began asking herself what are the skills that we have at Oakland Local that we could use to help narrow the income disparity and give people more opportunities for jobs. Susan reflected on what skills the Oakland Local team had: they knew how to build websites, marketing, how to run a business, and they had also been running journalism programs for youth, so they had experience working with youth. In addition, Susan also had a lot of experience with Google mapping, Google AdWords, and she had been doing different trainings to teach adults and youth how to do social media to promote their causes.

All of this collided together to become Hack the Hood, which is teaching technologically savvy youth how to build websites for small businesses so that youth can gain valuable technology skills and small businesses can stay competitive and not be pushed out through gentrification. Susan received some money from Google Ventures to do a pilot with adults. She had adult volunteers go door-to-door to speak with small

businesses in the Laurel District in Oakland to help get the small businesses on Google Maps and Places. This was also fueled by cell phone technology becoming increasingly affordable, moving cell phones from a luxury item to a widespread commodity. Yet, one could go to East Oakland and Google search for a service and none of the existing businesses would come up because they did not have an online presence. The businesses were in a transitional place as far as technology was concerned. Many of the entrepreneurs had owned their businesses for many years and had not previously needed a website because their customers did not have affordable access to the internet. Now there was a greater need to have a web presence, but many of the business owners did not have the technology skills to do anything about it.

As Susan led this pilot, she discovered the need to partner with local organizations in order to approach the small business owners with community-based legitimacy. Most of the small business owners were constantly being approached by people promising them free services, but turning around and charging them large fees. Susan was extremely well-connected so she worked with community organizations like the Laurel Improvement District. That fall, Mary joined Oakland Local and was largely working on a police brutality research project. However, Mary became interested in the work Susan was doing with the small businesses and soon shifted her time in order to apply for grant funding for that work.

Hack the Hood's third co-founder, Zakiya Harris, was also working at Oakland Local. She was working with Susan on a youth program called Education Voices, where they were teaching youth how to write stories and create their own websites on Wordpress. Susan had applied and received a grant from the California Endowment for

this work and brought in Zakiya, an Oakland native and long time educator. Zakiya's background and interest made her a clear co-founder for Hack the Hood.

Then, in 2013, Hack the Hood received the funding from the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY) and the Thomas J. Long Foundation. It was remarkable that Hack the Hood received the OFCY grant, because it was an extremely competitive grant to receive. The grant application had to spell out exactly what Hack the Hood planned to do during the boot camp, which forced the co-founders to sit down and talk about what they wanted to do and what it would take to produce it. Hack the Hood almost did not receive the money because they were a new organization and were seen as a departure from the OFCY's traditional grantees. However, the co-founders attended a meeting and a woman on the panel asked the committee why they were not looking at Hack the Hood. The woman highlighted that the program proposed that youth would be working directly with small businesses during the six-week boot camp, whereas many other programs provided training without the hands-on learning component. In the end, Hack the Hood did receive a small organization grant, which was a total of \$50,000 for three years. Hack the Hood received the funding a month before the proposed start date of the boot camp, so the team had four weeks to get everything done, including the curriculum.

The OFCY grant was a reimbursement grant, which meant that Hack the Hood had to pay for everything upfront and then apply for reimbursement. They were able to make it happen, but it was very challenging. Four weeks later,

Hack the Hood launched its first full summer program in Oakland in [July] 2013. 18 youth took part, ages 16-20. In six weeks, they learned basic web development skills, created 60 websites for local small businesses, and visited tech companies including Pandora, Facebook, and Ask.com, to learn about tech careers. Of the 18 youth, 16 completed the whole program — a 92% completion rate — and graduated with online portfolios, hands-

on experience with local employers, new skills, and, for many, a deepened interest in tech and marketing careers. (Mernit, 2014, para 1)

This is how Hack the Hood came to be the youth program it is recognized as today, working to teach low-income youth of color how to use technology to empower their community.

### **Program Goals and Curriculum Background**

The origin story of Hack the Hood is clearly rooted in cultural and community awareness, but I was curious how the curriculum of the boot camp program was created. According to Mary, the curriculum approach was largely informed by Susan's perspective that everyone has assets that they might not even be aware they possess, and the best path to help others succeed is by helping them build on the assets they already have. Through Susan and Zakiya's work with Education Voices and other projects, it was clear to them that many youth of color were high social media users. In 2014, the Pew Research Center released data supporting this notion, "Overall, 73% of Black internet users—and 96% of those ages 18-29—use a social networking site of some kind" (Smith, 2014, para 5). In addition, due to the growing affordability of cell phones, most Black youth were heavy mobile users, which the Pew Research Center also substantiates, "72% of all Blacks—and 98% of those between the ages of 18 and 29—have either a broadband connection or a smartphone" (Smith, 2014, para 6). The high cell phone usage of Oakland youth also pointed to the marketing need for local small businesses to have a web presence in order to stay competitive.

Most of the small businesses did not have a website and the ones that did have one, did not have a mobile-friendly website. This coupled with the high mobile usage of Oakland youth led Hack the Hood to focus on the findability, ease of finding a website's

content through search engines, for the small businesses. The intent was to create simple one-page websites that had the address, business hours, and other basic information of the business. The goal was that when local residents used Google search to find a service, all of the relevant local businesses would appear in the search results.

As far as the curriculum for youth, Hack the Hood had a high awareness around the disparities and gentrification that youth were experiencing in their communities. From the beginning, Zakiya addressed the lack of representation of people of color as creators of technology. The curriculum always had an emphasis on having the youth understand the larger societal context of them learning technology skills, “they learn that this lack of diversity is an opportunity for new ideas to come to the table” (Winnow Research Studio, 2014, p. 40). This was also part of the intent in taking them on field trips to local technology companies, so they could see the lack of diversity and better understand the larger need for people of color to learn these skills. In addition to the technology and diversity focus, the curriculum also had a heavy focus on improving the soft skills of the youth. Zakiya’s educational background was in teaching soft skills, and as a result that was always big piece of the Hack the Hood curriculum.

### **Analysis of Hack the Hood**

In 2014, Hack the Hood was awarded a grant from the Workforce Accelerator Fund through the California Workforce Investment Board. The granted funds were for organizations “to design, develop, and implement video projects that accelerate employment and reemployment strategies for California job seekers” (Winnow Research Studio, 2014, p. 1). This grant provided the resources for Hack the Hood to work with Winnow Research Studio (Winnow) to evaluate how using video in their program could

better serve disconnected youth. I have elected to use Winnow's research on Hack the Hood to delve deeper into how the program builds on the community cultural wealth in the youth they work with. Winnow's research used a human-centered approach to understand what parts of Hack the Hood's model worked well from the youth participants' collective experiences and from the experiences of the leaders in the organization (Winnow Research Studio, 2014).

Winnow's research concluded that Hack the Hood succeeds in connecting youth to work because the program focus is "much more than simply making websites. They are treated as responsible team members who are learning the professional skills of being successful in a diversity of Tech roles" (Winnow Research Studio, 2014, p. 33). In addition, they identified that Hack the Hood creates a unique blend of: local partnerships, technology, belonging, and professional empowerment (Winnow Research Studio, 2014). In examining the four programmatic elements identified by Winnow with a CRT lens, it was clear that they demonstrate the different categories of capital incorporated in the community cultural wealth model.

The way Winnow describes Hack the Hood's emphasis on local partnerships can be attributed to building on navigational capital, transformative resistance, and aspirational capital. Winnow (2014) points out that "small businesses become example career paths to disconnected youth who are now able to see the range of entrepreneurship that is happening around them." (p. 36). As presented in Chapter I, the ability to navigate workplaces and careers is attributed to navigational capital (Yosso, 2005). Many youth come into the program with an understanding of entrepreneurship and business, but many have not had an opportunity to understand the various paths that can lead them there.

Through local partnerships, Hack the Hood exposes youth to the entrepreneurial career path of a small business owner. The exposure to small business owners fosters a range of professional options to the youth by showing them that their professional options include becoming employees at larger companies or organizations, and/or they could become entrepreneurs/small business owners.

Hack the Hood's local partnerships provides low-income youth of color an environment where they can build on their skills to pursue a career path they may not have been aware even existed or did not know the steps needed to get there. Muhammad, a Summer 2014 Hack the Hood participant, described his own shift in navigational capital in the program as, "I thought it was too late for me to get into Tech, but now I have a plan" (Winnow Research Studio, 2014, p. 16). Many of the youth already have a desire and interest in the technology ecosystem when they start the boot camp, Hack the Hood simply helps provide youth with the tools to understand how they can create a path to get there.

The aforementioned examples of local partnerships also demonstrate how the aspirational capital of the youth participants is built on within Hack the Hood. For the youth, "Meeting mentors from their city shows them that success is possible and accessible for 'people like me'" (Winnow Research Studio, 2014, p. 36). These examples are critical in nurturing the aspiration of the youth in the program and showing them that despite the inequalities communities of color face, it is possible to overcome obstacles and to be successful (Yosso, 2005). In addition, working with local small businesses, "demonstrates that Tech can empower people in their own community" (Winnow Research Studio, 2014, p. 36). By seeing their own neighborhood through a lens of



resilience and innovation, youth are able to see their own future as an extension of their powerful community.

Technology, the second core element identified by Winnow's research, also demonstrates Hack the Hood's ability to build navigational capital. Specifically, "exposure to the ecosystem of Tech helps youth see that there are more options than just coding jobs" (Winnow, 2014, p. 19). Hack the Hood uses technology as a mechanism for exposing youth to the vast number of careers that exist and provides youth with tools to "maneuver through institutions not created with communities of Color in mind" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Hack the Hood is challenging the cultural deficit language of the digital divide by teaching low-income youth of color they can be creators of technology and not just consumers.

The third core element of Hack the Hood, per Winnow's findings, is professional empowerment. This program component touches on navigational, linguistic, social, and aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005). The navigational and linguistic capital are deeply intertwined in building professional empowerment skills. In technology, learning how to navigate the industry is in large part attributed to being able to understand and speak "the vocabulary of the profession" (Winnow, 2014, p. 44). In addition to the technology specific language, the youth also build on their linguistic capital by learning how to communicate professionally with their small business clients. Professional empowerment also encompasses linguistic and navigational capital, which Hack the Hood builds on by teaching youth to identify contextual clues about how to speak and interact in different social and professional settings.

Social capital, the social support from one's social network and community, is also evident in Winnow's findings of professional empowerment (Yosso, 2005). Hack the Hood youth participants improve their social capital by receiving, "Guidance from mentors [technology professionals] who come in once per week giv[ing] them tactical skills for networking and applying for jobs" (Winnow, 2014, p. 44). Having older professionals provide valuable support about how to network and apply for jobs is critical to the youth building on their social capital. Increasing their personal social network to include technology professionals is invaluable to the youth as they continue their educational and professional journeys.

Hack the Hood's fourth core programmatic element is belonging, as identified by Winnow, which highlights how the program builds on the youths' social and familial capital. As discussed in Chapter I, familial capital refers to the ability to nurture the cultural knowledge built through kinship (Yosso, 2005). Hack the Hood does this by providing youth with a "space everyday where they are respected and cared about by their colleagues and their instructors" (Winnow Research Studio, 2014, p. 48). Having a culturally relevant environment that is both honest and supportive about the realities that youth face in their lives, provides a unique opportunity for them to feel like they are part of a larger *chosen* family. Astrid, a Summer 2014 Hack the Hood participant, reflects on the impact familial capital had on her, "I usually quit things. I was probably going to quit the second week, but I knew that Max had chosen me and I didn't want to let him down" (Winnow Research Studio, 2014, p. 49). Hack the Hood builds kinship both between the youth and the instructors, and also between the youth and their peers in the program.

The analysis of Hack the Hood's four programmatic elements outlined in Winnow's research show clear examples of the community cultural wealth model. Based on this detailed examination, it is clear that Hack the Hood builds on the cultural assets that low-income youth of color bring into the program. Specifically, the analysis demonstrates how all six types of capital outlined by Yosso (2005) are built on in Hack the Hood. Of note is that the two main types of capital evident in Winnow's research are navigational and linguistic capital. The emphasis on these two types of capital directly correlate with Hack the Hood's goals of preparing youth to be successful in an industry with a lack of diversity.

#### **Evaluating Community Cultural Wealth**

Hack the Hood's Spring 2015 boot camp for disconnected youth started during my work on this project, which gave me a unique opportunity to implement elements of the community cultural wealth model into the evaluation metrics. I was able to craft questions directly related to community cultural wealth for the pre- and post- assessment the youth cohort took at the beginning and end of the program. The hope is that the questions in the assessment will help provide an additional measure of the types of capital youth come into the program with and the types of capital Hack the Hood builds on the best. Albeit, as the analysis of the Winnow research and the literature review in Chapter II outlines, many of the community cultural wealth experiences are best highlighted through the qualitative responses of the youth participants.

Due to time constraints, this project was completed before the post-assessment results of the spring 2015 Hack the Hood cohort had been done. In addition, Hack the Hood is currently working with a team of experts to build out their programmatic

evaluation metrics. Once completed, these metrics will provide the organization with tools to assess the impact the program has on low-income youth color, small businesses, the technology ecosystem, and the larger Bay Area community. That being said, the timing of this project has provided Hack the Hood with the CRT and community cultural wealth theoretical framework to implement into their evaluation metrics. My hope is that several years from now Hack the Hood will be able to showcase their impact on community cultural wealth with the data they have collected.

## CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Conclusions**

Although the United States has evolved in the area of legal racial equality, it is clear that racism continues to be an endemic part of our society. Rather than let the deficit approach that racism breeds guide our work as educators and community organizers, it is imperative that we implement a positive and culturally relevant approach to our work with communities of color. By celebrating the wealth that already exists in communities of color, we are also acknowledging the infinite potential within them. In order to create a counter-narrative, it is critical that we share examples of how this work can be done and that we one another with resources to continue this work.

This project examined how Hack the Hood, a Bay Area non-profit organization, successfully works with low-income youth of color in an outside of school context using technological skills to empower them. CRT, community cultural wealth, and the many studies on academic success provided a model through which to examine the efficacy and cultural relevance of Hack the Hood programming using interviews and data already gathered on the organization. Based on the analysis of Hack the Hood and the promising findings related to how their work advance several of the tenets of the community cultural wealth model, I developed a series of workshop ideas to offer educators and community organizers in other settings with a source of inspiration on how to work with low-income youth of color in culturally relevant ways that acknowledge the vast wealth and skills they already have. This project aims to build on the limited research on how

programs that work with low-income youth of color can resist culturally deficit narratives and empower youth to succeed.

My research adds to the historical literature reviewed by showcasing clear examples of community cultural wealth and its positive impact on education within communities of color. This project contributes to existing literature highlighting the wealth that exists in communities of color by drawing out examples of capital that have not historically been included in the dominant narrative. This analysis provides a unique narrative about how community-based organizations can work with low-income youth of color by valuing the wealth they bring with them, rather than seeing young people of color and their communities as lacking in resources.

Embarking on this project around using the CRT framework to connect to the praxis of Hack the Hood was an enlightening one. Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model truly focused the lens with which I started to examine the world and education more closely. Jayakumar et al.'s (2013) work inspired me immensely and as I began to research community cultural wealth I was impressed by the work I found. However, as I dug into the work there seemed to be a gap around other examples of how community cultural wealth is built in communities of color and how it impacts educational and career success. At first I considered redirecting my work; however, as I was reading the research on high-achieving Black students (Harper, 2008; Jayakumar et al., 2008; Palmer and Gasman, 2008; Wiggan, 2008), I realized that while the connections in their research were not blatantly tied to community cultural wealth, the language and elements for the framework were already in their work. My aim as a CRT scholar is to "engage in the 'messiness' of real life" (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 40). This

epiphany fueled my examination above and inspired me to look both within the academic world, but also at the work being done in the community.

It is my hope that the perspective I brought in examining existing work through the CRT framework will provide a space for more scholars to connect their work to the community cultural wealth model. It is also in this space that I aim to further my own research by examining how community cultural wealth is built in diverse communities that reflect the many cultures that often make up a community. Specifically, I aim to continue examining how community-based programs in low-income communities of color work with youth to build on their community cultural wealth across cultures and the positive impact it has both on the youth and also on the larger community.

The vastness of existing research, as well as room for additional research is immense and the hope of this field project is to be a drop in the water of the proverbial bucket of success. While the current times continue to make it more and more evident that equality between White and people of color is still far from actualized, the aim of this project is to emphasize the importance of also recognizing the positive and powerful resources available within communities of color. By understanding how communities have and continue to build capital, we can focus our work on enhancing the process and ensuring that other communities of color can do the same.

### **Recommendations**

I focused on creating two workshop samples and sample evaluation questions that provide a starting point for other organizations to build community cultural wealth into their existing curriculum. Further projects could create a more robust sample curriculum for other youth focused organizations to incorporate the community cultural wealth

model. As referenced in Chapter III, this project evolved from an analysis of how Hack the Hood's work fit into the community cultural wealth model into much more. As my analysis developed, I had the rare opportunity to further implement my research on community cultural wealth deeper into the Hack the Hood program. While this evolution was not anticipated, it reflects my hypothesis that programs are already using aspects of this framework and that there is an opportunity to deepen the work they are doing by having an explicit model to reference and build on.

This project focused on Hack the Hood's work with low-income youth of color around technology, but the aim and intent of the project is to showcase how community cultural wealth can be applied to all types of work with youth of color. The *digital divide* is the most recent example of how communities of color are depicted through deficit language; yet the true focus of this project is to show the need for and ultimate application of CRT and community cultural wealth across all disciplines.

Finally, as my work at Hack the Hood has taught me, it is essential that this work be seen as living, reflexive and continually iterative. This project is intended as a seed in the larger ecosystem of education and CRT. I recommend that those educators and community organizers that use this project as a guide for their work see it as inspiration. This work not intended to be the end; it is intended to be the beginning and the middle. Each community has its own unique wealth and my work on this project has taught me that it more than acknowledging the specific types of capital youth of color possess, the power and impact of community cultural wealth comes from seeing that there is capital in the first place.



There is still much work to be done; however, it is my optimistic belief that more programs will begin to incorporate community cultural wealth into their curriculum. While this project focused specifically on a community based organization, I encourage future scholars to examine how community cultural wealth can be used across all educational disciplines in a variety of settings. It is also important to note that this project and recommendations are based on the work Hack the Hood has done in the Bay Area with low-income youth of color between the ages of 16 and 24. I encourage scholars to create and explore how community cultural wealth can be applied to other age groups and in other communities of color. In addition, I implore other scholars to continue bridging the gaps between the work that is happening on the ground and the world of academia. Without praxis to demonstrate their power, theories are destined to be theoretical and of little practical value to marginalized communities.

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APPENDIX A

“Workshops to Build on Community Cultural Wealth Workshops”

Curriculum for Educators and Community Organizers

# Community Cultural Wealth Workshops for Educators and Community Organizers



By Henriette Ako-Asare

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**Introduction:**

This handbook of workshops was designed to inspire educators and community organizers with ways that they can empower the low-income youth of color by building on their community cultural wealth. All of the workshops are fully intended to be adapted and adjusted as they best suit your community. Many of the workshops could be facilitated in shorter or longer time periods, depending on the resources you have available.



## Workshop 1 - Mapping Career Pathways in Technology

### Objectives:

- Develop and research three different careers of interest in the technology ecosystem
- Create personal career pathways for each of the three researched careers
- Engage in critical discussions about lessons learned from pathways
- Build on the navigational capital of the youth by having youth literally map out a plan from where they are to a career. Part of this lesson is intended to help youth envision both short term and long-term steps they can take towards their goals.
- Build on their linguistic capital of the youth by having them research the skills and terminology specific to each role.
- Build on their aspirational capital by showing the youth that their dreams can become reality.

**Audience:** 16 - 24 year olds

**Estimated:** Approximately 2 - 3 hours depending on lesson adjustments

### Materials:

- Computers
- Construction Paper
- Markers and Pens

### Lesson Outline:

1216:0:1. This workshop is best suited to follow previous conversations/lessons about the technology ecosystem, career days, strength assessments and/or other career focused presentations. Begin by asking all the youth to pick three\* careers they are interested in pursuing and identify three job titles they would like to do, either in the near term or long term. Provide some examples of different types of careers in technology: software engineer, social media marketing manager, and web designer.

1432:0:2. Once everyone has selected three jobs they are interested in, give each youth 60 minutes to do some web research on each career. Specifically each youth should find out the following information for each researched profession:

1216:4:a. What is the required education level for the job?

1432:4:b. What is the required number of years of work experience?

1648:4:c. What type of skills are required for the job?

1864:4:d. What type of training or certifications are required for the job?

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1648:0:3. Once everyone has completed the research ask everyone to get into small groups to share out what they learned about their selected careers. Discussion prompts:

1216:4:a. What did you learn about these jobs that you didn't know before?

1432:4:b. Based on what you learned, which of the three professions you researched are you most interested in pursuing?

1864:0:4. Bring the larger group back together to share out what they discussed in their small groups.

1080:0:5. Now give everyone 30 - 45 minutes to pick one of the three jobs they researched and write and/or draw out a step-by-step plan for themselves to pursue that role based on where they are today. For example, a high school junior interested in becoming a web designer will have a different plan or path than someone out of school. Emphasize that there are many paths to the same role and to explore options that are most interesting to them.

13296:0:6. To conclude the lesson, have each youth present their path to the class explaining why they chose the career and why they picked the steps they did in their plans to pursue the role.

\*The number of careers can be adjusted based on the time available to facilitate the workshop.

**Lesson Adaptations:**

- This lesson can be adapted by changing the number of the careers researched and the amount of time given to do the research.

**Additional Lesson Resources:**

- "How to Become A Software Engineer" <http://www.wikihow.com/Become-a-Software-Engineer>
- Salary and Education Information: <http://salary.com/>

## **Workshop 2- Human Rights Education: Black Foster Children**

**Human Rights Focus:** The goal of the workshop is to educate youth about the human rights violations foster children, particularly Black foster children face. The hope is that this workshop will build on the linguistic and resistance capital of low-income youth of color by teaching them about human rights, discussing systemic racism, and exploring action they can take to resist the dominant narrative and ultimately help break the cycle of oppression.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Develop an understanding of the cycle of oppression that exist between mass incarceration and the disproportionate number of Black foster children
- Understand specifics of the human rights violations that many Black foster children face
- Engage in critical discussion regarding the systemic policies and procedures that enable mass incarceration of Blacks and disproportionate representation in the foster care system in the United States

### **Relevant International Human Rights Instruments:**

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** —  
(<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=eng>)
  - Freedom from discrimination (Article 2)
  - Right to equality before the law (Article 7)
  - Freedom from torture and degrading treatment (Article 5)
  - Right to freedom of movement (Article 13)
  - Right to participate in government and in free elections (Article 21)
  - Right to social security (Article 22)
  - Right to adequate living standard (Article 25)
  - Right to education (Article 26)
- **Convention on the Rights of the Child**  
<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- **Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**  
(<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>) — especially Articles 9-17 and 25
- **Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**  
(<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>) — especially Articles 6-7, 11, 13

▫ **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**

(<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>)

**Audience:** 18 – 24 year olds

**Estimated Length:** 4.5 hours

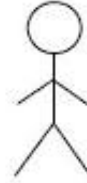
**Materials:**

- Documentary- *The House I Live In*
  - Written and Directed by: Eugene Jarecki
  - Available on Netflix and YouTube, more info: <http://www.thehouseilivein.org>
- YouTube Videos
- Paper & Pencils
- “Sam” Stick Figure
- Copies of UDHR

**Lesson Outline:**

- **Introduction-- (30 min)**
  - **Activity 1:** Write 13%, 27%, 37% on the board and ask the youth if anyone know what these numbers mean?
    - Then identify that 13% refers to Black representation in the total population, 27% refers to how many Black children are in foster care, and 37% refers to how Blacks representation in the prison population
    - Open up the discussion on what may be the cause of this disproportion
  - **Activity 2:** Ask the youth to get into two groups (more depending on number of participants) and give each group a piece of paper with a stick figure on it. Tell each group the stick figure’s name is Sam, who is an Black foster child. Ask half of the group to draw a web of potential causes of why Sam might be in foster care, elaborating on each cause to create a complex web. Ask the other half of the group to draw a web of potential human rights that Sam may not have honored as a foster child. Pass out copies of the UDHR for reference.
    - Ask groups to share some reflections on the causes that can contribute to Black children ending up in foster care and also the human rights violations that can occur.
- **Understanding the Problem – (3 hr)**

- **Activity 1:** Have the attendees watch the *House I Live In*, a 110 minute documentary that gives a deep history and understanding of the War on Drugs and its impacts on the Black community, the low-socio-economic community, and how those communities historically intersect.
  - **Activity 2:** After watching the film ask everyone to spend 10 min free writing on how this film relates to Black foster children and their human rights. Then spend another 15 min having the group share what they wrote. If not all relevant human rights are brought in by the group ask the group why they did or did not include human rights articles.
  - **Activity 3:** Pass out foster care facts from the Alliance for Children's Rights and Children's Rights (included) and give everyone 10 minutes to read over. Ask everyone to get into small groups and talk about which facts about foster care and the disparities in foster care were new to them.
    - Then have each group pick a fact that relates to a human right violation that Black foster youth face and draw a picture depicting it. Then have each group share their pictures and reflections.
- **How can we break the cycle? (1 hr)**
- **Activity 1:** Watch YouTube Video: (2 min) *Raise Me Up*, a spoken word piece by a young Black foster woman and her desire to be recognized as successful. *Raise Me Up*:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WHIUQ7RP4M>
    - Have the group help compile a list of things the young woman in the video wanted (not to be stereotyped, invested, etc.). After the list is compiled have everyone get into small groups and come up with ways they and the larger community could address her requests
    - Bring everyone together and have each group share their ideas for implementation.
- **Debrief:**
- Have everyone in the group share out about the lesson: What did they learn? How did they feel? Did they know about the UDHR prior to the lesson? What emotions came up? What actions can they take to address how Black foster children are treated?



**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:****[Invisible Education Achievement Gap Between Foster Youth & Peers](#)**

“The Invisible Achievement Gap,” a landmark study funded by The Stuart Foundation, was released this October. The report, which connects statewide education data to child welfare data, is titled thus because its findings show that children in the foster care system often have specialized education needs that go unrecognized and unmet, leading them to fall behind their peers in terms of academic achievement.

The study found that students in foster care had a distinctly different demographic profile from other students. Students in foster care were three times more likely to be African-American than the statewide student population, but were less likely to be Hispanic or English learners. They were also twice as likely to have a disability, and, among students with disabilities, were five times as likely to be classified with an emotional disturbance. Students in foster care were also older for their grade level and had a higher risk of dropping out.

The study also found that foster care students had much lower rates of school stability, transferring between schools more frequently than their peers. Only about 2/3 of students in foster care attended the same school for the entire school year, compared to 90% of the general student population. In addition to this, about 10% of youth in foster care attended 3 or more schools during the school year, a level of school mobility experienced by only about 1% of the statewide student population. These findings are supported by a study recently conducted by UC Berkeley’s Center for Social Services and the Institute for Evidence-Based Change, which found that foster youth are twice as likely to switch schools as their classmates, with about 95% of foster youth changing school the first year they were placed in care, as compared to 37-38% of the non-foster care student population. Such school mobility can be severely disruptive and have a detrimental effect on foster youth’s education, with students being said to lose about six months of learning with each school transfer.

In addition to this, the study found that students in foster care were more likely to be enrolled in the lowest-performing schools, with around 15% of foster youth attending the lowest-performing 10% of schools, as compared to only 2% attending the highest-performing 10% of schools. Foster youth also had lower enrollment rates in the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program, with only about 75% of foster youth participating in the program during their final year of testing. For those students in foster care who did take the test, an achievement gap was clearly visible between foster youth and their peers. Students in foster care consistently scored below the level of

proficiency in English and elementary and secondary mathematics, falling into the two lowest performance levels at twice the rate of the statewide student population.

In light of these findings, researchers emphasized the need to recognize that foster youth in the education system are a distinct subgroup of students who are at high risk for poor academic performance and failure, and the need for educators and administrations to take steps to identify and address their specialized needs in order to enable foster youth to succeed academically.

**Source:** Alliance for Children’s Rights, <http://kids-alliance.org/galleries/invisible-education-achievement-gap-between-foster-youth-peers/>

#### **Facts About Foster Care from Children’s Rights**

- **Too many children are trapped in foster care.**
- On any given day, there are approximately [400,000 children in out-of-home care in the United States](#).
- During the last year about [650,000 children spent some time in out-of-home care](#) in the United States.
- Children entering foster care remain there on average for [nearly two years](#).
- Despite the common perception that most children in foster care are young children, the average age of the children in foster care is over [nine years old](#).
- The median amount of time children spent in foster care increased between 2000 (12 months) and 2011 (13.5 months). On average, children in the American child welfare systems spend about two years — 23.9 months — in foster care. Ten percent of children in foster care have languished there for [five or more years](#).
- While most children in foster care live in family settings, a substantial minority — [15 percent](#) — live in institutions and group homes.
- Nearly half of all children in foster care have [chronic medical problems](#).
- About half of children under five years old in foster care have [developmental delays](#).
- Up to 80 percent of all children in foster care have [serious emotional problems](#).
- More than 60,000 children living in foster care have had their biological parental rights permanently terminated. The assumption is that once parental rights have been terminated, the State should work as rapidly as possible to ensure that the child is safely in a new adoptive home and that the adoption is finalized. Yet of these children, the [average time they’ve been waiting to be adopted is nearly two years \(23.6 months\)](#).
- In 2011, **11 percent of the children (over 26,000) exiting foster care aged out of the system**. Research has shown that teens aging out of the system are highly

likely as adults to experience homelessness, poor health, unemployment, incarceration, and other poor outcomes.

- Sixteen percent of children in foster care in 2011 were in foster care for [three or more years before they were emancipated](#).

#### **Facts About Disparities in Foster Care**

- **In 2011, [more than half](#) of the children entering foster care in the U.S. were children of color.**
- [Black or African American children](#) are disproportionately more likely than other children to be reported, investigated, substantiated, and placed in foster care.
- **Twenty-seven percent of the children in foster care are Black, [double the percent](#) of Black children in the population in America.**
- Children of color, especially black children, and often American Indian children, face [significant disparity](#) within the child welfare system. They are more likely to have **longer placements** in out-of-home care, are less likely to receive comprehensive services, and are less likely to reunify with their families than white children.

**Source:** Children's Rights, <http://www.childrensrights.org/issues-resources>