

Y'ALL CALL IT TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION, WE CALL IT

#FORTHECULTURE:

THE USE OF AMPLIFICATION RHETORICS IN BLACK COMMUNITIES AND THEIR  
IMPLICATIONS FOR TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES

by

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This project seeks to define and identify the use of Amplification Rhetorics (AR) in the social movement organization TRAP Karaoke and at three Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). In highlighting the AR practices in Black communities. This project will provide insight into what these practices and spaces have to offer to the field of Technical and Professional Communication (TPC). AR is a theoretical framework that details the discursive and communicative practices, both written/textual and embodied/performative performed/used by individuals that self-identify as Black and centers the lived experiences and epistemologies of Black people and other historically marginalized groups. AR are #ForTheCulture practices that provoke change within the academy, regardless the field, however for this project I focus on the field of TPC. The phrase “For the Culture,” is used to describe or allude to an action that can benefit those individually or within a community much like TPC artifacts. This project identifies rhetorical practices located in Black spaces and communities that can be identified as TPC

through the reclamation of agency, the sharing of narratives, and the inclusion of Black epistemologies. It illustrates just what it means to pass the mic and remind folks that we not 'bout to act like there aren't people of color at the TPC table. This project will lead practitioners, mentors, and people in positions of power to reconsider their own rationale alongside implicit and explicit bias that may influence how they review work that does not identify as the "standard" within the field of TPC. This project is unapologetically Black. Its foundation is built upon Black theoretical frameworks. And just to make sure folks are payin' attention, I even tossed in some AAVE and shade; you may even catch a read or two. This project provides the reference guide for my AR framework and also a multimodal artifact that embodies AR theory put into practice.



Y'all Call it Technical and Professional Communication, We Call it #ForTheCulture:  
The Use of Amplification Rhetorics in Black Communities and their Implications for Technical  
and Professional Communication Studies

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Department of English  
East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy in Rhetoric, Writing, and Professional Communication

by  
Temptaous T. Mckoy  
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Now, In the words of Meek Mill, "Ain't this what they've been waiting for? You ready?"

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## Chapter 1: B.O.A.T.S-Based on A True Story

So, if you readin' this dissertation I'm gonna assume you one of my committee members, a trap music connoisseur, or someone that peeped my hashtag #IssaTrapDissertation on social media. Whoever you are, welcome to my project that may be the littest dissertation you ever read—ok I'm a bit bias, but I'm so serious. Imagine you were at a college graduation where the speaker was boring you to death, or you had absolutely no interest (kinda like when President Trump gave his speech at good 'ol Liberty University's 2017 graduation). Then suddenly, you hear the famed instrumental, "Back That Azz Up" by New Orleans rapper, Juvenile, featuring Mr. Carter himself (Lil Wayne for y'all out the loop on that too). Then you hear "Takin over for the '99 and the 2000," and at that moment, you know issa 'bout tuh go down, and you ready to turn up. Now I know some of y'all had to stop and try to figure out why this kind of performance matters, what that song is, and where exactly is she going. Well, that's essentially what this dissertation will be like. Not saying I will bore you or be all over the place and keep you lost in the sauce; however, I acknowledge that the dissertation genre is not one that is often regarded as an exciting read, unless of course it covers a subject matter that you live for. Nonetheless, my dissertation project uses the genre conventions of the classical dissertation blended with what I'm calling a dissertation that is #ForTheCulture where I bring to the forefront some key components of Black culture. In all, this dissertation project is where technical and professional communication (TPC) scholarship, Black culture, and trappin' meets.

Alright, so currently, the field of TPC has lit flame to the call for a more diverse and inclusive field. Women scholars such as Natasha Jones (2016), Erin Frost (2016), Rebecca Walton (2013), Miriam Williams (2010) and others, have published and called for the field to become more inclusive in terms of scholarship, diversity of practitioners, and epistemologies. However, it is evident that conversations surrounding this topic have led to little action in our field. Not sayin' that the change would happen overnight, but dang! Why, in 2018, are we still tryin' to figure out the next step to enacting more inclusive practices instead of putting what we already know, and have published, into action? I, a product of a program rooted in developing socially just TPC scholarship, am deciding to assist in taking on this charge. Alongside my own personal interests, this is why I'm taking the risk of writing a dissertation that draws on Black culture to flout some traditional conventions of the genre and discipline—conventions that are rooted in supposedly objective (read: white) practices. One way I suggest that we as a field can do this is by taking the time to look to historically marginalized communities, specifically Black communities, to understand how they are enacting TPC practices. In doing so, we should amplify these practices, and instead of dismissing these communities as specialty areas, understand them as a part of the field of TPC.

So, in thinking of how I could get this concept across, I have developed a theoretical framework, Amplification Rhetorics (AR), through which I identify the rhetorical practices, both written and performative, in Black communities to highlight the TPC knowledge that is already present in Black communities and that we as a field can learn from. Dismissing Black communities and their rhetorical practices creates barriers for Black rhetors and leads to missed opportunities for TPC. When institutions, disciplines, and fields fail to acknowledge the diversity of the practices they study, potential students are unable to see themselves within those spaces,

and they do not take advantage of what the institutions, disciplines, and fields could offer them. In addition, institutions, disciplines, and fields don't benefit from the diversity of ideas and people in these communities. This project pays it forward by highlighting Black individuals and their communicative practices to illustrate how their contributions can influence the field of TPC. In highlighting these contributions, I acknowledge and make clear that it is not the role of the field of TPC, institutions, or disciplines to take and mold these practices and their communities, thus colonizing these spaces. I even had to check myself on this at times because I am a Black individual and a member of the TPC community; instead I use the position of being enrolled in my doctoral studies to focus on my Black community and privilege their lived experiences and epistemologies.

This project seeks to define and show evidence of the use of AR in the social movement organization TRAP Karaoke and at our nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). I do this by researching the communicative practices used in these Black communities and showcase what they may offer to the TPC field. I assert that TPC knowledge and practices are already being made and happening in Black spaces and have been overlooked or dismissed as sites to generate TPC knowledge. My project centers Black spaces that showcase TPC as it is defined by professional communication theorists Nancy Blyler and Charlotte Thralls (1993):

...discourse [written, oral, or performative] directed to a group, or to an individual operating as a member of the group, with the intent of affecting the group's function, and/or discourse directed from a group, or from an individual operating as a member of the group, with the intent of affecting the group's function, where group means an entity intentionally organized and/or run by its members to perform a certain function. (p. 197)

Using their definition, I've developed my own working definition for TPC that addresses the technical ("T") aspect of "TPC" as discourse, written, oral, or performed aimed at moving or directing an individual or community to action. This discourse can be enacted by an individual or group of individuals with specific expertise or insight that is dependent upon the community's knowledge.<sup>1</sup> My definition highlights the individual or group that holds the community's "common sense" knowledge (Miller, 1991) or their expertise. In this context, the expert's knowledge becomes technical. Individuals who do not share a community's history or practices may not be able to draw on the community's practical usage of certain forms of discourse (Miller, 1991), which is important to the role of expert in communicating inside and outside the community. In Black spaces and communities, calls to unite, celebrate, and share lived experiences through oral and written traditions as well as performances are rhetorical practices, which can be identified as TPC and can lead to the identification of the speaker as a public intellectual (Bowdon, 2004) within their communities. Identifying and amplifying these communication practices as TPC serves as a means to influence or affect the group's function, or in this case, the function of a specific Black community.

I use the phrase "For the Culture," from the MIGOS song "T-Shirt," in my dissertation title to describe or allude to an action that can benefit those individually or within a community, much like my working definition for TPC. For example, *#ForTheCulture* on Black Twitter provides a space to connect Black people and their narratives. This hashtag can be used to link tweets of the same subject matter and can be seen throughout Black Twitter posts that speak to

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<sup>1</sup>So funny thing, this finalized definition didn't come till damn near the end. I revised it a bit from its original. You will find out why in Chapter 4.

Black culture and call for change within the Black community. However, the phrase has now been picked up or hashtag hijacked as “popular” rather than exclusive to Black communities, but its appropriation does not remove its space of origin. What I identify as technical and professional communication within Black communities, I acknowledge as being *#ForTheCulture*.

While enrolled in my many studies, I’ve learned that Black cultural artifacts and rhetorical practices that are considered *#ForTheCulture* are not often regarded as legitimate within the academy unless there is a theoretical framework or formal name to support such epistemologies and practices. The primary intent of TPC, at least from my definition, is to move people within a specific community to some action—even if an outside audience does not understand that action. There will be times when the call to action is not explicitly stated based on the audience and instead leaves space for the audience to utilize their agency to decide their next action. So I’ve decided to play the game of the academy, (because c’mon, you don’t hate the player; hate the game), and develop the theoretical framework AR to legitimize the work of Black communities for other scholars (and other historically marginalized groups) and also provide this framework in one of the Blackest ways possible through the use of Black cultural artifacts, Black theoretical frameworks, and Black scholars. My dissertation project serves as the reference guide for the AR framework, and it also models the theories that inform AR as they are put into practice. My choices to enact various rhetorical practices within my project may make those currently in the field, on hiring committees, or award committees feel uncomfortable or some type of way. However, it is a risk I am willing to take to ensure that I stand my ground in making my work socially just. My hope is that practitioners, mentors, and people in positions of power reconsider their own position in the field alongside implicit and explicit bias that may



influence how they review work that does not identify as the “standard” within their field of TPC.

### **Making the Call for Inclusion and Diversity in TPC (The Literature Review)**

As mentioned earlier, the field is currently restructuring itself to be more inclusive and starting to branch outside of, what Gerald Savage identifies as its industrial settings (2003, p. 3) and its founding histories (Connors, 2004). In ignoring specific communities and groups within TPC, we risk the development of TPC artifacts that only showcase “problem solving” variables and not variables which may lead to the need to solve a problem. AR ask that all of these variables are taken into account when developing TPC artifacts. By becoming more inclusive as a field, the distribution and communication of TPC knowledge and knowledge-making practices become the rhetorical tools for amplification. Race, ethnicity, and identity are a major part in how we move as individuals within our field (Williams & Pimentel, 2014). Socially just rhetorical practices call on the field of practitioners to be more cognizant of the choices they make to ensure the field is open and willing to learn from scholars from Black and other historically marginalized communities. I like to believe calls for inclusivity happen in waves, and as there is a lot of energy required to keep these movements substantial, they may die out due to a lack of involvement, dedication, and continued efforts. This energy includes the labor of doing the work, research, and continued advocacy to ensure the movement does not cease to exist. However, there are moments when movements begin to lose some of the members doing the work thus slowing the movement’s ability to continue in its efforts for change. However, in order to K.T.S.E.<sup>2</sup> or momentum, I think we must highlight our starting point. You don’t just wake up

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<sup>2</sup>Keep That Same Energy

one day and run a marathon (ok, I have but that's not the point). You train, you research, you understand breathing techniques, you put on ya fresh Nike Air Zoom Pegasus, and you research the route of which you are about to embark on, from start to finish. Changing the field to be more inclusive and diverse is certainly a marathon and not a sprint, and it is important that we continue to think of it that way.

In thinking of expanding our field, we must acknowledge gender identity, sexual orientation, cultural background, race, and other forms of embodiment that shape what it means to be diverse (Savage & Matveeva, 2011). In thinking of these various communities and what they have to offer the field, and what the field can learn from them, we are also able to consider the ways that their shared and diverse experiences can lead to practical solutions that can benefit us all (Miller, 1991). To have diverse scholars means we have access to a diverse body of knowledge and knowledge-making practices. However, it is imperative that we look to the language of diversity as more than just a response to issues of marginalization such as racism (Ahmed, 2012) but instead look to utilize the language of diversity to better showcase a set of diverse knowledges and practices that can contribute to a field of study. Acknowledging diversity as an issue within our field, as alluded by Condon (2008), can lead to individual and systemic growth. The usage of the term *diversity* serves to legitimize the work and labor being completed by our stakeholders (TPC practitioners, program administrators, and students). The need for such a term is important because “the word enables otherwise lumbering institutions to move, to shift even if just a little bit. We need the word because some significant number of our stakeholders are doing risky justice work in service of real need...” (Condon, 2000). And in order to see this shift, we must acknowledge the term diversity is not limited to race. For example, Katherine Durack (1997) points to the lack of scholarship produced by women and the need for

amplification. Even more so, I appreciate her reference to the various ways that women's technological scholarship has been undercut, undervalued, and attributed to men (Durack, 1997). This happens in Black communities with their discoveries, curation of TPC artifacts, and forms of discourse.<sup>3</sup> Their contributions go unnoticed and/or false credit is given (Shetterl, 2016; Greene, 2007; Abdul-Jabbar, Boos, & Obstfeld, 2012; Sluby, 2011).

Most of the scholarship on diversity, inclusion, and social justice in TPC wouldn't be possible without the publication of the collection *Critical Power Tools: Technical Communication and Cultural Studies* (Scott, Wills, & Longo, 2006), which argued for cultural studies approaches to technical communication. This collection reminds us that in having a more culturally aware approach to TPC, we can reach new audiences in an effort to repair the mistrusts between the technical communicators and the public. Yet in order to do this, we must combine pragmatic goals with normative ones (Scott, Wills, & Longo, 2006). The field certainly took up this call and began to focus on the inclusion of diverse theories, practices, research sites, and pedagogies. I suggest there are key areas of scholarship that TPC scholars can look to in order to better understand the call for diversity and inclusion in TPC, specifically. The first, "Disrupting the Past to Disrupt the Future: An Antenarrative of Technical Communication" (Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016), stands at the forefront and serves as a roadmap to accessing past and present scholarship that urges the field to move towards more inclusive practices. The authors highlight the various threads of TPC history and scholarship that have worked towards revising the field. These threads include: "scholarship in feminism, sexuality, and gender studies; user advocacy; community-based research; intercultural and international studies; disability studies; and race

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<sup>3</sup>I know y'all saw who developed that Jack Daniels recipe.

and ethnicity studies” (Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016, p. 214). My project focuses primarily on contributing to the TPC thread in race and ethnicity studies although the relationship between race, intercultural studies, and gender studies are also explored in my project. I also think it is important to highlight, as the article does, the call by Angela M. Haas (2012) for the inclusion of more research that studies “the intersections of race, rhetoric, and technology” (p. 279). In writing collaboratively to compose their article, Jones, Moore, & Walton actually do the work in their article that they suggest should be taken up; I also attempt to do this in my scholarship as well as this dissertation. It also showcases the importance of collaboration from a diverse group of scholars. In Sara Ahmed’s (2007), “‘You end up doing the document rather than the doing’: Diversity, race equality and the politics of documentation,” she tells us that the way “documents are written also affects how they might be taken up” (p. 593). Jones, Moore, and Walton’s article emphasizes the inclusion of diverse scholars, theoretical frameworks, epistemologies, and pedagogical practices and considers how to make the field more socially just and diverse. Socially just scholarship in the field of TPC identifies how communicative practices “can amplify the agency of oppressed people” (Jones & Walton, 2018, p. 242). In doing this work of amplification in our scholarship we are able to dismantle systems of oppression that continue to aid in the diminishing of historically marginalized communities (Jones, 2016). By seeing, knowing, and doing socially just scholarship as modeled by Jones, Moore, and Walton, I think we can see a shift in the way that we approach TPC research overall.

Another key collection of scholarship that we must consider in the literature review, well technically this source is the new kid on the block, is a collection that highlights the need for a more inclusive and diverse field of TPC, while amplifying the work of scholars that are identified as historically marginalized. Two scholars that have truly exemplified and taken on

this work and call to action are Angela M. Haas and Michelle F. Eble, coeditors of the collection, *Key Theoretical Frameworks: Teaching Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century* (2018). They take on and respond to what well known technical communications scholar, Gerald J Savage, notes as a socially just approach to technical communication. Savage states in the foreword of Haas and Eble's edited collection:

Social justice work must begin by assembling a community of thinkers and actors who agree on the need for change. The work of such communities can appropriately involve disruptive actions such as demonstrations, strikes, marches, or sit-ins. But it can also, often more effectively, involve showing how: teaching, campaigning, studying, witnessing, and materially transforming the conditions that perpetuate injustice. Perhaps some of the contributors to the present book have acted disruptively in support of social justice, but what they do here is teach and show how to enact social justice in the curriculum, the classroom, and in the work of technical communication. (*Foreword*, p. x)

Their edited collection, much like the Jones, Moore, and Walton article, demonstrates socially just scholarship in action while also serving as a reference, or tool guide, to better implement and enact various rhetorical strategies within technical communication scholarship, including pedagogy and advocacy work, that seeks to move individuals and communities into action. Furthermore, this edited collection recognizes that social justice approaches to technical and professional communication scholarship are often “informed by cultural theories and methodologies, but they also explicitly seek to redistribute and reassemble—or otherwise readdress—power imbalances that systematically disenfranchise some stakeholders while privileging others” (Haas & Eble, 2018, p. 4). With the inclusion of contributors from twelve different universities, this edited collection provides a foundation for how to move forward as a

socially just TPC scholar. Kristen R. Moore's chapter, "Black Feminist Epistemology as a Framework for Community Based Teaching," (2018) calls for the field to utilize Black Feminist theory in our efforts to produce socially just TPC research that also prioritizes "action, experiences, and epistemologies" (p. 188). Prioritizing socially just scholarship alongside cultural awareness can lead to research that can also influence the culture for which the scholarship is rooted in; socially just scholarship allows for reciprocated outcomes between communities and researchers. Yet, and to echo Moore, it is also important that scholars not take up diversity pride as a "technology for reproducing whiteness" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 151). This idea of diversity pride when producing scholarship pertaining to Black communities without acknowledging their uniqueness does nothing more than put a "Black Face" on white scholarship. By putting Black face on white scholarship, we risk removing the historical contexts that shape socially just scholarship (Williams, 2010).

Other TPC scholarship that focuses predominantly on race is limited. However, I believe there is space to investigate the role of race and marginality within TPC, even for scholarship that does not plainly identify spaces as TPC. As stated in the edited collection *Communicating Race, Ethnicity, and Identity* (2014) by Miriam Williams and Octavio Pimentel, race and ethnicity inform the production and distribution of technical communication in the United States. This edited collection includes various chapters providing insight to the TPC present in Black communities. One chapter as it relates to this project specifically focuses on technical communication and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The chapter highlights the intercultural technical communication that takes place at HBCUs (Coleman, 2016) and shines light on the varying rhetorical practices in these spaces to develop technical communication artifacts, which essentially serve to communicate complex information to multiple audiences.

Identifying the specific rhetorical practices at play when Black people develop TPC artifacts also addresses the resistance African Americans have had to traditional styles of regulatory or technical writing, which has historically been used in continued oppressive efforts (Williams 2010). These contexts illustrate how the technical communicator can serve as advocate (Dawson, 2011) not only in organizations but in their own communities. Also, an additional collection of scholarship we can look to that answers this call for scholarship on race is the *Journal of Business in Technical Communication (JBTC)* special issue “Race, Ethnicity, and Technical Communication: Examining Multicultural Issues in the United States” (2012). This special issue, also edited by Miriam Williams and Octavio Pimental, responds to the need for additional scholarship that is not colorblind and highlights the need to continue conversations and curate scholarship that explicitly address “race, ethnicity, or multiculturalism in technical communication” (Williams & Pimental, 2012, p. 273). This special issue provides articles that explicitly highlight the impacts and influential nature of race in TPC, the disconnect that has happened in the past, and the scholarship that suggest ways to review instances of race in TPC scholarship. In addition, Angela Haas’s “Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: A Case Study of Decolonial Technical Communication Theory, Methodology, and Pedagogy,” continues this call to have a more “visible discussion” (p. 282) about how we can address the needs concerning the interdisciplinary work of cultural studies and technical communication. In addressing these needs, Haas suggests a “cultural studies approach to technical communication research, practice, and pedagogy can guide and support us in creating more culturally responsive and responsible texts that accommodate their users” (p. 281). Godwin Agboka’s article “Liberating Intercultural Technical Communication from “Large Culture Ideas” (2012) reminds us of the importance of including cultural influences within the scholarship of technical communication. Agboka

reminds us that there is a gap in this type of research highlighting “the important role of culture in the research and pedagogical direction on training and scholarship” (p. 160). As the call for more inclusive and culturally diverse scholarship continues, I think it is important that we also consider our long-term impact and our research usages.

As you will later see me advocate in my project, TRAP Karaoke and HBCUs are examples of Black spaces where community members enact and perform the work of technical and professional communication, even though the work may not be formally identified as such. Having to continually fight for and advocate for the development of Black scholarship all the while watching the practices of marginalization within various fields of study can lead to political fatigue (Ahmed, 2012). Ahmed refers to this fatigue in terms of institutions messing with you then dropping a scripted apology (2012, p. 148). I acknowledge this fatigue in terms of research where we continuously see the same apology for not producing Black scholarship and not taking on the charge to produce said scholarship all the while standing behind the guise that scholarship addressing diversity in TPC is only a special interest and actually not a part of the field itself. Why must we only look to special editions/issues when it comes to scholarship that focuses on or includes diversity in TPC? Yes, it can be helpful to carve out that space for diverse scholars, yet I also question if by carving these spaces, do we subconsciously continue the idea that diversity and cultural awareness is predominately limited to special publications? There has to be a middle road here in all of this. The problem here is not the people producing scholarship on Black bodies or other diverse/historically marginalized communities; instead the problem here is scholarship that continues to perpetuate ideas of whiteness as the only option or set standard. Even having the knowledge and recognizing that technical communication takes place in Black spaces, we are able to better advocate for the rhetorical approaches that people in those



spaces call on and use. In doing so, we do not become a part of a system that continues to aid in the marginalization of non-white students, in which we assume that the education process (which have standards set based upon colonized/white/western spaces) converts students from “wild and misbehaved children into educated and refined citizens” (Del Hierro, 2018 p. 174). This outlook alone is dangerous because we all know that “wild and misbehaved” is coded as anything not white—a category which HBCUs fall under. I mention this because we must be willing to see and understand that TPC takes shape in spaces that are inherently Black, and these spaces may not always adhere to what some deem professional or a legitimate site of study because it does not always offer the *standard* refined citizen as referenced in Del Hierro’s scholarship. TRAP Karaoke and HBCUs both include spaces of refined citizens, just not a westernized standard. In having this in mind, alongside earlier mentioned socially just scholarship, I offer my project as an illustration of how we can privilege Black voices, lived experiences, and epistemologies in TPC scholarship.

### **Why Do We Need Another Theory?**

The theoretical frameworks and perspectives we choose to utilize while conducting research serve as the blueprint to our approach in how we come to conclusions and develop or articulate our findings. Unfortunately, if a framework or perspective is not recognizable to the academy, or formalized, then the academy does not legitimize it. So, with that in mind, without formally recognized theoretical perspectives, it can be thought that we are just out here writing or researching with no guide to judge the product we are attempting to develop without sound reason or rationale. Often times we forget that theoretical frameworks act like a blueprint; they suggest action and provide a plan to move forward alongside the rationale. When we verbally articulate theoretical frameworks, in comparison to writing them, our bodies can provide the

context from which we are drawing on. Whereas, theoretical perspectives provide the lens for which to physically and metaphorically see and understand how a theoretical framework can be applied and put into action. The choice to speak with finesse (voice inflation, slow and meticulous articulations, for example) about theoretical frameworks can indicate if we are for or against the usage of said theories within the context of our projects. We are also able to use, or attempt to use—because let’s be real, some people are hell bent on standard written and spoken English being the only way to communicate complex information within the academy—language such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE), which provides the author/speaker the space to better connect with their audience in their translations of various theoretical frameworks. Yet, it is also important that we consider the ways that we may aid in the marginalization of other groups by utilizing dominant theoretical frameworks (which I argue is not intentional, but we have seen this happen with some canonized theories). For example, as much as I look to Feminism, it has also been critiqued for this very marginalization. George Yancy (2000) suggests the feminist movement has aided in “marginalizing the voices and political concerns of Black women” (p. 156). He centralizes the structure of whiteness and how it in fact shaped the feminist movement in ways that may be overlooked at times (2000). And as we have seen, womanism has become one way that scholars have sought to address this issue of marginalization in feminist theoretical frameworks.

I do not say all of this to allude or make it seem as though I do not think there is value in utilizing theoretical frameworks to lay the blueprint for our projects, but I do think it is important that I make it apparent that we have limited theoretical frameworks that can be used to validate the research completed by historically marginalized groups and Black bodies in the field of TPC (Popham, 2007). This in turn leaves scholars, like me, looking for ways to connect our research

to not only those within the academy but also to those who may not understand the formality of theoretical frameworks. Traditional theories can be considered very general and oftentimes can miss the issues encountered by diverse communities (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). The use of “single lens or perspectives” (p. 20) does not help in the development of new knowledge and especially the development of scholars. To change the field, we must start with our students, not the field itself. The canonization of certain theories and not others that we teach to our students leads to the research conducted by students within marginalized groups to be undervalued, as the theory in which they speak of has not always been created yet, or the authors themselves are attempting to create a new theoretical framework.

For example, I’m sure when NWA constructed their song “Fuck tha Police,” they obviously had a reason to justify the creation of such an explicit song. However, due to the criticism received, the value in the song was overshadowed by its lyrics and not the meaning of what was actually being said. The song was so badly received that the group had been banned from performing the song during their first major tour in 1989 (“*The Painful, Long, And Lasting Legacy of ‘Fuck tha Police,’*” 2015). “Fuck tha Police” served as the narrative of NWA’s encounters with the police, but it also became a representation of resistance and advocacy for freedom of speech—without any formal academic theoretical framework but instead a shared understanding of lived experiences. Sometimes the assumed subject matter or lack of understanding the author’s exigence for the development of a new theory leads to a diminishing or attempt to ignore new theories, as we have seen in the past with feminisms. The rhetorical practices used by historically marginalized communities can be dismissed as illegitimate if they are not attached to a specifically articulated academic theoretical approach.

In taking up multiple theoretical frameworks, I've crafted a project that further supports the need for an additional theory. My presentation style, AAVE, shade, and the inclusion of a multimodal dissertation, suggests the need to continue to utilize theories that call for the need to enact change in various spaces. For example, by implementing a different medium in my dissertation project, I suggest that we really reconsider how we in fact present theoretical frameworks. But real talk, using a digital chapter forces the academy to be more reflective of why the hell have we been dissertating (defending) our theories the same way...through long expansive texts. I mean, I think it is much more effective to display an analysis of a performance model in comparison to only writing about it. Yet, one of the ways that we see this form of dissertating become the norm, or validated, is through the development and usage of theories that call for change. In being aware of these knowledges and additional theoretical frameworks, TPC practitioners are also able to ensure we are developing a field that is culturally sensitive and diverse (Del Hierro, 2018).

The use of the various theoretical frameworks discussed throughout my project provide context and asks scholars, like myself, to reflect back on their roots. In discussing the foundations of AR, I am also showcasing the shoulders I am standing upon. This same thought process happens in the development of music too—yup, here's a music analogy for ya! We have all heard a song and thought, "Man does that sound familiar." You are actually hearing the initial song and feeling that initial emotion or connection. For example, The Notorious B.I.G's "Juicy," was sampled from the 80's hit "Juicy Fruit" by Mtume and Rappin Duke's "Rappin Duke" (Mtume, Rodriguez, & Wallace, 1994), both of which left some type of impression, good or bad on your listening experience. Ok, or my man Ed Sheeran's "Thinking Out Loud" (Andrews, 2016) or Robin Thicke's "Blurred Lines" (Grows, 2015), (both of which have been sued for

copyright infringement by Marvin Gaye’s estate), remind you of the sound that is Marvin Gaye’s. That emotional experience stays with you from the sampled tune as you move into the present one (Liljeström, Juslin, & Västfjäll, 2012). This very same response happens when we review theories that we have encountered that lead us to feel a sense of connectivity to the scholarship and may lead us to go forth and attempt to locate the original theory (song). Whether the theory resonated with you or made you upset, that experience will stay with you as you move through other scholarship that may include contrasting or mirroring theoretical frameworks. My theory is its own, but I expect readers to be able to identify some of the theoretical choices that I make explicit, but they may also experience their own sense of nostalgia while reading about my theoretical framework. As referenced in my second chapter, Jay-Z takes this same approach in his album, *The Blueprint*. Jay-Z’s “The Blueprint” returned Jay-Z’s music to a sound that was more soul and jazz in comparison to his previous work and the music at that time. With the many samples of his prior sound, he was able to create some of his greatest hits that overlapped in sound and context. I am modeling this sampled approach to scholarship, as other artists and rhetoricians have done in the past, in addition to engaging in responsible citation practices to curate my Amplification Rhetorics theoretical framework and suggest the need for a different style of dissertation project.

Now that I’ve said all of that, I guess I should answer the initial question, “Why do we need another theory?” AR as a theoretical framework brings together epistemologies and calls for change that allow historically marginalized groups and their insight to become a part of the academy and not simply serve as a theory for one specific group—even though I am not completely opposed to strategic exclusionary practices when it comes to the development of theories. For this project, I define and identify AR as a theory that can be used in the field TPC,

but it is also a lens that uses a cultural approach to researching communication practices. My project articulates and validates the rhetorical practices that can be identified as TPC within historically marginalized groups and cultures. My project continues the work begun by scholars like Angela Haas, Natasha Jones, and Gerald Savage that have taken up the mantle of inclusivity and diversity; however, there continues to be more work to do, and we must be vigilant in doing so. To sum it all up, AR have the potential to change the dominant understandings of TPC and call us to re-examine the manner in which we approach TPC.

We have hit a moment where TPC is thought to be used solely as a means to communicate “problem solving skills” (Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2012). However, when we take this approach, we ignore what makes communities and their “problems” unique. In ignoring specific communities and groups within TPC, we risk the development of TPC artifacts that only showcase “problem solving” variables and not variables which may lead to the need to solve a problem. AR asks that all of these variables are taken into account when identifying and developing TPC artifacts. By becoming more inclusive as a field, the distribution and communication of TPC knowledge and knowledge-making practices become the rhetorical tools for amplification. Race, ethnicity, and identity are a major part in how we move as individuals within our field (Williams & Pimentel, 2014).

Amplification Rhetorics asks how elements of embodiment can make our field more inclusive in our knowledge-making practices and does not rely solely on the marginalized to explain or do the sole labor of making the field more inclusive. Socially just rhetorical practices call on the field of practitioners to be more cognizant of the choices they make to ensure the field is open and willing to learn from scholars which hold different racial identities, lived experiences, and ways of knowledge making practices. I also suggest we also consider the ways

in which approaches to our scholarship and pedagogy can be made receptive and applicable to one community and not communities that may not hold the same identity—say for example the use of the word Bitch in Black communities and its same usage in LGBTQ communities. Again, a sense of cultural awareness. This distinction is not always a bad thing, but it is important to recognize that sometimes an artifact may not be written and intended for you, the reader, when it is actually a tool of oppression.<sup>4</sup> As detailed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) in “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” rhetorical practices can be feminist but not anti-racist. If the field does not take up socially just intersectional rhetorical TPC practices, as illustrated through AR, then racist ideologies and practices may continue (Williams, 2012).

Finally, I think it is important that I recognize and proudly express that I center Black experiences and the narratives of Black and Brown bodies within my scholarship. I produce research that privileges Black and Brown bodies to serve as a response to the inadequate numbers of diverse representation in my field of study. Completing this type of research is also a form of resistance (as I choose to not follow the norms that have come before me such as only talkin’ about white cisgender men), and it is also a way for me to advocate for the work of scholars who will come after me, showcasing that scholarship that privileges Black and Brown bodies is legitimate, valid, and not only an area of special interest. And yet, as we wait for the changes that will take time to come, I’ve made a conscious effort to simply say, “Fuck it, I’ll do

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<sup>4</sup> Think of the various court rulings that referenced Black people as if they were inhumane and unable to read or contextualize the language that was present. See, *From Black Codes to Recodification: Removing the Veil from Regulatory Writing* (Williams, 2010)

it” when it comes to Black research.<sup>5</sup> Haas writes that folks been promising to do the work of cultural studies in technical communication (Haas, 2012); ain’t but a few folks actually stepping to the plate. I, like other historically marginalized scholars, are choosing to combine theory with practical problem-solving skills and implement and develop scholarship where I see a gap. And as African Americans have always had to do, I have sought to create a theory that provides “third way” answers to systematically racist exclusions” (Banks, 2005, p. 27) in TPC scholarship. So yes, I am making it apparent that the scope of my project pertains specifically to Black and Brown bodies and their cultures. It wasn’t until a conversation with one of my mentors and committee member Erin A. Frost that I realized that if I meant Black bodies, then I need to flat out say Black bodies, epistemologies, and whatever else I’m talking ‘bout concerning Black people. I also acknowledge it because it takes a lot of courage to stand firm in your research to focus on Black bodies, especially as a graduate student, when all the scholarship around you is focused on everyone else but your people. Scholars such as Adam Banks (2005), Elaine Richardson (2006), and Geneva Smitherman (2003, 2000, 1995) have all served as an inspiration for me to center the lived experiences of Black bodies.

Now, I also want to take a moment to pause and acknowledge my personal criticism on the notion that project scope can serve as a valid response to why various elements or experiences are ignored by scholars in any field. When developing artifacts that speak to various communities and the impact those artifacts can have on varying communities, it is important to not dismiss or clearly overshoot additional outside contributing factors in the name of project

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<sup>5</sup> As tweeted by Charne Graham, @88nae88, “Fuck it, I’ll do it – Black Women”, references Black women having to do the damn work sometimes.



scope. In saying project scope is the reason why multiple contributing factors are not acknowledged assumes that the context of our research operates in a vacuum, and it doesn't. And to be honest, I have fallen victim to this in my own research, and I make continued efforts to not do so. In taking a feminist approach and in an effort to produce socially just scholarship, it is our duty to pay attention to where our research area or interest finds its place in the bigger scheme of things. Highlighting project limitations is not the equivalent of dismissing additional or outside contributing factors. I find acknowledging the limitations of project scope can showcase just how invested a scholar may be in their work. And actually, we have already seen this practice of acknowledging limitations within TPC studies and highlighting the outside influences. As shown in Koerber's (2009) "Rhetorical Agency, Resistance, and the Disciplinary Rhetorics of Breastfeeding," she states:

I admit, in the present study, that I have made no effort to consider the perspectives of women who never attempted breastfeeding or had less positive experiences with it. Such consideration would undoubtedly reveal many other ways in which women resist the disciplinary power of breastfeeding discourse, and it would shed new light on the difficulties inherent in such resistance. However, it is beyond the scope of this article's analysis. (p. 90)

As shown, researchers must still make apparent there are additional outside influences within a community that has shaped the way they have developed their artifact. I can think of conference presentations I've attended and asked speakers "well what about this...?" and often times I am given the response, "the scope of my project was to focus on xyz," without any mention to additional outliers, possible implications, or need for additional research. Instead of telling our

audience we ain't got to the research, we can acknowledge the need and call for additional research—I even suggest the researcher in question should lead this charge.

Furthermore, I think it is important to make apparent that this is not to say that I am incapable of conducting research that does not include Black and Brown bodies, as I have since the beginning of my educational career. I just so happen to have a preference to amplify the work of people that have gone unheard for so long; but hey, if you wish to see a dissertation that is solely rooted in Eurocentric values and norms, overpowered by the knowledge of only cisgender white males, and is assumed to be neutral, then this is not the project for you. (I didn't put that as a footnote because I wanted to be sure you, the reader, caught that shade.) My project illustrates my theory because it reclaims what it means to be Black in any space but specifically a space that is influenced by TPC, it showcases my narratives and those participating in my research, and it offers new ways of knowledge-making within the field of TPC. In the coming chapters, I provide a more thorough explanation of what makes my project stand as a model for my theoretical framework based on the brief description provided. Furthermore, my theoretical framework and project also enacts a Black Feminist theoretical approach because it brings the voices of Black women to the center (Collins, 1986) and suggests methods for voices of those in other historically marginalized groups to be heard. So, yea, sorry *#PermitPatty*, *#BBQBecky*, and *#PoolPatrolPaul*, AR ain't for you.

### **Project Origins**

I wish I could say I knew from the beginning this dissertation topic would be the thing to consume my life for the last 12 months, but I am here to admit, this is not where I was going. However, what I do know is my personal experiences as a Black woman over that past 10 years would sure impact what this dissertation project was gonna be. I also knew my research would

focus on the narratives by Black people, my people, and other minority groups. And in living as a Black woman, I have had many negative and positive experiences, that unbeknownst to me, have been heavily influenced by TPC documents and dominant cultures—which themselves are reflections of white patriarchal culture. From being pushed into attending an HBCU at an early age (I only applied to HBCUs and decided to attend Elizabeth City State University), to being denied an opportunity for employment—as I chose to go by Shawn (a shortening and gender neutral version of my middle name Ta’Shawn<sup>6</sup>) on employment documents rather than Temptuous due to my name being a racial identity marker and then lost a job opportunity as I was accused of lying on my application. Both of these experiences were influenced by TPC and Black Culture and intersected in ways that I could never imagine. Even more so, both of these experiences were shaped by my embodiment as a Black woman.

Fast forward to Summer 2017, I decided to attend a function known as TRAP Karaoke. I went with the idea that this would be just a great time to enjoy myself, but instead, it turned into a safe haven for Black, trap music loving, karaoke participants. Black people, connecting to one another through music, dance, and *#Tees4TheTrap* TRAP Karaoke was founded in Summer 2016 and is an organization that engages and connects the lived experiences of TRAP Karaoke participants in a culture that is inherently Black. Once started as a karaoke event with trap music aiming to develop a “user generated concert experience” by DC native Jason Mowatt (*TRAP Karaoke*), TRAP Karaoke has grown into a movement all its own that engages the lived experience of its attendees. Most importantly, TRAP Karaoke provides its participants the space to be ‘Unapologetically Black as Fuck,’ an uncut approach to racial identity (Chappell). Let me

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<sup>6</sup> Which is still pretty Black.

be clear, this is not just your traditional karaoke but rather karaoke centered on traditionally Black or trap music. Luckily for myself, I attended this function while enrolled in my PhD program and was able to identify the TPC practices that were in the room. From the lyrics sung by participants, to the display of lyrics on the screen, to the *#Tees4TheTrap*, all these elements are unrecognized instances of TPC. And I realized, this experience reminded me of another, my enrollment at my HBCU. HBCUs are officially defined by congress as an institution “whose principal mission was and is the education of Black Americans established before 1964” (“United Negro College Fund”, 2015). Also, HBCUs are the oldest minority serving colleges and emerged in the post antebellum era (Cole, 2006). HBCUs are another safe haven for Black scholars to get an education and focus solely on their studies and not the implications of their race within society. Now do not get me wrong, HBCUs are not necessarily a fortress against racism or sexism, but HBCUs allow for Black lived experiences and epistemologies to become a part of the classroom and not a specialized interest.<sup>7</sup>

While some may see these spaces as polar opposites as one is a public site and the other an institutional site, I want to showcase and make prominent that TPC knowledge is present in Black spaces and influenced by Black culture, but we as a field have to be willing to accept this knowledge as TPC. This decentering of the colonizer, another word for white people as referenced from the movie *Black Panther*, culture in both TRAP Karaoke and HBCUs and makes the experiences of Black people more apparent and a part of institutional TPC knowledge. So as it came time to finally narrow what I wanted to discuss for the next year of my life and beyond, I knew two Black spaces for sure were on my list: TRAP Karaoke and HBCUs, I just

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<sup>7</sup> Oh, but be clear, there are some problematic things going on that we will discuss.

needed to identify their intersections. Some of those intersections obviously include Black culture but also their transformative nature as Black spaces. The spaces physically and socially where TRAP Karaoke and HBCUs exist are based on the state of Black culture and social status at that time—past or present. Whether it be a TRAP Karaoke event that is based on the performances of the audience, collaboration of the crowd, and a shared understanding of the Black experience, or the development of an HBCU as a response to the need to educate recently freed slaves in the trades, both of these instances, and others, happen as a result of a response to Black culture thus influencing the discourse used within these communities.

### **Amplification Rhetorics**

To begin, as you move throughout my dissertation project, you will notice that each chapter is named after an album from a Black artist. In this case this chapter is named B.O.A.T.S, which is the sophomore album for 2 Chainz, also known as Titty Boi,<sup>8</sup> that takes on a journey of his life and what it is to be 2Chainz. So, I felt it was only right to name this chapter after his album, as all of my theoretical framework origins and foundation is based on a true story.

My theoretical framework AR came out of a conversation with two of my mentors, Erin Frost and Michelle Eble, and three other doctoral students; Cecilia Shelton, Gina Kruschek, and Carleigh Davis, concerning the Association of Teachers of Technical Writers (ATTW) latest diversity award. So initially we thought of the obvious, the diversity award. However, I remember myself and my fellow cohort member Cecilia Shelton (who identifies as Black) mentioning this did not completely cover the overarching idea to amplify the contributions that

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<sup>8</sup>So, if you takin' notes as you read, be sure to keep up with 2Chainz, he's going to come back up.

historically marginalized groups bring to the field. Now, I do not want to take all the credit for the name here, but I would like to mention I went pretty hard, another way for saying presenting strong evidence of argument, for this name. Some of my key pieces for argument was that the point of this award is to showcase the work of underrepresented groups that have a lot to say and a lot to bring, and that we must amplify this work. But most importantly that in amplifying this work, we are forging a space that continues in allowing these groups of people to claim their own rhetorical practices within the field of TPC and their lived experiences within their epistemologies. It was important that the organization recognize AND reserve space (I'm not a fan of the term give here as it focuses on the organization's privileged space within the academy and in turn was losing something rather than gaining insight) for historically marginalized scholars a space to be heard and seen. The goal of the award is not to validate the work of the underrepresented, even though some may look to the award as a means of validation of the work completed by underrepresented scholars, but to instead decenter the work of the present knowledge within the field and be willing to add to it. Following the naming of the award, it was officially codified as: "part of ATTW's commitment to social justice practices and increasing organizational participation and supporting research from underrepresented scholars and teachers of technical communication." Annually, ATTW offers three awards "to recognize and amplify the important contributions of underrepresented students and/or non-tenure track faculty presenting at ATTW" (ATTW Website). Following this conversation and my winning of the inaugural Amplification Award, as selected by a committee, I knew that this was something I wanted to continue to discuss and better articulate for others in the field to understand the importance of amplifying the labor and epistemologies developed by underrepresented communities.

Amplification Rhetorics are discursive and communicative practices, both written/textual and embodied/performative, typically performed/used by Black/African-Americans that center the lived experiences and epistemologies of Black/African-American people and other historically marginalized groups. AR are characterized by three tenets: (1) the reclamation of agency (ownership of embodied rhetorical practices), (2) the accentuation and acknowledgement of narratives (validated lived experiences), and (3) the inclusion of marginalized epistemologies (that add to new ways of learning). AR's foundation comes out of the development of other theories which focus on amplifying the historically marginalized as well, and even though each tenet can be found within each of these theories, I attempt to ground (not cement) each tenet to a specific theory throughout my project: (1) Critical Race Theory, which asks us to acknowledge and evaluate how race can shape the manner in which we move in our day to day, (2) Womanist Theory, which helps to better situate the need to listen to and understand the lived experiences and narratives of the bodies present in historically marginalized communities, and (3) African American/Black Rhetorics, which combines the work of Womanist Theory, Critical Theory, and Intersectionality that shapes the manner in which the epistemologies within historically marginalized groups contribute to various fields.

By definition, AR rely on including the narratives and lived experiences of historically marginalized groups, and as a self-identifying Black woman, I knew I wanted my project to focus on Black communities. My self-identification as a Black woman provides the additional ethos, outside of my institutionalized knowledge, to credibly analyze Black spaces and construct a valid narrative of Black rhetorical practices that happen to be TPC. As Aristotle mentions, agency and ethos are much more dependent upon the embodiment of the presenter than the facts

and ethical representation of the rhetor (Roberts, 1991), and I wish to utilize my embodiment to its fullest extent in this project.

Finally, I argue Amplification Rhetorics can serve as cultural and embodied instantiations of TPC. In other words, AR have the potential to change the dominant understandings of TPC and call us to re-examine the manner in which we approach TPC (Agboka, 2012), as I charge scholars in the field of TPC to question just how much culture influences research and pedagogical practices. Amplification Rhetorics asks how elements of embodiment can make our field more inclusive in our knowledge-making practices and does not rely solely on the marginalized to explain or do the sole labor of making the field more inclusive.

### **Project Specifics**

My project focuses on Amplification Rhetorics found within two Black communities that I myself am very connected to, even though my project suggests my theory of AR be taken up to analyze the practices of AR in other communities or suggest others utilize AR to highlight other historically marginalized communities. I have selected two Black communities for my analysis because agency, ownership of one's embodied lived experience, and narratives are three critical aspects of AR and this specific community is often times overlooked in all three of these aspects. The Black community is constantly charged with the duty of reclaiming their Blackness (agency) as a valuable component of who they are. Their lived experiences while maneuvering a primarily white world goes unnoticed by non-POC because their lived experiences are not the standard. Finally, the bodies that decide to tell Black narratives can sometimes be misconstrued and disguised as allyship, when in reality this telling of narratives by people that do not self-identify as Black can diminish the importance of sharing and amplifying Black narratives; this is not to say allies are non-existent, just some of 'em don't know how to be a guest. I think it is important



that I acknowledge my personal limitations within my own lens to see and genuinely understand my lived experiences as a Black woman, who has served as a TRAP Karaoke participant and attended an HBCU. My project will focus primarily on Black examples and artifacts for evidence. Finally, as the main goal of my work is to amplify historically marginalized rhetorical practices found within historically marginalized groups, in this case Black communities, I wish to privilege their lived experiences over those that are not historically marginalized, essentially taking a FUBU,<sup>9</sup> For Us by Us, approach to my dissertation.

### **AAVE and Throwin' Shade**

So, I'm gonna use a variation of language choice throughout my project. I appreciate the scholars before me, such as Vershawn Young, that have opened the door for scholars like myself to make a conscious choice to be as Black as I wish to be in my written and oral discursive practices. As explained in Vershawn Young's "Nah, We Straight': An Argument Against Code Switching," we should not look to my choice of utilizing AAVE within my project as code switching but instead code meshing. As Young states, "code meshing: dos idiomas or copping enough Standard English to really make yo AAE be Da Bomb" (p. 50). Code meshing is all about race (Young, 2009), and while I understand it may not be an accepted practice across the academy to enact code meshing performances within academic writing, I feel that it very well applies to the theory of AR. This project is rooted in race and the identity that comes with a particular race, in my case Black. My ability to fluently suggest and articulate ideas in AAVE and Standard English does not necessarily reveal myself as a weak scholar—even though I and

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<sup>9</sup> FUBU is a late 90s term, now resurfaced, which stands for "For Us. By Us" and had a philosophy to make clothes for the consumer, by the consumer—who were Black (FUBU).

other Black individuals tend to really hate when people tell them they are sooooo articulate. Rather this ability showcases my strengths as I am able to maneuver through multiple spaces, not just the academy. Essentially, I am a genre- and language-fluid discursive scholar, a scholar who possesses the ability to enact various rhetorical discursive practices whether written or oral, or an academy chameleon, or a scholar utilizing their finesse—your choice. We, as participants within the academy, should know and understand that this use of code meshing of informal and formal AAVE in “formal, discursive products, such as political speeches, students’ papers, and media interviews” (Young, 2009, p. 66 ) can expand our audiences and influence the impact we wish for our TPC scholarship to have. Yet, here is the thing, we often understand this concept in spoken discourse, but not so much in written. The way in which we accept or dictate how people should sound is based upon “the way white people wish they [people that are not white] sounded” (Kelsky, 2018), which I still ain’t figured out nor defined. In my opinion, this need to sound or write in a specific manner that is not inclusive, rings in the academy, and being real, it is emotional labor (Kelsky, 2018) for members of a community that take up code meshing practices the academy does not consider. Just think of the labor of wanting to simply say, “Y’all trippin,” but instead “You all, I think your choice of action may not be best at this time.” We joke about it, but truly, what is the difference between these statements, outside of grammatical structure? And actually, the first statement places emphasis on the actions of the person that’s trippin, and not the speaker’s assessment. It reframes who takes accountability for trippin<sup>10</sup>—taking accountability is labor.

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<sup>10</sup> Ok, so here is another example of this. We actually do this in our emails. Ya know instead of saying “Fam I told you the instructions for the last meeting in the previous meeting.” We may instead say, “My apologies for not

Most importantly, and keeping it all the way 100, the practice of dismissing AAVE is pretty racist.<sup>11</sup> Standard English's rise as "standard" comes from what linguists have identified as the "speech habits of middle-and upper-class whites" (Young, 2009). By implying that there is only one way to write or that persons of color must separate their language from that of Standard English is a logic that mimics the Jim Crow Era, equal but separate (Young, 2009). This notion that Black English is to be limited when in "formal settings" or the public domain again showcases that these variants of language choice are not equal and leads one to be labeled as inferior (Young, 2009). When scholars view Black English or Spanglish as inferior, they continue this racist ideology because in all reality "Black English don't make is own-self oppressed" (Young, 2010). I think it is important that I call myself out as I too have fallen into this academic assimilation of language acceptance—this is referred to as "linguistic double consciousness" (Young, 2009, p. 51). In the past, I have struggled with the sight or hearing of non-standard English in formal and professional settings. However, this was prior to my knowledge of anything other than Standard English and its access to formal spaces.

Furthermore, I think it is important I let y'all know, my lexicon is derived from my upbringing in the middle-class American South, my exposure to family members who lacked formal education,<sup>12</sup> and members within Black communities (musicians, church members, schoolmates, etc.). There is no one way to be or speak Black. So, what you read here in my

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conveying the information to you." EVEN THO you damn well know you gave them the instructions as clear as day. So, stop always taking accountability sis.

<sup>11</sup> If you want folks to change things in the academy, remind them just how racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, etc., it may be (with evidence), and they are sure to reconsider continuing said practice because NO ONE wants to be called a racist.

<sup>12</sup> Notice how I said formal and didn't leave education out there by itself because some folks forget that informal education (street smart) is just as pivotal to one's survival.

project is not the standard for AAVE or AAE, nor do I plan to spend a great deal of time, if any, in my dissertation providing a lesson on AAVE or AAE. Instead I welcome readers to become uncomfortable—but not Black scholar using AAVE and having to validate the choice uncomfortable. I welcome readers to not always understand the language choices or aim to identify the “part of speech” because the sentence is grammatically incorrect and must have “be” somewhere in there or a phrase’s direct meaning or origin, but I have to admit it hasn’t really stopped bodies within the academy from still using said phrases or terminology such as “Bye Felicia” but having no idea where the phrase comes from, or being a white woman telling a panel led by Black women at a conference, “It’s time we get ratchet,” so I don’t expect readers to be too uncomfortable, just lost in the sauce at times. This dissertation serves as a disruption to the current outlook of the field of TPC, which is not as inclusive as we think overall. I understand I am not stepping into a new idea, but I’m sho gonna remind y’all what I am here to do, or as we say, “I got time tuhday.” Through the use of formal and informal AAVE in my project, I will showcase my indignation (Wolfram, 2004) for the current outlook of TPC through my language and place emphasis on other areas of concern or critique.

Also, prepare for all of the shade to be thrown within my project, which I also identify as a TPC practice. For those that are not familiar with shade, as defined by Merriam-Webster, throwing shade is “to express contempt or disrespect for someone publicly especially by subtle or indirect insults or criticisms” (Merriam-Webster, 2017). I don’t know about y’all, but it sounds like the folks in the field of TPC been throwing shade for some time now. Now shade doesn’t always have to be elaborately disrespectful by default or hold negative connotations. One of the main purposes of shade is to shine light on an issue or individual, without overtly bringing attention to yourself. Shade is also a rhetorical move to charge people to change and really just

tell them about themselves. Scholarship that calls on the marginalization of communities in various fields of study (even if implicit), and even reading responses/critiques that are published, can be viewed as shade. You can respectfully read someone for filth while throwing shade. The idea of throwing shade is not a new one, however, we owe credit to its most recent explosion to the queer community. In 2010 an episode of RuPaul's Drag Race included the use of the phrase to describe the competition (*What Does 'Throw Shade' Mean?*, 2017). Since then, the phrase has been utilized to its fullest potential and it just so happens that women of color are the experts. During the Feminisms and Rhetorics 2017 conference, there was a panel titled “#SayHerName #BlackGirlMagic: 21st Century Black Women’s Rhetorical Practices” that uncovered some of the various ways that Black women have reclaimed and taken ownership of their rhetorical impact. One prominent scholar in the field of cultural rhetorics, Gwendolyn Pough, schooled the audience of majority white women on the rhetorical power of shade and how Black women have mastered the art of throwing it. As a Black woman in the audience, I appreciated not only the recognition of this rhetorical power but the highlighting of it being a Black rhetorical power, even though queer culture has also had a heavy influence. Throwing shade is what has kept Black women and gay men safe—and not just safe in the physical sense (which I argue has been the case in some instances) but in the sense of gay men and Black women having agency and engaging in the reclamation of their identity. As Tameka Bradley Hobbs details, shade is “the bitter residue of a people who have mastered the art of dismissing and humiliating others with humor and sarcasm after having been degraded for years ourselves” (Hobbs, 2015, para. 3). E. Patrick Johnson, instructor of African- American studies at Northwestern University also traces the art of shade throwing to slavery (Holmes, 2015). Slaves used shade to insult their masters without them being aware of what was going on because the threat of being beat for humiliating

massa' in his face surely outweighed the pleasure of telling him about himself. As Anna Holmes describes in her *New York Times* piece, "The Underground Art of Insult," shade can take shape in various forms and one can only hope that they do not become the subject of someone's shade. From a deep look from across the room, a rolling of the eye, or even a compliment that can be interpreted as false, shade is a form of "plausible deniability" (Holmes, 2015), yet it is very intentional in its simplest form, has the power to either be an analysis of one's character or an assassination, or read (which is another way to say you have told someone you are displeased with their actions). Oddly you don't even have to utter a single word to throw shade, but as this is a written piece, I hope my reader will identify, and enjoy, the shade I throw within the written context. As shade is having another moment in history, which can be attributed to the rise and acceptance of Black vernacular in pop culture and digital media (Holmes, 2015), I figured now would be the best time to implement its rhetorical power within my dissertation. Shade throwing, much like my choice to implement AAVE within my project, is a form of AR.

### **Moving Forward**

My project will bring my theoretical framework AR to the forefront and make it clear that scholars of the field cannot overlook the lived experiences and epistemologies of Black individuals and Black communities (and all historically marginalized groups). If scholars in the academy continue to overlook the knowledge present in marginalized communities, practitioners will only be complacent in the privileging of current academy TPC practices. In remaining complacent, not only is the academy allowing certain types of epistemologies to dominate the field—those formed in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)—and the field becomes stagnant overall. The dominant narrative that TPC is only for problem solving is not conducive to the possibility of growing a more inclusive field (Jones, Moore, Walton, 2012). As described

in “Disrupting the Past to Disrupt the Future: An Antenarrative of Technical Communication,” the authors allude to the understanding of the field of TPC historically and challenge that narrative. They believe, and I agree, “we do not believe the narrative of our field (our history, our purpose, our identity) can be—nor should it be—so neatly encompassed by a coherently pragmatic identity” (Jones, Moore, Walton, 2012, p. 213). In fact, there have been several scholars that have presented other approaches to combat this pragmatic narrative associated or assumed to be attached to TPC (Miller, 1991; Herndl, 1993; Katz, 1992; Sullivan, 1990). Holding on to this limited idea of TPC and its purpose leads to Black and other historically marginalized groups continued dismissal and lack of acknowledgement for their contributions to a field that looks at their knowledge as specialized scholarship. Finally, by not being open to the work of Black scholars in our field, barriers are formed within the academy. Barriers such as access to tenure track promotions as there is a limitation as to how credible focused research is defined (Mabokela & Green, 2011) in which the current criteria is reflected as “Eurocentric and masculinist” (Mabokela & Green, 2011, p. 68) and was created long before historically marginalized groups joined the conversation. Even who gets to be acknowledged as an expert in the field turns into a question. Is it their skillset and knowledge or is it the way they are disciplined into the field? Working to recognize oneself in scholarship is a key part of who a researcher will become. I do not want to make assumptions that finding oneself in scholarship is always labor intensive (iight it is for me), but it is a space for consideration and students should be able to locate themselves in the scholarship they read and use in their studies (Haas, 2012). This call and need for the inclusion of the scholarship completed by me, and other historically marginalized groups, is not just about wanting to discuss Black artifacts, or artifacts specific to historically

marginalized communities, but this is a call for change in academy practices that impacts all scholars and extends to other levels within the academy.

In the next chapter, I will walk y'all through how I define AR as a theoretical framework. In doing so, this will allow for other scholars to understand the framework and how it applies in the chapters for analysis. Chapter three describes the methods used to complete my project and where I provide additional insight and background on the communities I have selected, my rationale for coding mechanisms, and why I have taken various approaches to collecting and analyzing my data. Following, Chapter four will present my digital chapter, in which I immerse my audience into the world that is TRAP Karaoke. This digital chapter will take my audience through a lesson on trap music as a movement, genre, and culture that has led to the development of TRAP Karaoke. I highlight the AR that are made present within the TRAP Karaoke movement in addition to pointing out instances of TPC. In doing so, I hope to highlight the way that TPC can exist in these cultural spaces. Chapter five provides the results of my review of HBCU mission statements, discuss their ties to their history and curriculum, identify them as TPC artifacts, and locate instances of AR in the mission statements. In addition, I perform a review of HBCU curriculum to present my findings of AR in their curriculum development. My final chapter, chapter six, will unveil and articulate the rhetorical moves I have made present throughout my dissertation (Don't cheat and jump to the final chapter early!) and further elaborate on the importance of amplifying the work of Black community members as TPC practitioners.



## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspectives, *The Blueprint***

### **Amplification Rhetorics**

As discussed in Chapter 1, Amplification Rhetorics (AR) are discursive and communicative practices, both written/textual and embodied/performative, typically enacted by individuals who are Black. AR center the lived experiences and epistemologies of Black people and other historically marginalized groups. AR are characterized by three tenets: (1) the reclamation of agency and ownership of embodied rhetorical practices, (2) the accentuation, acknowledgement, and validation of narratives and lived experiences, and (3) the privileging and inclusion of marginalized epistemologies. These three tenets are derived from various theories that originate from Black scholars and focus on amplifying historically marginalized groups and their communicative practices. I use Critical Race Theory (CRT), Womanist Theory, and African American/Black Rhetorics to construct AR. These are not the only theoretical frameworks that have helped me develop Amplification Rhetorics as a theoretical framework; however, the ideas and foundations within these three particular theories are most prominent. CRT asks individuals to acknowledge and evaluate how race can shape the manner in which they move in their day to day practices. Womanist Theory helps to better situate the need to listen to and understand the lived experiences and narratives of the bodies present in historically marginalized communities, and African American/Black Rhetorics and their emphasis on intersections privileges the epistemologies within historically marginalized groups and how they can contribute to various fields within academia including TPC. Furthermore, AR illustrate how TPC as a field can become a space to inform those that are unaware of the influence culture has on TPC. AR also highlight and make apparent that without these cultural influences, TPC would not have

problems to solve. Or, without considering cultural influences, TPC never truly solves a problem. It only makes the problem more ingrained and embedded.

AR, as a theoretical framework, calls on scholars to identify specific rhetorical and technical communication practices within cultural spaces and to be willing to pass the microphone and make space for the experiences and knowledge-making practices of Black people and other historically oppressed individuals. Given the purpose of AR as a theoretical framework and how it can be used, I also suggest AR can be seen as a decolonial theoretical framework within the field of TPC. As a decolonial framework, AR offer the opportunity to redress colonial influences on Black communities while supporting the inclusion of coexistence amongst cultures and also committing to the work of reciprocity (Haas, 2012). It is important to recognize AR as an example of decolonial rhetorics in that a decolonial world is “committed to the emancipation of human diversity in all its expression and manifestations” (Rodriguez, 177). Furthermore, in identifying AR as a decolonial framework, I am committing to a framework that is sustainable for myself, other Black scholars, and future generations, all the while recognizing those that have come before me such as Riley-Mukavetz (2018) who asserts that projects that utilize a decolonial theoretical framework should aim to “create, sustain, and maintain a habitual space for present and future generations” (p. 126). I respectfully and consciously look to the work of other decolonial theory scholars (Thomas, 2005; Ettawageshik, 1999; George & Sefa Cei, 2018), whom all suggest the need to consider the spaces we inhabit and how they may impact our future generations, or in my case, future Black scholars, to support referencing my framework as an example of decolonial research, and I hope to further lend insight to the ways Black communities engage in and implement decolonial practices within their day-to-day communication and performances.

In this chapter, I will move the reader through an exploration of the theories that provide the blueprint for AR. These theories inform the tenets of AR in overlapping ways, and each theoretical framework I've selected is closely aligned with a specific tenet of AR. CRT is connected to Tenet 1, Womanist Theory informs Tenet 2, and African American/Black Rhetorics supports Tenet 3. However, these tenets and their theoretical associations may and do overlap. For example, CRT, as I have suggested provides the theoretical framework to reconsider how race shapes our day to day lives. Whereas Womanist Theory offers insight into the importance of understanding the lived experiences and narratives of the bodies present in historically marginalized communities. In order to do the later, one must first understand race's impact on such narratives. This chapter seeks to inform readers of past and present scholarship that details the lived experiences of individuals in Black communities and provide additional frameworks that allows AR to be applied in other fields. Also, in presenting AR, I aim to lend the insight needed for the reader to better understand the research that I have completed in my forthcoming chapters on TRAP Karaoke and HBCUs where I will further discuss the ways that the field of TPC can analyze, utilize, and implement AR in their research.

AR are meant to be utilized and understood by researchers, and AR can also be a way for an individual member to amplify who they are and who they believe themselves to be. I like to think of AR as a theoretical framework for understanding another community's rhetorical practices and also a way to showcase pride in the rhetorical practices of certain communities. So, as you move through the discussion of each tenet, it may become a bit entangled as to who is doing the analyzing and who is doing the amplifying. Know that both roles can be enacted by any individual depending on the community and context. For the purposes of this project and in

order to define the tenets of AR for analytical purposes, I discuss the theoretical rationales that support the characteristics of the discursive and communicative practices that I call AR.

### **Defining the Tenets of Amplification Rhetorics**

The following sections define each tenet and provide a discussion of the supporting literature and rationale for including each tenet as a key characteristic of the rhetorical communication practices (written/verbal/performative) located within Black communities. As a reminder, even though the tenets are aligned with specific theoretical frameworks, you may see the theories show up in other tenets, and these tenets serve as the three key characteristics or foundation of AR.

#### **Tenet 1: The (Re)clamation of Agency and Ownership of Embodied Practices.**

Tenet 1 focuses on the ways agency and ownership can be (re)claimed by individuals from historically marginalized communities to support a specific set of embodied rhetorical practices, and it highlights and provides insight into the ways individuals (re)claim their agency as part of their communicative practices. In order to effectively identify AR, you must first be able to identify the agency for which the observant does or does not have to understand the rhetorical actions that follow in order to (re)claim and have ownership of one's embodied practices. CRT serves as one of the most pivotal theories in discussing the reclamation of agency (Tenet 1) mainly because the theory seeks to validate lived experiences as legitimized and owned by individuals or communities. CRT spotlights how a group can be marginalized but not coerced, thus (re)claiming their agency and owning their embodied rhetorical practices. Yet, before I go too far, I must make clear how I define agency within the context of this project.

Agency is the manner in which an individual acknowledges their positionality or place within a culture/community (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, et al., 2001) as a speaker/writer

whose voice, ideas, or cultural identity are regarded as valid, true, and based upon their societal stance. In other words, agency is how a person's position in the world and within society impacts their authority, ability, and potential to speak or suggest change. Agency shapes one's authority to speak as an individual who may not hold a position of power to make suggestions or enforce the call for change. For example, think of you tellin' someone's kid to sit down and they say, "You ain't my momma!" thus meaning you really don't have the power to force the child to sit down. Also, agency shapes an individual's ability to speak, but it also acknowledges the skillset or proficiency needed to do so. You think you should tell the child to sit down because you know it will result in a fall, but you are not his momma and you are fully aware of your position in this situation even though experience shows the child may fall. So, you have the lived experience and skillset to speak, but you know there is a chance that you may go unheard and you may be unsure if it is worth the risk. Finally, agency impacts an individual's potential to speak or suggest change as it calls into question what systems of oppression are at play that may hinder their calls for change to be made. Think of you telling the kid to sit down because you know it will result in a fall, but his momma comes up and tells you to mind your business. So, won't no need to tell him to sit down, but you still took the risk and told the child to sit down because it was in the child's benefit to do so, regardless of the consequences you faced. This recognition of agency as a space for authority, ability, and potential allows for the negotiation of agency to be enacted when it is acknowledged by the agent and apart from the agent's acknowledgement of their own agency. Even though agency is embedded in a societal/communal structure of shared experiences, I argue that individual experiences as offered within these structures, based on an individual's standpoint, can too shape agency.

I've developed my working definition for agency from Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's (2005) "Agency: Promiscuous and Protean," where she describes a contemporary idea of agency and how it has been established by using the infamous Sojourner Truth "Ain't I a Woman?" speech. Campbell suggests that voice or agency is primarily based on Truth's embodiment as a former slave and abolitionist. Furthermore, Campbell provides additional components of agency as she states:

In a nutshell, I propose that agency (1) is communal and participatory, hence, both constituted and constrained by externals that are material and symbolic; (2) is "invented" by authors who are points of articulation; (3) emerges in artistry or craft; (4) is effected through form; and (5) is perverse, that is, inherently, protean, ambiguous, open to reversal. (Campbell, 2005, p. 2)

Campbell's way of understanding agency offers insight into the way that agency is not solely dependent upon one individual. It is actually a negotiation between an agent and oppressive systems. But I also think it can be a negation of ownership with the agent themselves suggesting that coming to terms with their reality is in fact crucial to the act of reclaiming and owning their embodied practices. In addition, Campbell offers additional ways of seeing agency as it can emerge in artistry or craft. Agency is an ever-evolving concept that changes over time and is embedded in the "historical practical conceptions of time and action" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 973). The manner in which agency was (re)claimed and performed for civil rights activists through, for example, boycotts, marches, and bus rides varied from that of slaves who used uprisings, suicide by drowning, and the underground railroad. In addition, I draw on Eric King Watts's interpretation of "voice" to facilitate my working definition. Through his analysis of how one's voice can have impact and agency, he concludes there are three aspects that we can

draw on attributed to “voice;” voice is shaped and energized by the public’s idea of ethics of speech, voice is developed based on shared emotions, and voice is made valid by public acknowledgement (Watts, 2001, p. 186). Finally, agency calls for the speaker to remember and remain vigilant of the location from which they speak and (re)claim their positionality, or lens, as an asset, not a liability to public or society insight. In being aware of all of the elements as presented in these additional descriptors for agency, an individual is made aware of the systems they are up against and are able to consider the ways they can utilize their agency in rejecting the systems and their impact. In each of the references I’ve provided alongside my working definition for agency, it is made more apparent that agency, as a concept, is closely tied to the public’s or society’s role in understanding agency.

CRT advocates for the lens that is used by Black individuals in order to understand their world. This lens provides special insight as to how Black and historically marginalized individuals move about the world and better illustrates why there is a need to consider what non-historically marginalized communities may lack in perception to their position. As in Harris, (et.al.)’ (2012) example:

Why were people of color much more likely than whites to see American society as racist and to be pessimistic about the possibility of eliminating racism? Did they know something whites did not? (p. 9)

CRT also calls for Black people, specifically, to reclaim their own identities and lived experiences as valid and as a means to better situate their positionality in the world. In understanding this position, Black people are able to move from a state of Negromachy, or a state of confusion relating to the experiences by Black people in understanding their racial identity (Boykin, Franklin, & Yates, 1980) and a person dependent upon white society for self-

definition (Cross, 1971). For some, through assimilation, their *understanding* of their positionality and their *actual* positionality has shaped their identity and how they choose to move throughout the world. William Cross acknowledges this understanding of one's positionality versus their actual positionality as assimilation and suggests Black people at some point move from this position of assimilation as Negroes and into a space of self-acceptance and understanding as Black. This process, known as the Negro to Black conversion, or Nigrescence theory, explains a Black identity model (Cross, 1971), which I discuss later. CRT expands the range of institutions of power available for enacting agency, such as "economics, history, setting, group and self-interest, and emotions and the unconscious" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). In expanding these perspectives and to be reflective of one's positionality in the world allows for the identification or exigence to reclaim individual and even potential group agency.

Tenet 1 is about an individual making the decision to utilize their embodiment how they see fit and as it connects to the psychological transformation of Nigrescence theory in which one must first learn to understand who and what their identity entails and how it is influenced by their Blackness before they can move forward and enact the rhetorical powers as associated with their embodied practices. The usage of embodiment how one may see fit can be influenced by an individual's standpoint. Patricia Hill Collins makes clear in her response to Susan Hekman's "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited" (1997) that there is a difference between group based and individual standpoint and critiques Hekman for not acknowledging that difference. In other words, yes, a group of Black people may have a certain embodied experience of segregation, as referenced by Collins (1997, p. 375), but the individual experience may in fact differ based on possible factors such as time, class, and educational status—but overall the experience of segregation will resemble those that have impacted African Americans as a group.



To further echo the work of Collins it is imperative that we acknowledge that these standpoints are not one in the same and should not be used interchangeably. In thinking of Collins' view on this, I suggest that being aware of which standpoint one assumes, individually or within a group, will influence the choice to decide what embodied practice is most appropriate; individual standpoint cannot stand in place for that of the group. This awareness furthers my implication that one may decide to enact their embodiment and voice as they see fit because the individual "always holds complete power or agency over the consciousness that he or she constructs in his or her own mind and the choice that she or he uses to express that consciousness" (Collins, 1997, p. 379) along with the awareness of their position as a group or individual. Finally as suggested by Collins, standpoint theory oftentimes assumes only the individual proxy, however in taking into consideration the group the individual is a part of, I assert that standpoint can serve as a way to negotiate if agency is able to still exist, even if the agent does not acknowledge it themselves. An example of this would be the use of what we call "White Woman's Tears". On the surface level and as Hekman's view of standpoint theory suggests, the white woman is crying because she feels she has been harmed and those tears may in fact be valid. However, based on the lens Collins provides, those tears are in fact a part of a system that provides agency to white women in which they are able to weaponize their tears, even if they do not know it is a system of oppression which they are aiding in, but I think that can be debatable. Nevertheless, it is possible for an individual to not be aware of their agency, all the while enacting what their agency and power provides. Ultimately, it is up to the individual to utilize that agency how they may see fit once they have recognized its power.

As CRT reminds us, it is crucial to remain aware of where one finds themselves within the scheme of things and seek ways to overcome barriers which may be in place. To reclaim

means to retrieve or recover, and I wish to be very clear that Tenet 1 does not suggest one rely only on the agency they've *obtained* through societal structures but rather the agency they themselves make claim to, based on their own observation of their position and through the rhetorical strategies they enact. As a result, this moves us to claim or rather own agency, instead of solely the (re)clamation of agency. Tenet 1 is a component of my theoretical framework that describes the evolution of one's identity (from a gradual to more complex form), moving from the (re)clamation of agency to the ownership of agency to the showcasing of discursive or performative practices dependent upon context and an individual's positionality as historically marginalized. What's most difficult about that last piece is it can be difficult to pinpoint one's individualized understood positionality and agency, but if I am enacting AR, tenet 1, as a rhetorical practice, I do not seek validation from others to indicate my one true self. An example of this can be thought of when I am in the classroom. I enact AR tenet 1 when I position my embodiment and agency in the room by making sure that my lessons are structured around my understandings of my embodiment in the classroom (attire/physical appearance), owning that embodiment by being aware of the implications of my embodiment (tone/body language), and understanding my position as the instructor (setting expectations/establishing accountability). Recognizing that Black communities, and other historically marginalized groups, can claim and take back their agency is the overall focus of Tenet 1 in AR. Through AR, as characterized by Tenet 1, individuals of Black communities are able to negotiate just who they are seeking validation from. Which system of oppression are they actually fighting against? And what approaches can they take to undertake these systems while remaining true to themselves. This idea of reclaimed agency and positionality can be compared to two people looking at the same optical illusion. One person sees a horse, and the other person sees an old lady. Neither observers

are wrong, per say; however, if we disengage the viewpoint of the person that saw the horse over the person that saw the old lady, their agency, and supposed views, based on their orientation to the object is dismissed. I know that comparison may seem somewhat belittling on the large scale; however, I believe this same type of behavior happens when undergoing and reflecting on issues of embodied lived experiences—even when the person that saw the old lady may have a unobscured view, better lighting, and a new pair of glasses—or privilege. Thankfully, there are various theoretical frameworks that point to these kinds of privilege as barriers or systems of oppression, but these same theories also acknowledge what it means to have agency within spaces of possible privilege, and in knowing the agency we have or can (re)claim, historically marginalized groups can overcome these barriers of oppression, overlook them, and implement rhetorical strategies that amplify their embodied experiences, performances, and discursive practices.

I suggest an observer or scholar who wishes to learn from Black communities and identify AR communicative practices taking place as TPC look to rhetorical and technical communication practices that highlight agency, ownership, and positionality. In observing the rhetorical discursive practices or performances of any community, we look to how these three aspects (agency, ownership, and positionality) may look for different communities. An example of this would be Hillary Clinton reclaiming the title of “Nasty Woman,” as she is shown modeling a shirt that says, “Nasty Woman” (2017) a name that refers to her push back at President Trump’s petty, childish, uncalled for, ignorant (shall I go on?) name calling, but also her physical embodiment as a woman. Or my girl, Brittney Cooper’s (2018) opening to her book *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Superpower*, in which off rip she lets ya know

straight up that she is not here for the stuff.<sup>13</sup> Cooper lets her readers know, “This is a book by a grown-ass woman written for other grown-ass women” (Cooper, 2018, p. 1). Again, as shown in the Clinton example, Cooper highlights her embodiment, owning her embodiment, and her position as author and who the book is for. In doing so, she has provided the context needed to form a narrative around her book, which she herself has (re)claimed and constructed, as she is aware of who she embodies, what she represents, and the societal norms associated with an identity such as hers. This leads to the next tenet, “The Accentuation, Acknowledgement, and Validation of Narratives and Lived Experiences.”

### **Tenet 2: The Acknowledgement and Validation of Narratives and Lived Experiences**

Tenet 2 focuses on the accentuation (emphasis), acknowledgement (recognition), and validation (affirmation) of narratives and lived experiences that highlight the importance of individualized and community-wide shared experiences. In acknowledging their lived embodied experiences as a means to position themselves in the world, they are also afforded the insight to better articulate their narratives. It’s kinda like the old saying, “You don’t know where you goin’, unless you know where you come from.” Reclaiming one's agency allows individuals and groups to understand the influencers as well as the impact their narrative, both shared and individual, can have on the greater scale of things. Shorthand, agency shapes narratives, and even one step

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<sup>13</sup> In case you were unaware, “stuff” should actually be a different word, but in tryna make sure I still enact some of the formalities in the dissertation genre, I’ve censored the statement. But you should know, the word is “sh\*ts”, and more specifically the phrase is “F\*\*k Sh\*Ts”. As in “I am not here for the f\*\*k sh\*ts.” This is essentially another way to highlight and place emphasis on the negatives, nonsense, messiness, annoyance, or down right unneeded additions by using a combination of terms that both signify anger, annoyance and contempt, or as Plies would call it, big mad. And the fact I had to consider the rhetorical censoring of a specific statement within my dissertation to ensure I do not offend readers in such an important chapter is a prime example of Tenet 1, and my annoyance of having to care not to offend. I’ve taken a moment to acknowledge my agency, my position in the academy, and my location within the dissertation. Most importantly, I’ve considered the implications for myself, a Black female graduate student (not well established Brittany Cooper), and using such profane language as a means of contempt, and chose not to within this specific space of my dissertation, and that was my choice to make—Tenet 1 in action.

further, often dictates who has the authority to share their narratives. In understanding who the narrative actually belongs to, one must reconsider if in sharing that narrative, the intended impact will be received the same or if the narrative will be lost on that individual's assumed agency. As agency is also shaped by one's position in connection to a culture or community, I believe it is safe to say everyone ain't got the same agency to tell another community or individual's story with hopes that it will be acknowledged and viewed as valid.

I support this second tenet with the foundational principles of Womanist Theory. Coined by Alice Walker, and as described by Layli Phillips in her edited collection, *The Womanist Reader* (2006), Womanist Theory works to accentuate the lived experiences and “everyday methods of problem solving” (xxx) that Black women must constantly be made aware of. This sense of awareness is an ever-constant lived experience of oppression faced by Black women and further helps provide the agency to discuss and share narratives of hardships. Womanist theory was developed as a critique to early feminism because feminism did not highlight the intersectional hardships faced by Black women (Williams, 1986). Furthermore, Womanist theory highlights a different approach to theoretical understandings. For example, in the classroom, unlike standard theoretical courses, which are dependent upon philosophical essays, courses developed out of Womanist theory instead rely on the use of “allegories, slave and fictional narratives, testimonies, and a wide range of cultural products including blues and jazz (con)texts” (Lee, 1995). The focal point of the Womanist theoretical framework is to focus on the narratives of Black women that are shared through various genres that are known to represent their lived experiences, even though they may take on the role as the “outsider within” (Collins, 1986). This awareness and acknowledgement of self, family, and society for African American women contributes to the title of an “outsider within,” which further supports the importance of

sharing one's lived experiences through the uniqueness of a shared narrative. Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* highlights the various stories her mother told her as a child, and those stories help to make her who she was at the time of her authored collection (1983), essentially reminding her audience that it is their duty to pass down the stories, narratives, and knowledge of those that came before them and record these stories as her mother had done (p. 240). Narratives serve to accentuate, acknowledge, and validate the lived experiences of an individual at the specific moment of the tale recall and also serve to shed light on the lived experiences of those that have come in the past (Baker-Bell, 2017; Richardson, 2003; Walker, 1983). Black feminist-womanist storytelling allows us to collect, write, analyze, and theorize, and heal from our stories (Baker-Bell, 2017). Theorizing and healing from our stories allows us to pass the wisdom and knowledge we have acquired through our lived experiences to generations that follow us. One place this occurs is in the Black beauty salon. There we are provided knowledge from what we refer to as "aunties" or elders, and our narratives are shared amongst one another. As we use these moments to share our narratives and get our hair did, there is a moment to learn how our community practices have evolved over time (Baker-Bell, 2017). As a result, this may remove the need to seek validation in the future from that of the oppressor because we are able to validate each other's narratives.

Womanist theory, as described by Philips and other scholars such as Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1985) and Clenora Hudson-Weems & Zulu Sofola (1995), women who are at the forefront of Africana Womanism, helps to better situate the need to listen to and understand the lived experiences of Black women and their community practices. Much like CRT, Womanist Theory serves as a theoretical framework that is used to validate, provide a theoretical understanding, and explain the value of lived experiences as told by those experiencing these

embodied instances of oppression. Shared narratives of oppression provide a sense of community and understanding by those who have faced the same hardships. This does not mean that one narrative is any less valuable than others, but it is important to highlight the power in numbers of shared narratives. The narratives already exist; however, sometimes, there is a need to include and lend a microphone (NOT VOICE) to those that may go unheard. This privileges agency and has the potential to provide authority, ability, or potential to utilize one's voice. To lend a voice to someone suggests that the person is not aware of their own authority, ability, or potential to speak for themselves, and in turn is reliant upon outside permission to speak or share their story. The valorization of Black lived experiences (Williams, 1986), as influenced by Womanist theory, centers the importance of these narratives and the importance of including and listening to these narratives.

Theoretical frameworks, such as AR, are often developed out of narratives, as theoretical frameworks can support a narrative, and possibly THE narrative, for which to understand the object one may be observing. Or to get a bit more technical, I make this assumption based upon one of the definitions for narrative as “a representation of a particular situation or process in such a way as to reflect or conform to an overreaching set of aims and values” (“Narrative,” n.d). In other words, the use of narratives and lived experiences and their validation provide a foundation for understanding an individual's rhetorical actions, and narratives can serve as rationales for action. This provides a space for members that are not a part of the academy to potentially make claims that, “We don't need *your* canonized formal theories to understand *our* narratives”.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> I think it is important I call myself out here for actually developing a theory to support the narratives of historically marginalized groups. However, as indicated in Chapter 1, I understand what the academy recognizes and the need to develop formal theories to ensure the scholarship that is produced within the academy is legitimized.  
#ForTheCulture

Theoretical frameworks as canonized by the academy are not the only way people can seek to validate their narratives and lived experiences. Also, when asked “Do narratives influence the rhetorical strategies of historically marginalized groups or do historically marginalized groups use the rhetorical practices and strategies as a way to tell their narratives, share their knowledge, be heard, valued, or accepted?” I believe it is most appropriate to say the answer here would be both. Narratives serve to explain and provide reasoning for communicative strategies implemented by historically marginalized communities and heavily influence rhetorical strategies found within historically marginalized groups. This is the case because narratives are shared experiences that also serve as lessons for those within shared communities and observers of a community. I would even go as far as to say that narratives that are not created by historically marginalized groups but about historically marginalized groups, can have great, negative influences. An example of this would be past narratives constructed by the media following the killing of an unarmed Black teenager.<sup>15</sup> The teen is described as much larger, dangerous, and troublesome than they may actually be. Media outlets often go on a spree to assassinate the victim’s character by posting and showing images of the victim in an ill light (Fridkin, Wintersieck, Courey & Thompson, 2017). As bad as these occurrences may be, the narrative that the media helps create is that “If I am shot by the police, I so rightfully possibly

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<sup>15</sup> See Calvin John Smiley’s “From ‘brute’ to ‘thug’:” The demonization and criminalization of unarmed Black male victims in America” (2016), Willie Tolliver, Bernadette Hadden, Fabienne Snowden, and Robyn Brown-Manning’s “Police Killings of Unarmed Black People: Centering Race and Racism in Human Behavior and the Social Environment Content” (2016), and others in the *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, Volume 26, Issue 3-4.



deserve it.” However, the development of these narratives on the part of the media lead to counter narratives that called this practice out through the use of a hashtag #IfTheyGunnedMeDown, which shows participants posting photos of themselves in an uncanny way next to a photo of themselves that would be typically regarded as “safe” based on their attire and poses.<sup>16</sup> Historically marginalized participants understand what could possibly occur in the media if they were gunned down and they are instead challenging it by providing a different narrative. So, in this instance, a narrative created by an outside entity influenced a rhetorical strategy to communicate their lived experience, and as a response, participants created their own counter narrative to validate these lived experiences. This is also known as rhetorical resistance (Watts, 2001; Koerber, 2009; Symon, 2005; Phillips, K. , 2006; Talbot, 1996) through narratives, in which we listen to the lived experiences of those who may lack rhetorical agency with certain audiences but hold a great deal of lived experiences to be accounted for and recognized. In all, when narratives go unheard the labor of having to navigate through certain spaces, predominately white spaces, for Black individuals can become intense, even more so when facing *gendernoir* racial fatigue (Hotchkins, 2017) or the intersection of labor regarding race and gender.

Yet, I see there remains an additional space to unpack, or that I keep Electric Sliding around—who gets to validate these lived experiences? Womanist theory gives us the frame to understand that narratives don’t need only be validated by the white westernized society’s standards, but narratives, as discussed by Baker-Bell (2017), can serve as a new way to form

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<sup>16</sup> See Cecilia Shelton’s dissertation, “On Edge: A Techné of Marginality,” for further exploration on this topic.

knowledge, a means of activism, and as I believe, a way to establish accountability. Stories are owned by the speaker, performer, rhetorician, and I question if one does not see their narrative as valid within themselves, then how much power does outside validation really hold?

My theory does call for the validation of lived experiences, but I don't necessarily say on whose terms. It is important here that I highlight that an individual can indeed enact AR, thus amplifying their own lived experiences, narratives, and epistemologies. Yet based on the definition of the term validation, do I really need an outside view to confirm the accuracy of my own lived experience? How do we negotiate my agency in confirming that accuracy? Who takes on the role of someone that is responsible for confirmation? Why must that confirmation only happen from an outside lens? I wish to admit that even for myself, this is an area in which I recognize can be a slippery slope. How does one validate their own narrative? I suggest by acknowledging and knowing that their lived experience existed, then they can validate their experience. However, this does not mean that there cannot be an internal battle or a moment of conflict within oneself when the validation is not received from outside viewers/listeners, as we have seen with Anita Hill and her experience when she told her narrative. Hill was met with backlash and "fiercely ridiculed by some Black women" (Bell, 1992, p. 371). This type of treatment can lead to the questioning within oneself if their lived experience is valid. However, I also think of the speech provided by Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman," in which she really did not seek validation from her audience. I think she was confirming what she had already known to be true. I think often times we may use confirm and validate interchangeably, when I think it can be helpful to consider them as operating as individual concepts. For example, y'all know I love giving a good example. One can confirm that they are in discomfort at the doctor's office, but that same doctor cannot validate that pain. Does this mean the pain is nonexistent? Of

course not, so then it becomes the role of the patient to amplify their confirmed pain until it is then validated by the doctor. But again, in this tangible mess of terms, I argue that I can confirm pain is present and validate my need to seek additional treatment. And in building on this example, a Womanist approach to this example leads to the narrative being shared with other Black women so they learn that they too can advocate for care. Thus, narratives can also be curated based on the experience of a group of individuals, as standpoint theory suggests. If one knows their experience to be true, and it has had an impact on them, there is no need to seek validation from others, but there is a need to share the narrative or lived experience as indicated through Womanist theory. I do wish to also mention that this idea of not having to seek validation can lead to an interrogation of tension as to why tell the narrative anyway. I like to argue that we tell our narratives not to necessarily validate our experiences but to hold our audiences accountable for their knowledge of those experiences; however, I could see the terms validity and accountability used interchangeably when sharing our narrative, yet I do not think they should be interchanged as such. Let's go back to the doctor example. I've told you I am in pain, I've confirmed this. Yet, you do not see my pain as valid, cool. However, when I seek additional care, you are now held accountable because you were informed of the pain, you chose not to listen, and as a consequence you may be held responsible for additional medical attention or care. I feel this concept is fairly easy to understand from the role of speaker but possibly difficult as the audience. Even more so, the listening of narratives can become difficult when the narrative that is shared challenges one's outlook or the systems of oppression they benefit from. Tenet 2 suggests that through this listening of narratives by marginalized groups, systems of oppression can become dismantled. In short, when asked "who gets to validate this experience," the response is the person that is living and experiencing it. By understanding that narratives are

subjective, we are better able to understand how an individual learns to incorporate their narratives and lived experiences into different knowledge-making practices.

### **Tenet 3: The Privileging of Marginalized Epistemologies**

Tenet 3 focuses on the importance of the inclusion and integration of African American/Black Rhetorics into spaces where knowledge is curated, informal and formal, so that Black epistemologies can add to traditional ways of learning. African American/Black Rhetorics combine the work of Womanist Theory, Critical Race Theory, and others. African American/Black Rhetorics provide a way for historically marginalized communities to share their perspectives and ways of doing and learning in ways that are specific to their community while communicating amongst one another as well as outsiders. Most importantly in the context of my theoretical framework, through the use of African American/Black Rhetorics, the voices of those in historically marginalized communities can be “recognized by the gatekeepers of the disciplines as legitimate contributors to their perceptions of truth” (Jackson & Richardson, 2003). One of the most prominent texts to offer insight into African American/Black Rhetorics, is the Ronald L Jackson and Elaine Richardson edited collection, *Understanding African American Rhetorics: Classic Origins to Contemporary Innovations*. In the foreword, we are provided a foundation for understanding the importance of utilizing African American/Black Rhetorics. As stated,

... it is clear that when we learn more from the diverse voices among us, and as we know more about human experiences and the realities of others who have viewed life through a different lens, each of us becomes more empowered. (Foreword, xi)

And in this effort to become empowered, African American/Black Rhetorics serve as the vehicle to privilege the epistemologies and ways of knowing as discovered through ones (re)clamation of

agency and validation of shared narratives, which influence their rhetorical and the cultural practices. This is consistent with taking on an apparent feminism approach where scholars are able to enact rhetorically inclusive practices that lead to the amplification of historically marginalized communities (see Frost, 2016).

Even though epistemologies, or an epistemology, concerns epistemic performance as judgement, knowledge, and belief (Sosa, 2017), it is important that we also highlight what it means to acquire knowledge, outside of the classroom, within other communities. I argue that African American/Black Rhetorics emphasizes the development of knowledge based in shared community practices and experiences, that are then taken as a part of the community's ways of knowing, or "Knowledge in Action" because "knowledge is a form of action" (Sosa, 2017, p. 207). When enacted in AR, Tenet 3 illustrates the ways that individuals can learn how Black rhetorical practices can lead to new ways of understanding why present norms have existed (such as the abandonment of AAVE for Standard English (SE) to ensure you receive a job) and why it is crucial to overturn those norms (such as acknowledging the labor that goes into having to use SE when it is not your norm). In challenging social norms, as I've suggested, we are able to expand the knowledge that is made readily available to members of society as a whole. As knowledge obtained within a community can be constituted as socially achieved knowledge (Campbell, 1990), this tenet suggests members outside of historically marginalized communities look to the specific ways of understanding how these communities achieve social knowledge. By including and privileging the knowledge of Black or historically marginalized communities, their knowledge-making practices are no longer dismissed as secondary to all other standard knowledge-making practices.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight the knowledge that may not be explicitly shared through Amplification Rhetorics as this is one way that communities still hold a piece of their identity, specific to their group or understanding. This acknowledgement of African American/Black Rhetorics that are not always easily identifiable or seen highlights the occurrences of tacit knowledge within historically marginalized communities. Tacit knowledge is one of the most critical components of Tenet 3 of my theory because tacit knowledge is knowledge that is not easily transferable through written or verbal communication, and the conversations concerning tacit knowledge are centrally focused on the body, or embodiment, of which the tacit knowledge is shown, presented, or reproduced. However, tacit knowledge is still transdiscursive even when it is not explicitly linguistically representable (Adloff, Gerund, & Kaldewey, 2015). A great wealth of the knowledge present in African American communities is passed down through traditions such as song, dance, rituals, or storytelling. Tacit knowledge is fundamental, holistic, collective, normative in structure, and is differentiated (Adloff, Gerund, & Kaldewey, 2015). Tacit knowledge is about insider/outside knowledge and is usually constructed within a shared community. One's inability to understand or translate that knowledge makes it even more crucial to have what I call inclusive rhetorical practices when understanding how Tenet 3 works within my theoretical framework.

Inclusive rhetorical practices suggest that there is or should be a welcoming of varying ideologies and communicative practices that are regarded as sacred and specific to other communities and deemed valuable to those that are not a part of those communities. Enacting inclusive rhetorical practices such as the respect of cultural norms, performing the labor to learn more about the community one may not be a part of, and stepping to the side to allow historically marginalized communities the space to share knowledge however they may see fit in spaces such

as the academy can lead to an abundance of growth amongst individuals in and out of the academy.

Adam J. Banks and Keith Gilyard's book, *On African American Rhetorics* (2018) discusses additional rhetorical practices by Black scholars that speak to the various Black epistemologies found within their communities and lend insight to those that may not be familiar with Black epistemologies. Elaine Richardson's *Hip Hop Literacies* unearths the various ways Black communities, predominantly those in hip-hop communities, engage in certain communicative practices, such as Black and African American Vernacular Discourse (Richardson, 2006), to showcase their Blackness and their reality but to also enact resistance and a form of self-pride and agency. In understanding this move to highlight hip hop literacies and performances as a part of African American/Black Rhetorics, Richardson has shined a light on the need to be more open to the inclusion of historically marginalized communities and their rhetorical practices. This validation of the knowledge-making and discursive actions that take place in Black communities helps to recognize them as legit and worth learning from. When we learn from historically marginalized communities, we are able to identify spaces in our communities in which we can see the knowledge obtained as applicable. Or, we are able to learn about our own bias and why this knowledge that is present in historically marginalized communities, was not always made apparent—at least to us.

Finally, African American/Black Rhetorics call on us to stop and reconsider what it looks like and what happens when Black rhetoricians choose to not follow the narrative put forth to enact certain rhetorical practices that is expected by the dominant academic culture. Instead, they choose to “interrogate the educational, political, or social systems” they have been trained to think critically about (DeShields, 2018), thus influencing African American epistemologies. This

resistance through pushing back at dominant culture helps further support Tenet 3, as is it essentially a tenet that is developed around the resistance of Western norms by a historically marginalized community or group to enact their own ways of knowing and doing. This tenet calls on members outside of the Black community to reconsider what they can learn from African American/Black Rhetorics and the epistemologies for which they create. In doing so, members outside of Black or historically marginalized communities are able to better see themselves in relation to the use of African American/Black Rhetorics in their community or respectfully implementing African American/Black Rhetorics in their own rhetorical practices. Tenet 3 of AR is what brings the previous tenets together. I suggest that in privileging these devalued ways of learning, we are able to resist and potentially evolve knowledge-making practices into something more inclusive all the while still understanding that communities may have epistemologies or rhetorical practices that are special and specific to their own.

### **Tenets 1-3 as shown in the Upcoming Chapters**

I suggest that as scholars seek to understand AR as I have presented that they begin to think of how to identify specific instances, references, or guidelines for completing an analysis on their own of AR in practice. Then consider which of the tenets these communicative practices may fall under, as researcher/observer. I highlight that it is important that you first understand the community you are observing and your own position in relation to said community. An example of this variant in identifying AR in practice would be the use of AAVE by a Black scholar in written artifacts versus the use of AAVE by a white scholar. In one instance, the language utilized can be deemed an amplification of a significant cultural communication practice, while the latter can be assumed or thought of as a means to mock or lack cultural sensitivity in regard to a cultural communicative practice. AR as an analytical and productive tool is relative to the



community one is observing or participating in. There is no single definitive way to identify AR. I know we are essentially “trained” to look for concrete definitions of theories and how they manifest in practice, but I argue, much like the different waves and versions of feminism, that my theory of AR will evolve alongside Black communities and their discursive practices. Most importantly, I developed this theory for Black communities and communities that have consistently faced barriers and instances of oppression, which means they get to decide how and what practices they use to amplify their communities. However, I do recognize that other observers may see places for amplification that the community may not recognize. But I also want to make clear that in doing so, the observer should be respectful and honor the community and its practices overall, even if this means seeking additional clarity from the community. As offered in the example above regarding AAVE, what one may view as a form of amplification, can in fact be a form of dismissal and disrespect. It is the duty of the researcher or observer to be cognizant of the dismissal and disrespect that may occur. I suggest my framework serves to assist researchers as well as compose socially just scholarship that allows for more essential ways of understanding and observing Black communities.

### **Conclusion**

The three tenets of AR focus on (re)claimed agency—Tenet 1, shared narratives—Tenet 2, and privileged epistemologies—Tenet 3 and lend new insights into how you, the reader, will move through and understand the upcoming chapters in addition to how we can aim to amplify the work of Black scholars. Even though the tenets in AR may not show up equally, each tenet is represented and made apparent in each site of study. As readers move through the upcoming chapters, I showcase the three tenets which characterize AR in ways that my audience is able to identify and possibly take on in their own research. As previously mentioned, AR, and what

might be identified as AR, are dependent on the community that is being reviewed or observed more than the actual observer and their opinion of what is occurring. This does not mean their observations are irrelevant or should be completely dismissed either. In my next chapter, Chapter 3, I provide additional insight into methods for data collection, as well as provide additional information about my sites of study. In providing this information, I will frame chapters as sites of study for AR that also include instances or examples of TPC. The upcoming chapters serve as the roadmap for understanding AR and illustrating how AR work in Black spaces like TRAP Karaoke and HBCUs.

### **Chapter 3: Methods, *Trap House***

In this chapter, I describe and discuss my two separate sites for this research study, TRAP Karaoke and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). I have selected these spaces because both are developed and maintained through Black communicative practices, whether written or performed. I utilized both sites to provide a contrast of what AR look like when performed in a public space as well as when they are written, or in formal documentation.<sup>17</sup> In the case of TRAP Karaoke, AR are showcased through the attendance at TRAP Karaoke events by participants, performers, and people who wear t-shirts and participate in #Tees4TheTrap. In studying HBCUs, I identify AR in their written form as showcased in HBCU mission statements and curricula. Again, both of these sites and their artifacts are situated within inherently Black spaces, and they also illustrate a revision of how we might understand TPC. This chapter also discusses my methods of data collection, analysis, and delivery.

#### **Identifying Amplification Rhetorics at TRAP Karaoke**

TRAP Karaoke is a user-generated concert experience in which concert goers and participants become the “entertainment” or artists. Creator Jason Mowatt, founder of TRAP Karaoke, states “TRAP Karaoke is like going to church...but instead of ‘Amazing Grace,’ you’re singing ‘Back That Azz Up’” (TRAP Karaoke, n.d). As TRAP Karaoke is a “user-generated experience” (TRAP Karaoke, 2018), it relies on its participants to construct the rhetorical practices in their performances of trap music (and other genres), their display of #Tees4TheTrap and their participation in the TRAP Karaoke event. To identify more specific examples of AR, I complete an analysis and review of the embodied rhetorical practices of being a curator(s) of and

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<sup>17</sup> In my final chapter, I will reveal additional reasons as to why I selected these somewhat opposite sites of study.

within the trap music genre, the donning of #Tees4TheTrap, and the attending of a TRAP Karaoke event itself. I have selected these components because they have influenced and are a part of the TRAP Karaoke movement. I define a movement as a social and/or cultural occurrence that influences and is embedded in some form or fashion into surrounding community events (e.g. TrapNPaint), scholarship (e.g. my dissertation), and social movements (e.g. Million Man Swag Surf). Without these elements (alongside others), TRAP Karaoke as a movement may not have been as influential as we see it is today. All of these elements together are what have led me to complete my analysis of how AR are made present in an unapologetically Black space that I also identify as a site where TPC happens. To conduct my analysis, I traveled to Atlanta, GA to visit the Trap Music Museum, attended a TRAP Karaoke event in Raleigh, NC, and conducted interviews.

### **Trap Music, Its Curators, and Its Contributions**

Trap music is a Hip-Hop sub-genre of music that finds its roots in the American South. The genre emerged in the early 2000s as a musical outlet detailing the experience of those in troubled neighborhoods (DJMag.com), drug dealings, and other illegal activities. The lyrics of trap music share the narratives of drug dealing, usage, and other illegal activities, but they also describe systems of oppression, the need to overcome, getting' to the money, and most importantly, to make sumn' shake. For this project, I provide an overview analysis of the trap music genre and identify ways that this specific genre showcases AR as a means of communication among members of the Black community. In addition to my overview of trap music lyrics and its positionality as a genre, I conducted a semi-structured interview with prominent trap music artist/curator and activist, T.I., asking him to speak to his influence on the

trap music genre and how he understands the genre as a place for study for academics in and out of the field of TPC. The questions included:

1. How did you decide to enter the genre of trap music?
2. For some, your career has been defined or greatly attributed to your lyricism, which focuses on trap music. How do you define or articulate what trap music is to you? In other words, why the choice to produce trap music, alongside other hip-hop genres?
3. What impact do you believe, if any, trap music has had on the music scene, alongside the Black community.
4. For my research project, I identify trap music as a genre of music that produces Technical and Professional Communication.<sup>18</sup> Based on the definition I have provided you, would you agree with my assessment or challenge it to mean otherwise and why? In other words, what is your assessment of what's being communicated in trap music?
5. What can public intellectuals, as well as scholars in various fields of study, learn from the trap music genre as it pertains to the development or understanding of Black culture, community, and ways of knowledge making?

My interview with T.I. serves to assist in the development of a foundation for my digital chapter (Chapter 4) as a whole, which details and discusses my research findings related to TRAP Karoke. T.I., a high-profile rap artist and a member of the Black and trap community, can speak to implicit and explicit lived experiences and knowledge that may not be universally understood by individuals that are not Black. This interview highlights the influence lived experiences can

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<sup>18</sup> Technical and Professional Communication is defined as discourse utilized to move an individual or community to action. This type of discourse is typically initiated amongst a community expert with communal insight and or member.

have on the curation of trap music and individualized/communal epistemologies. Trap music is an important part of the foundation for TRAP Karaoke, and my interview with T.I. also discusses how trap music can also be user generated in ways that we see TRAP Karaoke to be a user generated concert experience. Hence meaning, the rapper becomes the user who has the experience with trappin' leading to the generation of their music. Most importantly, I utilize the interview with T.I. to showcase how Black individuals may not always be a part of spaces for formal education, or the vernacular utilized in a field, they still have the knowledge, skillset, and language to communicate the very same concepts—thus redefining what it means to be an expert. Or in this case, what it means to be a TPC practitioner. Oh yeah, and this interview will also shed light on just how difficult completing the logistics for a digital chapter can be.

In addition, I also visited the Trap Music Museum in Atlanta, GA, alongside other historic Atlanta sites important to trap music. This visit and brief analysis of the Trap Music Museum serves to further highlight trap music as a genre and to illustrate the ways in which Black people reclaim their agency in a world that does not always curate museums containing Black artifacts outside the history of slavery. I am not making the claim that slavery is not an important part of Black history. However, I do argue that when Black people create Black museums for Black people, there is an undying sense of understanding and pride in the narrative that we create for ourselves. The museum provides an opportunity for its patrons to view the world through their own eyes rather than “through the eyes of others” (Dubois, 1989). As mentioned by Mario Gooden’s “The Problem with African American Museums,” museums are often times curated through the lens of white superiority and historical social exorcism (Gooden, 2016). The Trap Music Museum opened in Summer 2018 and was created and designed by T.I.; former Hip-Hop Wired editor and veteran Hip-Hop journalist Maurice Garland; visual artist DL

Warfield; Antwanette McLughlin;<sup>19</sup> and others. It removes this additional lens of othering and instead allows for the amplification of Black lived experiences in a way that is often times dismissed. Finally, I collected additional video of some historic Atlanta sites to further showcase and in order to highlight just how influential Atlanta, GA has been in the development of Black culture and music. Now granted, we can say that Hip-Hop got its start in the streets of New York; however, Atlanta has become a mecca of sorts in which the sound of a completely different style of Hip-Hop emerged, shout out to OutKast.<sup>20</sup> And as the kids say nowadays, you tryna be a rapper, go to the A. Snapping ya fingers, screaming yeaaa, expansions of vernacular, a great deal of that can be attributed to the A and surrounding areas.

### **#Tees4TheTrap, Marginalized Identities, and Embodied Narratives**

The second portion of my analysis focuses on TRAP Karaoke participants and their donning of #Tees4TheTrap. The #Tees4TheTrap are shirts that are typically worn by Black individuals.<sup>21</sup> Black individuals who participate in #Tees4TheTrap enact the rhetorical practice of performative strategic attire.<sup>22</sup> Performative strategic attire is utilized to communicate a specific idea rhetorically by using the body as a part of the text and highlighting their Black identity. In further elaborating on AR made present in the TRAP Karaoke movement, I review the #Tees4TheTrap and those who wear them to represent the narratives as displayed and articulated through their shirts. I interviewed and observed participants at a TRAP Karaoke event who were

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<sup>19</sup> Remember this sister's name!

<sup>20</sup> Some argue about the origins of rap vs HipHop and the differences between the two genres (or genre vs subgenre depending on who you talk to).

<sup>21</sup> Even folks that ain't Black can wear a #Tee4TheTrap, it just ain't gonna have the same impact based on the presented message.

<sup>22</sup> Performative strategic attire serves as a declaration and utterance of avowed embodiment, which is an extension of participant identity and embodiment.

wearing #Tees4TheTrap. In my interviews I asked them to reflect on their tee-shirts, their choice to wear them, and how they suggest their wearing of #Tees4TheTrap can lend knowledge to the field of TPC. They were not provided details about my dissertation project although they did consent to be interviewed for my research project on TRAP Karaoke. However, I did not provide explicit detail as to how I, the researcher, interpreted their shirts. The questions included:

1. What has brought you to a TRAP Karaoke event?
2. Why have you decided to wear this shirt to TRAP Karaoke?
3. Why do you feel compelled to use your body to communicate something or a message through your shirt? In other words, what message do you want to send through your shirt?
4. How does your shirt connect you to other #Tees4TheTrap / TRAP Karaoke participants.
5. Are you familiar with Technical and Professional Communication? (If not, I will provide the working definition for my project<sup>23</sup>). How do you suggest your #Tee4TheTrap enacts the definition for Technical and Professional Communications as I have provided?

I allowed the participants I interviewed to speak and make claims for themselves in however and whatever language they saw fit. In doing, so, I was able to get somewhat unfiltered responses.<sup>24</sup> Through my observation, I took note of the various ways participants may have pointed to, referenced, or centered their shirts throughout the duration of the TRAP Karaoke event. The interviews were video recorded, and in my analysis, I discuss the language used by

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<sup>23</sup> Alright so bet, the current definition for TPC was actually revised following my interview with T.I., as I discuss in my digital chapter (Chapter 4). This means that my interviewees received a different definition which states: “TPC can be identified as discourse, oral or written (I’m also arguing for this to include performances) that moves an individual or community to a proposed action or further defines a proposed action.”

<sup>24</sup> They def were not completely unfiltered, and I will further discuss the reasons for why I believe this to be in my digital chapter.



participants and how it closely aligned with that of AR. For example, I highlight the variety of responses as provided by participants in the interviews that is explicit to lived experiences, language that highlights Black narratives, and language that suggests new ways of understanding #Tees4TheTrap as artifacts for TPC. Participants were selected at random from among the subset of people wearing #Tees4TheTrap.

### **TRAP Karaoke, Participants, Community**

My final area for analysis was the TRAP Karaoke event itself. For this component, I decided to take an autoethnographic approach to completing this specific analysis. By being a member of the community and embedding myself in the research, I am able to relate to the experiences which the participants I am interviewing speak too. I took moments to maneuver through the audience and attempt to experience the event as a general participant. I say attempt because it is not too easy to swap from researcher to participant within the same night, especially if your favorite song comes on. However, I did pay close attention to the energy felt while interacting with participants and took note of how the crowd celebrated and cheered on one another. I also performed to ensure I gained the full TRAP Karaoke experience.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, I conducted semi-structured interviews with TRAP Karaoke attendees who performed on stage and simply looked like they were having a good time. Imagine just how hard it was to identify people having a good time. Much like my interviews with #Tees4TheTrap participants, we video recorded these interviews and asked TRAP Karaoke attendees/ participants to reflect on their role as attendees of the event in addition to asking how the event itself served as a site for Black

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<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting that this was the second time I performed at a TRAP Karaoke event, however, there is nothing like that high of being on stage being cheered on by your people.

liberation and TPC, all at the same time. In the interviews, I listened for and observed language and even body language that displayed AR as spoken and/or performed. The questions included:

1. Why did you come to TRAP Karaoke?
2. How many TRAP Karaoke events have you intended? If first, who/what convinced you to come? If 2nd or more time, what makes you feel compelled to return?
3. How did you feel connected to other TRAP Karaoke participants and audience members?
4. If given the opportunity to “blast” or promote TRAP Karaoke to other professors/scholars that are not familiar with the event, what would you say? In other words, what should someone take away from the TRAP Karaoke experience?
5. Are you familiar with Technical and Professional Communication? (If not, I will provide the working definition for my project). How do you suggest TRAP Karaoke enacts or serves as a form of Technical and Professional Communications based on the definition I have provided?

As the digital chapter (Chapter 4) is situated for a public audience (it ain't just for the academy or my dissertation committee; it's for my social media followers, grandmother, and your regular smegular girl from the Bronx), I did not want to make the assumption that those I interviewed were not familiar with the jargon we so eloquently utilize in the formal classroom setting in which some have identified as one of the few institutionalized spaces to learn. Instead, I allowed the people who I interviewed speak from their own understandings and utilize the language they chose to describe their rhetorical practices all based upon their own agency and epistemologies. I did not limit my analysis to only a specific set of keywords from the interviews as this could serve as a disservice to interviewees and would possibly lead to a reshaping of a narrative based on my OWN ideas. My videographer, D'Andra Drewitt, maneuvered through the

crowd and recorded the performances of participants. I used this footage to analyze not only just how hype the event was but how performances were shaped by the presence of a camera. To also assist in gathering the emotion and feeling, attendees were asked to wear GoPro cameras at random and send us the videos they captured on their social media platforms to utilize as a part of my analysis. One of the key pieces of the analysis is to ensure that the analysis is completed on the data that is authentic to the TRAP Karaoke experience. I wanted to be sure I captured the most authentic TRAP Karaoke experience, even through a camera lens. Finally, I conducted an interview with TRAP Karaoke creator, Jason Mowatt, to gain a better understanding of what he believes TRAP Karaoke can lend to the academy and the field of TPC. The questions for our interview were:

1. How did you come up with the idea of TRAP Karaoke?
2. I see that you describe the event as “a “user-generated concert” experience, placing fans at the center of the concert experience. Would you care to elaborate more on why this language to describe this model? In other words, why the choice to highlight the fans in this idea of a concert, instead of a professional musician?
3. Why the choice of TRAP Karaoke, instead of saying “Black Karaoke” or “Urban Karaoke,” given the negative connotation that comes along with the term TRAP.
4. For my research project, I identify TRAP Karaoke as a space where Technical and Professional Communications takes place. Based on the definition I have provided you, would you agree with my assessment or challenge it to mean otherwise and why? In other words, what is your assessment of what’s being communicated in these spaces?
5. In following up on the information provided on your website regarding TRAP Karaoke: “A platform on top of music; a backdrop for life; a nexus into cultural participation,

personal empowerment, cherished moments, human connection, and community!” How and why can public intellectuals, as well as scholars in various fields of study, look to TRAP Karaoke to develop or understand Black culture, community, and ways of knowledge-making?

These three components of TRAP Karaoke overlap one another and essentially influence the overall movement of TRAP Karaoke. It is important that I reiterate, that for some people, these rhetorical practices may not appear as TPC, but instead of me constantly repeating the definition for TPC I provide in the beginning of this dissertation (I mean imma remind y’all at least once), I instead welcome my audience to ask themselves how what I have shown them might be considered TPC, and why they agree or disagree on this stance. You see, I get it, my job is to provide enough evidence and to support my claim for why the spaces I am reviewing serve as TPC in practice, but remember my dissertation serves to illustrate AR in practice and that means that I am able to make the choice as to how these practices are TPC based upon the definitions I have provided you alongside my own embodiment, narratives, and epistemologies.<sup>26</sup>

### **Identifying Amplification Rhetorics at HBCUs**

HBCUs are officially defined by congress as an institution “any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation.” (Higher Education Act of 1965). Also, HBCUs are

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<sup>26</sup> But hey, don’t let that hang you up just yet. We gonna talk more about it in Chapter 5.

the oldest minority serving colleges and emerged in the post antebellum era (Cole, 2006). In the early 1990s, HBCUs were responsible for educating nearly 40 percent of America's Black college graduates, 80 percent of Black federal judges, 85 percent of all Black doctors, 75 percent of all Black PhDs, 50 percent of Black engineers, and 46 percent of all Black business professionals (Jackson, 2002). In other words, these institutions take their job and purpose very seriously. Mission statements from HBCUs provide written documentation for how the curriculum and culture of HBCUs are a reflection of the Black lived experience. For my project, I review and analyze the mission statements of three HBCUs; North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, North Carolina; Spelman University in Atlanta, Georgia; and Howard University in Washington, DC., and complete an overview of curriculum and programs that can be considered to be closely aligned with TPC, or composition, at these three institutions. Mission Statements, better known as the written articulation of the objective of institutions of higher learning typically remind us that the institution is there to facilitate a learning environment while “enriching” student lives through the curricula. For this section of my project, I analyze how HBCU mission statements serve as instances of AR, influence institutional curricula, and operate as TPC artifacts.

I selected these three different HBCUs—North Carolina A&T (NC A&T) in Greensboro, North Carolina; Spelman College (SC) in Atlanta, Georgia; and Howard University (HU) in Washington, DC. —because of their STEM research, resource availability, and university archives. First, NC A&T is an HBCU located in Greensboro, NC. Founded in 1890 under the Second Morrill Act (“Historical Statement”, n.d.), the university has become well known for its innovative STEM research as well as its phenomenal band. It is also worth noting that the school is located in the same city where the famed Woolworth sit-ins took place in the 1960s.

Anddddddd the students that was brave enough to bust up in Woolworth, sit-in, and tell them folks they wasn't 'bout to move in order to aid in the fight against segregation, they went to A&T!

Next, Spelman College, the sister to North Carolina's Bennett College, was established in 1882 by two white New England missionaries, Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles (Finkelman, 2009). The university got its name, Spelman Seminary, from famed John D. Rockefeller's<sup>27</sup> wife, Laura Spelman Rockefeller, in 1884. Ol' girl came from a family of abolitionists, too. (Finkelman, 2009). The college didn't become "Spelman College" until 1924, and then Spelman University in 1929 (Finkelman, 2009). Today, Spelman is best known for being a part of the Atlanta hub, and members of the Atlanta University Center Consortium alongside Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, and Clark Atlanta University ("Members", n.d). Spelman University has been one of the leading producers of Black educated women, thus paving the way for future women to come. Some famous Spelman alumnas include, Alice Walker, Stacey Abrams ('95), Shaun Robinson ('80), and Varnette Patricia Honeywood ('72) ("HBCU Love: 15 Celebrities Who Are Part of the SpelHouse Legacy", 2017).

Finally, Howard University, the real HU in my opinion<sup>28</sup> and HBCU mecca, was founded in 1867 and is a private research university (About Howard, n.d). Much like NC A&T, the university boasts they too are the leaders in STEM fields ("About Howard", n.d). Growing from a single frame building to more than 89 acres ("History", n.d), Howard has exemplified one way that we can look to and understand Black excellence. Situated in downtown D.C., "The National Science has ranked Howard as the top producer of African American undergraduates who later

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<sup>27</sup> Homeboy was dropping mad cash and endowments after he met the school's founders at a Baptist church conference in 1882...Look at God! (Finkelman, 2009)

<sup>28</sup> Google it..

earn science and engineering doctoral degrees.” (“About Howard”, n.d). Not to mention, the majority of the Divine 9 Greek organizations were founded there, except mine, because we wanted to be different.<sup>29</sup>

Now let me say this. I want to be clear that in doing this project, I am not aiming to partake in HBCU elitism practices. I am fully aware of some not-so-good moments in the history of these specific HBCUs; some argue these schools are rooted and derived from respectability politics<sup>30</sup> (Prince, 2017). I am very well aware that this has been an issue not only in television series (where only Howard, Hampton, Spelman, and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and other elite HBCUs are mentioned), but also in scholarship that reviews HBCUs and their impact. I honor these HBCUs and others that have been referred to as elite while still having my own stance on the ways we can address the rhetoric surrounding what it means to be an elite HBCU. They should be honored because regardless of how we may feel about them, they came before other HBCUs and assisted in laying the foundation for other HBCUs to exist. I am a graduate of a small Liberal Arts HBCU, the Illustrious Elizabeth City State University. However, I also know that my institution started as a teacher's college, and during their years of growth, STEM research was not a focus, nor were the same resources available. I say all this to say and point back to my statement about scope earlier. In order to make this project successful, I knew it was pivotal to select universities that I would more than likely, not guarantee, be able to access their archives for the research I need. Trust me when I say, I am here for all of my HBCUs, especially the small ones that are forgotten and

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<sup>29</sup> Last created, best design.

<sup>30</sup> I code that for being like white folks personally \*shrugs\*

undervalued, but I have a specific goal and focus for this project. So, don't be tryna come at a sister

I reviewed the mission statements of these universities at three key points of history. I selected these time periods as they were most critical and exposed to certain social climates. These time periods represent social climates such as racism, segregation, education reform, and the current HBCU renaissance. To begin, I selected five years after their founding year. I initially wished to view mission statements from their founding or opening year, but the availability, resources, and possible access to these documents/ artifacts I needed for analysis would be difficult, so I decided to start at a point in time where the institution would have been established, operating, and have developed a curriculum. Furthermore, each university was established at different times, thus removing the option to review their founding year as a dependent variable as these schools were founded in different historical time periods within specific social, economic, and political times. Second, I chose 1965, Post Civil Rights Act Era. Following the post-civil rights era, institutions could not receive the HBCU title as it was argued this went against the separate but equal judgment. All colleges and universities began to revise their mission statements to meet the needs of a new outlook for higher education and produce a vision statement for moving forward as this historical judgement became evident through these forms of TPC. Finally, I selected Present Day mission statements, 2018-2019, or the most recent mission statement. At present, mission statements are created at different levels of the university, thus meaning the vision may be more representative of current socio-cultural occurrences rather than those of the past. However, in my review of the mission statements of today, I analyze the influence that systems of authority, such as accrediting bodies and Board of Trustees, have on



HBCUs and how HBCUs overcome or incorporate their historical founding into current mission statements.

Even though they share some commonalities within their history, as in being developed to educate Black and brown students, their previous mission statements and current mission statements today vary from their own institutional historic and present mission statements. The aims and goals of the mission statements is a reflection of the historical foundation pertaining to the institution and may vary based on the accrediting body. With that said, two of the schools I have selected are accredited by Southern Association of College and Schools (SACS) (NC A&T and Spelman University) and the other Middle States Commission on Higher Education (Howard University). For HBCUs, their mission statements became a part of documented history. Mission statements are written artifacts that adapt rhetorical moves and genre conventions and are influenced by historical contexts and accrediting bodies. In my preliminary findings, mission statements of the past, appear to be much more specific and showcase the institution's key attributes of educating Black and brown students.

In drawing on theories of genre combined with my AR framework, I review the standard genre conventions present in these HBCU mission statements and highlight how these conventions were and are reflective of the student body that HBCUs once served. These instances in mission statements are examples of tenet 1, which focuses on embodiment and reclaimed agency, as well as tenet 2, which focuses on shared narratives and experience. In addition, I look for the way that specific knowledge made at these institutions are highlighted and privileged in the mission statement as evidence of tenet 3's focus on privileged ways of knowing. Furthermore, I also looked to the curriculum in a developed program during these same time periods. To start, I began by locating the course catalogs for each institution during the

aforementioned years (1890s, 1960s, and 2018). Now, let me pause and say I thought this was going to be easy. But BRUH, getting my hands on this stuff was not easy. Obviously, each institution had their own digital archives that I was able to access, however, I personally did not take into account the language that was utilized in the past, and even currently, to indicate a document that we know today as the course catalog. In previous years, a course catalog was initially referred to as the university bulletin. As you can imagine, this caused some confusion when I searched each institution's digital archive. I was looking for course catalog, instead of university bulletin, or anything else that would indicate the document provided course information as well as the institution's mission statement. Fortunately, each institution had a person that I could contact to better navigate their digital archives. Even though there was a hiccup with one institution, all people were more than willing to help me locate the appropriate artifacts.

Next, I went into the project thinking that what we know today as mission statements was the standard all through time (an explicit statement that says, "mission statement"). I was wrong again. Today, mission statements are often times regulated and developed based on the standards set forth by accrediting bodies. For example, while conducting and developing my dissertation, I was made aware that the mission statement genre as we see it today for institutions is a fairly new concept. For example, between 1997-2003, missions' statements were referred to as the institutional purpose as indicated by the SACS accrediting body. The institutional purpose statement, or mission statement, as described by SACS must be consistent with the purpose statement, which some refer to as the vision statement, and the official "posture and practice of the institution" (SACS, 2011). Even though SACS does not provide specific line for line guidelines for what is to be included in an institution's mission statement, I believe their

outlining of what an accreditation by SACS helps outline and signifies why the mission statements we see today contain specific rhetorical moves and references. As included in the *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* handbook, an institution that is accredited by SACS is an institution that:

... (1) has a mission appropriate to higher education, (2) has resources, programs and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that mission, and (3) maintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate to the degrees it offers, and that indicate whether it is successful in achieving its stated objectives. (SACS, 2011)

And in a very similar fashion, *The Code and UNC Policy Manual*, published July 2001, provides additional insight as to what is required within a mission statement for UNC schools, in which they define and describe a mission statement as:

Mission statement. Institutions must have a mission statement. This statement, comprising the philosophy and objectives of the institution, should include definitions of the educational climate to be maintained, the character of education that students are expected to possess upon graduation, the occupational and other outcomes expected from available programs, and characteristics of attained individual growth. The statement should be operationally effective and should be periodically reviewed for possible improvement and restatement. An interval of five years is suggested as a maximum period between reviews. The statement should describe both the concept and practice of the institution. (UNC System, 2001)

Paul Cobley explains that the mission statement as a genre “is not a set of textual features that can be enumerated rather is an expectation” (Cobley, 2006). We do not analyze mission statements to see the same type of language completed in the same order, but instead we expect a mission statement to perform specific rhetorical moves in the language which they present. This means, we cannot have a checklist approach or a breakdown of specific keywords in specific places, and instead, look to mission statements to understand the structures and formulas of the mission statement genre itself. Cobley writes, “What this means for the understanding of genre should be quite clear. The ‘facts’ of genre – be they, *inter alia*, a genre’s ‘structure’, its discernible ‘formula’, its key repetitive elements – cannot be ‘things’. Furthermore, no matter how much they are experienced and no matter to what extent they invoke objects, nor can they be considered to be objects themselves. In the triad under discussion here, then, this leaves the ‘sign’, which, of course, refers to something beyond itself” (2006, p. 43). As mentioned in the section above, mission statements do not necessarily serve the same purpose as some people, like me, assume them to be. The same way I went in looking for language that specifically said

course catalog, I did the same with the mission statements. Cobley alludes to this as my way of leading up to take an L.

So, I had to ditch that approach and instead look for language that signifies the mission statement themselves and as a genre which mimic the rhetorical moves as suggested by SACS alongside the ideas of what I believed mission statements should convey based on what I've learned during my enrollment in my MA in Professional Communication and Leadership studies in organizational development. I developed the following criteria based on my theoretical framework of Amplification Rhetorics and the criteria as indicated by SACS and other administrative organizations. In doing so, I looked for language that did the following regardless of what the text was referred to as or labeled:

1. Indicated any potential end goal for the institution and/or department in regard to education. (degree outcomes, assumed knowledge acquired, department curriculum description)
2. Mentioned proposed outcomes for its student body specifically. (“the education of teachers,” “the future pioneers of engineering,” “Black productive members of society”)
3. Mentioned the purpose of the institution. (historical significance)

Now in some documents, these *mission statements* were found early in the catalogs (on the first page), while for others, they were found at the start of each department's section, and some were even found within the history statements. In all, identifying the mission statements based on the present day genre conventions and sentence structure order (see SACs description for mission statements above) were not the easiest to locate, but by utilizing the criteria above, I was able to

develop a working way for identifying and locating mission statements, even when not explicitly labeled as such, and the rhetorical moves that make them operate as so.

Once I established the criteria for identifying mission statements, I also developed a coding scheme for how I identified AR within the statements as based on each tenet

1. Embodiment—Proposed outcome for student population which was typically made of Black and Brown bodies.
2. Shared Narrative—Historical significance to Black community overall.
3. Privileged epistemologies—Potential end goal/degree outcomes leading to sharing and application of acquired knowledge.

By using textual analysis (color-coded for my visual learning style), (Red represented Tenet 1, Purple represented Tenet 2, and Brown represented Tenet 3), I used the above criteria to review what I identified as mission statements and draw conclusions, in which I hoped, would point to AR in TPC documents found to represent HBCUs. Once I identified the AR in the mission statement, I developed three tables, as shown in Chapter 5, to allow me to visually see the commonalities amongst the tenets during each time period and take note of how many times AR were present. The numbers represent the number of times I was able to identify specific instances of AR along with the tenets. A higher number of certain tenets in each time period showed consistency with the social times. I utilize these consistencies to further highlight AR in the mission statements but also highlight the ways in which curricula are also influenced.

In addition to my review of mission statements, I also completed a brief overview of occurrences in the institutional curriculum that can be identified as TPC—based on my working definition I provided in Chapter 1. In “Perceptions of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Technical Communication Programs” (Savage & Mattson, 2001), the authors point to different issues of

diversity in higher education studies, some of which include program availability, course offerings, state funding, and faculty availability. I argue that the courses and programs needed to sustain a TPC program at an HBCU have existed and continue to exist; however, there may be additional outside factors that have impacted their sustainability long term or the name of the program. The overview of curriculum serves to provide my audience with a starting point for developing future research on how we can move forward in developing TPC programs at HBCUs and/or looking to learn from historical TPC programs at HBCUs. My overview includes my own outlook on the curriculum and semi-structured interviews with TPC faculty practitioners at the HBCUs I have selected. I interviewed Kimberly Harper of NC A&T, who serves as the Technical Communication program coordinator and Alexandria Lockett of SC, a faculty member who identifies her scholarship and pedagogy as TC for this project. Due to time constraints and my own personal networks, I was not able to interview a faculty member from Howard; however, I do see this as an opportunity for continued research. The questions included:

1. How would you define TPC?
2. What is your experience, formal or informal, in working within the field of TPC?
3. Even though your institution may or may not have a TPC program, in what ways do you feel your institution or department may have already enacted or performed TPC whether it be in writing or performed?
4. What is your educational background, and how has it assisted you in the field of TPC or situated your work at your institution?
5. In what ways can HBCUs contribute to the current knowledge and understanding of TPC?

In my interviews with the faculty members, I inquire about their understanding of how TPC is present at HBCUs, both past and present, how HBCUs can contribute to the field of TPC knowledge, and engage their outlook and opinion on if the institution mission statements have influenced their institution, department, and curriculum.

### **Issa Multimodal Dissertation Y'all**

Also, I acknowledge and understand there may be a gap in our field's acceptance of nontraditional dissertations, or multimodal dissertations such as mine. Whether it be in the form of a rap album (which might I add is a part of Black culture) as created by A.D. Carson of Clemson titled "Owning My Masters: The Rhetorics of Rhymes and Revolutions" (2017) or a video presentation of TRAP Karaoke, there is more than one way to communicate my research findings and achieve a level of knowledge that is not in the traditional and current form of a dissertation. I believe if TPC practitioners and scholars are going to change the field overall, TPC practitioners and scholars must start that change through graduate students, like myself, willing to challenge past epistemologies and privileged modes of dissertating. Furthermore, I build my argument on the work of scholars such as Adam Banks (2016), Sidone Smith (2010), and Cheryl Ball (2004) (who is not Black but a woman who makes a great argument for the inclusion of different dissertation project formats) for the value of oral/non-written/visual/audio content for Black meaning-making practices/rhetorical strategies. I use a digital chapter to present the AR found at TRAP Karaoke events. This video chapter component showcases interviews with TRAP Karaoke participants, founders, and participants (as narratives and ownership of those narratives is imperative to my work) but also to further immerse you, the reader, into the experience that is TRAP Karaoke, which I hope will further showcase Amplification Rhetorics in Black spaces.



The current dissertation model is a one size fits all model, and it is evident that knowledge created through the forms of dissertations is not one size fits all. To be clear, I am not attempting to dismiss the labor that goes into a traditional dissertation, but I think by allowing for non-traditional elements in a dissertation, graduate students and fellow seasoned scholars are able to redefine the genre. Furthermore, even though I don't expect to see a complete overhaul of dissertation projects immediately in our field, conversations concerning the out-of-date nature of the dissertation genre have happened for at least a decade if not more (Patton, 2013). In 2012, the Modern Language Association (MLA) provided guidelines to better assist in evaluating work in digital humanities and digital media, leading to "new venues for research, communication, and the creation of networked academic communities" (MLA, 2006). Finally, as a scholar that has continuously advocated to eliminate privileged learning-making practices in the academy, I think I must also walk the talk and show that I indeed believe what I have presented on.

Fortunately, I have a committee that has stood behind me, with some additional persuading, to present my chapter on TRAP Karaoke in a completely digital medium. In their doing this, I believe that in a way they too are advocating for the change of the dissertation genre within our field. Ok, so I ain't trying to put words in they mouth, but they are technically making a strong statement that there are other ways to complete a dissertation. Without their support, my digital chapter would not exist, nor would my dissertation serve as an example of AR in practice the way I envisioned it to do so. This my friends, is what mentorship looks like. But most importantly, this is what it looks like when you, as a mentor, step up and decide to use AR practices in an effort to support your students.

### **In the Following Chapters**

In the forthcoming chapters, I present my findings upon completing my analysis of TRAP Karaoke and a review of HBCU mission statements. Through my analysis and suggested implications, I provide insight to Black sites of study that have been overlooked, are poorly mentioned, and suggest that we not hijack the rhetorical moves as found at these sites of study but understand these rhetorical practices as those that can be applied in ones field. The following chapters provide a lens to members of non-Black communities to see community practices that they may not be familiar with and provide the needed exposure that I believe lead to a better sense of understanding and acceptance of these rhetorical practices as TPC.

**Chapter 4: Digital Chapter, *Trap Muzik***

**TRAP Muzik**

See supplementary attachment.

## Chapter 5: “Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) serve as spaces to amplify and center the experiences of Black people. One way this amplification occurs is through the development of their own Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) artifacts such as mission statements. Even though those efforts may not be easily identifiable to many, the usage of Amplification Rhetorics (AR) in various HBCU spaces shows us that there are spaces and sites for investigation that we must not overlook or undervalue the knowledge they can provide. Mission statements serve as examples of AR in several distinct ways. First, they highlight and center the Black and brown bodies alongside their embodied practices while enrolled at their HBCU (Tenet 1). Next, mission statements illustrate how narratives and lived experiences of Black students can emerge in written artifacts (Tenet 2). Finally, mission statements center the epistemological needs of Black students that are enrolled at their institution (Tenet 3). It is important that we become much more rhetorically aware of how TPC artifacts, such as HBCU mission statements, show how we can center members of Black and other historically marginalized communities. In centering Black and other historically marginalized communities as sites of study along with their written artifacts, we broaden our lens to what and how we compose future scholarship and research. This broadening of our lens offers new ways to understand our specific fields of study as a whole. By reevaluating how we consider certain scholarship and research as a part of our field, not separate, we can reconsider what it means to contribute to a field of study. AR and their appearance in HBCU mission statements can help us redefine valuable spaces for study and lead to the inclusion of undervalued sites of study; this will impact the scholarship in disciplinary areas of expertise. I offer this chapter, in addition to

my digital chapter, to highlight written artifacts that exemplify a more traditional understanding of TPC in comparison to TRAP Karaoke. In presenting mission statements at HBCUs as TPC artifacts that focus on Black communities, I also provide a brief analysis of HBCU curriculum during the later mentioned time periods to showcase AR as embedded in the curriculum. In doing so, I suggest new ways of identifying TPC programs at HBCUs and their contributions to the field as a whole. I utilize this chapter to illustrate how we can center Black and other historically marginalized communities in our scholarship while still showcasing what we may traditionally know and understand TPC to be. In all, I offer this chapter as a way to speak to more traditional TPC scholars and describe a method for completing analysis and presenting one's findings based on the inclusion of Black communities and their written artifacts, thus leading to their amplification.

HBCUs have been and will always be pinnacle sites for the education and advancement of Black people. HBCUs have historically had the pleasure of having to do more with less, all the while educating, molding, mentoring, and uplifting Black people in ways that Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) simply can't. No matter how many Black Student Unions, Divine 9 organizations, or Black student events there may be, the fact remains that a PWI is not an HBCU. Don't get me twisted, I'm not anti-PWI (I mean I am completing my research at one). I'm just not hip for dismissing and ignoring the impact that HBCUs have had and continue to have on the education and development of Black people, even if Black people can finally be admitted into PWIs. In my Iyanla voice, "Not on my watch!". Furthermore, it is imperative that I make apparent that HBCUs are not just important for those that have enrolled; they are also crucial to the communities where they serve as anchors and have impact. For example, Fayetteville State

University (FSU) in Fayetteville, NC, is located off of da Murk', in one of Fayetteville's most impoverished areas or "the hood" as some call it, but FSU is also known for their community outreach and after care programs available to children in surrounding communities. HBCUs are often assumed to be located in what we call 'hoods in present day, but this isn't something new. It is important to note they were not *built* in what are presently referred to as 'hoods. The communities where HBCUs were built, and for some institutions still, are some of the most influential for Black people. As systems of oppression, zoning laws, racist housing practices, economic status, white flight, and gentrification would have it, the communities that surround our HBCUs are not entirely what they used to be (Willie, Reddick, & Brown, 2006; Brown, 2002; Williamson, J.A., 2008; Garibaldi, 1984). Yet, that has not stopped our HBCUs from continuing to serve their communities and provide a quality of education to their students. These commitments to community awareness, devotion, service, and history have heavily influenced HBCU written artifacts, such as mission statements, since the institutions were first created. In addition, these commitments are reinforced and illustrated through the use of AR found in HBCU mission statements.

HBCUs have played and will continue to play a major role in society and the curation of new knowledge. Everyone has been impacted by the existence of HBCUs even if they have not explicitly interacted with someone or enrolled at an HBCU. While they hold this continuous impact, HBCUs have also continued to overcome various points of adversity while being major contributors to society. According to Prezell Robinson's article, "The Private HBCU Retrospect and Prospect," included in the edited collection *Survival of the Historically Black Colleges and*

*Universities: Making it Happen* (2013), edited by NC A&T Chancellor Emeritus Edward Fort.

Robinson writes:

Our institutions were then, and continue to be, the battering ram against the doors of discrimination, depravation, and injustice. Never adequately funded, never enthusiastically supported, always cast to the outer fringes of the hinterlands of American higher education, these institutions have discharged their Herculean responsibilities and pursued their multiple missions with determination, with devotion, with compassion, and with courage. Poor in resources, but rich in resolve, our colleges have been and continue to be the weapons of people's liberation and the instruments of our nation's salvation and redemption. They have birthed and nurtured significant number of Black professionals in all fields. (Robinson, 2013, p. 53)

In acknowledging the Black professionals HBCUs produce, their need to serve as spaces to curate an abundance of educational insight becomes more evident in various fields of study. Whether it is a coworker who has attended an HBCU, your doctor performing open heart surgery, or even your favorite talk show host letting you in on what's real (I'm talkin' 'bout Oprah), HBCUs have educated the majority of Black professionals within our country (Department of Education, 2004; Provasnik & Shafer, 2004).

In this chapter, I lean upon the HBCU's foundation of community awareness, devotion, service, and history, as highlighted earlier, to lead my analysis of HBCU mission statements. This chapter further situates my working definition of mission statements used in this project. Then, I explain the criteria I used to complete my analysis of AR as identified in nine HBCU mission statements, from three different institutions, across three distinct time periods.

Following, I present and discuss the findings from my analysis of the mission statements and their emergence within the curriculum alongside the context of my interviews with two HBCU faculty members. I present my interviews with HBCU faculty to offer input from HBCU faculty members on the various ways HBCU curricula shows evidence of what could be identified as TC/TPC programs, even if not formally named, and their relationship to their mission statements. In addition, I highlight how AR have been used in the development of curricula. Finally, in closing, I suggest how the rhetorical moves and practices illustrated in HBCU mission statements can contribute to the field of TPC.

### **Mission Statements as a TPC Genre**

Mission statements are written artifacts that convey and express an institution's intentions and goals regarding student education, propose outcomes for its student body, and mention the overall purpose and historical significance of the institution.<sup>31</sup> I have developed this working definition to guide me in the development of the criteria I have used to identify mission statements in my analysis. Mission statements are, in a sense, declarations. Institutions have always had statements that describe their mission even if they weren't referred to as mission statements, or formally named. I've developed my working definition based upon the policies provided by separate administrative bodies, mission statement scholars (Cohen, 2017; Bawarshi, 2003; Keeling, 2013), and theories of genre constructed by scholars such as Paul Cobley (2006)

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<sup>31</sup> As you move throughout my analysis, you will note that I have Mission Statements and mission statements. These variations are intentional. "Mission Statement" is used to reference the formally named Mission Statement as stated by the institution. However, "mission statement" refers to text that I've identified using my working definition of a mission statement and its genre conventions—but that has not been formally labeled as a Mission Statement by an institution. In including both, I suggest that we are able to see the genre of mission statements show up in other institutional declarations, even when not labeled as such.



as discussed in Chapter 3 and which I further explain below. Mission statements, as we know them today, are similar to the institution's "Pledge of Allegiance"—which, I might add, has seen its share of changes intended to showcase a very specific narrative of American Pride, and not the killings of slaves (Ferris, 2014; Madriaga, 2007; Key, 1992). Mission statements can be reviewed as a type of genre because they share a set of generally agreed upon conventions (Cobley, 2006). James H. Davis, John A Ruhe, Monle Lee, and UJvala Rajadhyaksha's (2007) article "Mission Possible: Do School Mission Statements Work?" points out that Douglass Bennett contends the work of a mission statement to be "the only valid measure of the quality of education offered by a college or university must assess value added against a college's chosen aspirations-its mission" (p. 100). I agree with this from an organizational standpoint as well. Even though we know that institutions of higher learning serve as organizations, they also serve as organizations that are predominantly shaped by the culture of the region, politics, and economics. In order for a mission statement to be effective, Davis and others assert that the mission statement must cover the core values of the institution, or organization, the direction which the organization plans to grow, and the moves which the organization will make to see that those values are met.

Mission statements as a TPC genre have far greater impact on the institutional framework and missions than is recognized and serve as examples of AR. I identify mission statements as TPC based upon my working definition of TPC— discourse, written, oral, or performed aimed at moving or directing an individual or community to action. This discourse can be enacted by an individual or group of individuals with specific expertise or insight that is dependent upon community knowledge. Mission statements can lead communities (in this case, the institution) into action and are typically developed by a group of individuals with specific expertise and

insight into the institution and the community it serves. By showcasing AR within these examples of TPC, I am able to continue my work advocating for the use of HBCUs as sites of study and institutions which we all can learn from.

### **Reviewing and Understanding Mission Statements as a Genre**

In moving to understand mission statements as a genre, I think it is also important to have a clear understanding of the role and purpose of identifying a text as a genre. A genre as described by Ralph Cohen and John Rowett (2017) is a “combination of rhetorical, stylistic discourse features,” which can be identifiable by the observer (2017, p. 38). Seeing mission statements as a genre in this way offers an avenue for identifying shared conventions of the text present in my working definition. Furthermore, in reviewing the mission statements as a living genre, one that evolves with time, context, and proposed communicative action (Bazerman, 1997), we are better able to understand the benefits of looking at mission statements as a discrete genre. In recognizing mission statements as genres, we can “define and organize kinds of situations and social actions, situations and actions that the genres [mission statements], their use, rhetorically make possible” (Bawarshi, 2003, p. 18). To be clear, and as earlier mentioned, identifying a mission statement as a genre does not lead to the development of mission statements that follow the exact same format and/or semantic structure. Instead, the mission statement as a genre allows for the ability to articulate the “meaningful, consequential actions” (p. 18) of the mission statement because “genres shape us as we give shape to them” (p. 25). In looking to understand mission statements as a genre, we are then able to produce meaningful and effective mission statements that convey and express an institution’s intended end goal regarding student education, propose outcomes for its student body, and advocate for the overall purpose and historical significance of the institution.

What we presently identify as the institutionally labeled Mission Statement tells what the institution can do for those they represent and what you can do for the institution. An institution's labeled Mission Statement is one of the first things I look at in not only deciding if an organization is a good fit for me but also how the organization may see themselves. A mission statement should speak to what the organization, or in our case institution of higher learning, is currently capable of and what they aspire to do. However, this is where I see issues in the mission statements that I have come across over the years and based on my observations throughout my analysis. Institutionally labeled Mission Statements can appear to be vague and can, arguably, not match what the institution claims they are doing. Mission statements of the past appeared to be much more specific and showcase the institution's key attributes, even when these statements were not formally named. Recognizing mission statements as a genre allows for the inclusion of other institutionally tagged or labeled statements, such as *Vision Statements*, to become part of the way institutions convey their goals, ambition, and historical significance. Statements such as an Historical Statement can serve as a part of the mission statement because it identifies the institution's purpose alongside context for the institution's existence.

### **Establishing a Sense of Identity through the Mission Statement Genre**

This appeal to establish oneself and communicate intent to serve is crucial to HBCUs especially in states like North Carolina where, oftentimes, universities can be an hour drive apart from one another. Elizabeth City State University (ECSU), an HBCU located in Elizabeth City, NC, and East Carolina University (ECU), a Predominately White Institution (PWI) located in Greenville, NC, are separated by a quick drive down Highway 264 that takes about an hour and a half. In addition, ECSU and ECU are both a part of the UNC system and accredited by Southern

Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and these commonalities surely influence their institutionally labeled Mission Statements. SACS and the University of North Carolina (UNC) system are the people who are “pulling the strings” behind the institutions, thus trickling to the mission statements. Even though they both answer to the same higher ups, both institutions have their own mission statements which they abide by.

The UNC system, chartered in 1789, was initially only comprised of the University of Chapel Hill, opened in 1795 (“220 Years of History”, n.d). However, in 1931 the UNC system was reshaped to include three other institutions. Today, the UNC system includes 16 university campuses from across the state and provides oversight of program development, expansion, and general operation of UNC universities. North Carolina serves as the home of 11 HBCUs, second to Alabama, which is home to 12 HBCUs, for the most HBCUs in the country (“List of HBCUs By State, n.d). SACS is responsible for overseeing accreditation for universities in the southeastern region of the country, ranging from Virginia to Texas. SACS has oversight over the UNC system, or so it appears. Institutions within the UNC system must answer to administrative folks at their institution, the UNC Board of Governors, and SACS to maintain their accreditation. Luckily, both bodies, the UNC and SACS have Mission Statement regulations that are very similar conventionally and shape the Mission Statements genre within NC. As mentioned in Chapter 3, SACS and the UNC system both have a set of expectations and rhetorical moves they request in an institution’ mission statements. First, SACS states that the mission statement must highlight that the institution:

... (1) has a mission appropriate to higher education, (2) has resources, programs and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that mission, and (3) maintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate to the degrees it offers, and that indicate whether is successful in achieving its stated objectives. (SACS, 2011)

Whereas published in *The Code and UNC Policy Manual* in July 2001, and also mentioned in Chapter 3, UNC states a mission statement is defined by and must include the following:

Institutions must have a Mission Statement. This statement, comprising the philosophy and objectives of the institution, should include definitions of the educational climate to be maintained, the character of education that students are expected to possess upon graduation, the occupational and other outcomes expected from available programs, and characteristics of attained individual growth. The statement should be operationally effective and should be periodically reviewed for possible improvement and restatement. An interval of five years is suggested as a maximum period between reviews. The statement should describe both the concept and practice of the institution. (UNC System, 2001)

The empirical research presented in “Sameness and Difference; Analyzing Institutional and Organizational Specificities of Universities through Mission Statements” (Kosmützky & Krücken, 2015) further elaborates on the extensive work that is needed for universities to develop a strong mission statement that accomplishes the goals set forth by the institution, governing bodies, and relevant to remain marketable. In the cases of Howard University (HU), Spelman College (SC), and North Carolina A&T State University (NC A&T), their mission

statements have seen several changes over the years. Some were minor, while some were complete revisions.

### **Criteria for Analysis**

To begin, I completed my analysis of AR as located in HU, SC, and NC A&T's mission statements. I selected these three schools as I knew I would be able to easily access their archives due to their notoriety, in which I address in Chapter 3. Furthermore, I reviewed HBCU mission statements from each school during three specific time periods: 5 years after the school was founded, 2 years following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and present day, 2018. I selected these time periods because they offer insight into separate social climates such as racism, segregation, education reform, and current HBCU renaissance, as mentioned in Chapter 3 (p. 66). Five years after the school's founding would have provided the institution time to establish itself. I chose two years following the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because at that point, new institutions could not receive the HBCU title and institutions were no longer segregated. As a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, institutions began to revise their aims and goals, thus impacting their mission statements. Finally, I chose present day mission statements, 2018-2019, because they are representative of our present-day understandings of mission statements and also showcase the impact systems of authority have on the development of mission statements.

Because the concept of the mission statement as a genre is a fairly new one, the artifacts I reviewed did not always have text that was labeled as the mission statement. Instead, the text conveyed the institution's purpose and mission. Thus, the mission statements I identified were labeled a variety of ways within an institution's documents. For example, I identified a university's mission within documents labeled *Visionary Statement*, *Statement of Purpose*, and

*Aims & Ideals.* In other words, if the text aligned with the criteria as stated below, they were utilized as a part of my analysis of university mission statements. Based on the definitions for mission statements outlined above, I developed the following criteria from my working definition to help identify and analyze the mission statements. In order for text that wasn't labeled a "Mission Statement" to be considered an institution's mission, the text would have to include language that did the following:

1. Indicated any potential end goal for the institution and/or department in regard to education. (For example, degree outcomes, assumed knowledge acquired, and/or department curriculum description.)
2. Mentioned proposed outcomes for its student body, specifically. (For example, "the education of teachers," "the future pioneers of engineering," or "Black productive members of society.")
3. Mentioned the purpose of the institution. (institutional or historical significance)

Also, since my analysis' primary goal was to identify if and how AR were used in the mission statements at different times, I also revised the AR tenets to be reflective of the specific artifacts for review, which were that of colleges and universities. This led to a coding system for identification. The tenets were operationalized as follows:

1. Embodiment—Proposed outcome for student population which was typically made of Black and Brown bodies.
2. Shared Narrative—Historical significance to Black community overall.
3. Privileged epistemologies—Application of acquired knowledge while at an HBCU.

As I identified and reviewed each set of mission statements, I utilized three colored markers to identify the tenets I saw present in the mission statements; red=embodiment, blue=shared narratives, orange=privileged epistemologies. This approach helped me visualize AR and led to the development of the tables seen below. It's possible for someone to repeat this same process, which I welcome, and identify more or less examples of AR throughout these very same mission statements, thus acknowledging the human variable at play.

Table 1			
<i>Five Years After School Founding</i>			
	Tenet 1: Embodiment	Tenet 2: Shared Narratives	Tenet 3: Privileged Epistemologies
North Carolina A&T State University Founded: March 9,1891 (1895-1896)	4	3	1
Spelman College Founded: April 11,1881 (1885-1886)	2	1	1
Howard University Founded: March 2, 1867	1	3	4



(1871-1872)			
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Table 2			
<i>Two Years Following Civil Rights Act of 1964</i>			
	Tenet 1: Embodiment	Tenet 2: Shared Narratives	Tenet 3: Privileged Epistemologies
North Carolina A&T State University (1966-1967)	-	-	3
Spelman College (1966-1968)	2	3	1
Howard University (1966-1971) *	-	-	-

Table 3			
<i>Present (2018-2019)</i>			
	Tenet 1: Embodiment	Tenet 2: Shared Narratives	Tenet 3: Privileged Epistemologies
North Carolina A&T (2018-2019)	1	2	1
Spelman College (2017-2019)	4	3	3
Howard University (2017-2019)	4	3	4

### **Analysis Findings**

In the following section, I provide my findings of AR in the mission statements of HBCUs at different times in history. For each section, I provide an overall analysis or common threads I observed followed by specific examples from the mission statements for each institution.

#### **Amplification Rhetorics Five Years After School Founding**

This time period is most pivotal as it is a reflection of the stance and condition of the university while it was also trying to establish itself. As HBCUs worked to establish themselves,

they used specific rhetorical practices that were best situated for this cause. They were able to highlight the student body they would serve, shape the narrative concerning their existence, and situate themselves as pivotal to the education of Black students and their epistemologies. Also, during this time period, mission statements were not formally labeled as such by the institution so I utilized the criteria as described above and in Chapter 3 (p. 88-89 ) to identify text that operated as the mission statement. One common thread you will see is that the majority of what I identified as the mission statement was located in the university/institution history section. When reviewing the mission statements for evidence of AR during the earlier years, it became evident that Tenet 1, which focuses primarily on embodiment and agency, was much more prominent than the other Tenets at NC A&T & SU. Yet, early on I started to notice some difference between just whose embodiment was being amplified, outside of their Blackness and instead, their gender. HU was the exception to this observation as their mission statement showcased more of Tenets 2 & 3, with an emphasis on the historical significance and what their student population has to offer to society and epistemologies. In addition, I noted that Tenets 2 & 3 contained more overlap during this time period.

### NC A&T

To begin, NC A&T's mission statement in 1895-1896 was located within the catalog's introduction/forward. The statement appeared to have a focus predominantly on Black men, even though the school had granted admission to Black women up until 1902. In 1902 the board of trustees voted to admit only men to the institution until 1928, when the university officially received co-educational status ("A&T History," 2018). However, in the 1895-1896 catalog, there is a quick reference to the woman population, that if read today may garner some ill feelings, which states:

Girls are admitted to the College on the same terms as “pay student.” ...the young women under competent instructors are taught sewing, cooking, and laundry work. The well-arranged laundry, spacious sewing-rooms, model kitchen and dining room are some of the facilities afforded for practical instruction in these branches of domestic labor. (The Agricultural College for the Colored Race, 1895-1896, p. 6)

This area is the only place we see the mentioning of a woman student within the mission statement. Now as frustrating as this is even for me to see, it still serves as an example of AR in that the cultural and historical context as well as the social roles of the time period dictated (to some extent) the assumed labor and lived experiences of women and documented it as such. Arguably, the opportunity to attend a university to become a much better domesticated servant to her hard workin’ man, is something to be prideful of and part of her lived experience. This serves as one example of Tenet 2 as it focuses on just how this narrative can be valuable to the individual it is attached to, in this case, a Black woman. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century up until, well today, society has dictated the role of women in the home, especially Black women (Glenn, 1985; Landry, 2000) as that of domesticated servants. And even at one-point, Black women took pride in their ability to master their role as caretaker in the home (Littlefield & Bounds, 2007). This shared experience and narrative provided additional reasoning to enroll in courses that focus and highlight the duties of a caretaker. This doesn't mean these past ideologies are wrong per say, but given the time and circumstance, this course of study highlights intellectual and professional growth for a woman.

This type of gendering in the mission statement is displayed in the passage that focuses predominantly on men as well. For example, the following passage highlights Black male

students and the way in which they will serve and make contributions to the world outside of the university:

The young man that leaves this College, with honor, a good character and a well-trained mind; who is familiar with science and art relating to his calling in agriculture, mechanics, or any other trades, will not be compelled to canvass the country seeking employment. Capital will be looking for him...there will be found graduates of the Agricultural and Mechanical College. (The Agricultural College for the Colored Race, 1895-1896, pp. 6,7)

This passage illustrates various AR moves, and in return, it turns the ideas and notions that a Black man is incapable of having honor, good character, and a well-trained mind, on its head. The College, through its mission statement, uses terminology that is typically used to describe men that are not Black, especially during this historic time period. By doing so, it addresses the specific manner in which Black men are often implicitly ascribed and instead uses language that amplifies the greatness of a Black man that holds such characteristics as a form of embodied strategic alignment and positionality, as referenced in Chapter 2. This move to spend time specifically stating the Black man's character and moral compass is not an attempt to focus or assume a Black man's ability to assimilate to the outside world, which I do believe can be debatable, but it instead highlights what the outside world can gain from the NC A&T graduate, that would also be a Black man. As a result, the education and knowledge obtained by a Black male graduate of A&T is centered and privileged (Tenet 3). This type of rhetorical move even addresses issues of present times, in which Black men must be sure they are presented as someone with good moral character in comparison to their white counterparts. And this awareness even influences and shows up in our entertainment of today. For example, in a

powerful monologue by Anansi<sup>32</sup>, God of Knowledge and Speech (portrayed by Orlando Jones) on the book turned television series *American Gods*, he states that white people are believed to be inherently good. In fact, they are inherently good people and happen to make a bad choice (Gaiman, et al., 2019). Whereas, Black and Brown bodies are the opposite and must continuously fight to be seen as good. Even though this monologue only aired recently, March 2019, it is apparent that this idea of needing to “appear” as good, is for much more than entertainment in a television show. In utilizing AR analyze the various ways that Black men and women can contribute to society we are able to see evidence that a school such as NC A&T is needed for the Black community and outsiders.

#### Spelman College (Spelman Seminary)

The rhetorical practices implemented in the Spelman Seminary institution for women mission statement (1885-1886), an institution for women, reflects its female student body makeup entirely throughout the catalog representing Tenet 1, 2, and 3, even though as earlier mentioned, Tenet 1 is most prominent. From the front cover to the department descriptions and the consistent use of “she” and “her” pronouns, AR are throughout the catalog. In this keen example of AR as displayed throughout the mission statement, we see evidence of the institution’s development to only educate woman (Tenet 1), address the need for her education based on shared lived experiences (Tenet 2), and answer the call for more educated women like herself (Tenet 3). As in the case of NC A&T, there was not a specific set of text labeled as the mission statement; however, by utilizing the criteria I developed, I observed text that would be

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<sup>32</sup> They call em Mr. Nancy in the show tho, but I think this would be a great place to challenge the reader to research why I decided not to refer to him as Mr. Nancy. \*Hint... his story is attached to West Africa and the Caribbean (Griffiths, n.d.).

identified as the mission statement. I was led to multiple areas, mainly what was labeled as the Department Descriptions. For example, the Normal Department description as included on the General Information page, illustrates a move to implicitly highlight the traditional role of women as teachers but also a move to highlight the institution as the premier space to educate women teachers. As stated,

Every person should prepare for teaching before attempting to teach. Such preparation will pay, pay largely. A Normal School, devoted to the training of teachers, is the place in which to prepare. This is such a school, Parents wishing to educate their daughters for teachers should send them here. (Spelman Seminary, 1885-1896, p. 30)

Granted, the school was not co-ed, yet we see another example of positive gendering taking place in the early founding years. And this is one example of many where it is evident the institution understands a need and their role to answer the call. Again, during these times, women were typically limited to roles as educators and caretakers, so I believe it is only right that Spelman situated themselves as pioneers in the training of women educators, amongst other fields of study. Another department description that utilized AR practices was that of the Training School for Nurses. What made this description one that spoke to me was that yes, upon completion of the program, students are “qualified for responsibility as a professional nurse” (20)<sup>33</sup>, students were also able to enroll in order to gain general knowledge to take care of the sick in their homes and communities. Again, given the context and dominant gender roles at that time, it was typically the responsibility of women to ensure that the sick was cared for. Even more so, Spelman’s mission statement mentions the individual that takes up the instruction would have

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<sup>33</sup> The use of professional here also equates to embodied strategic alignment.

been enabled to “care intelligently for the sick in their own home” (20). However, I also saw this to mean something else outside of caring for someone in their home. It also meant that there would be access to medical care by anyone in the community. Far too many times history has shown us that Black bodies do not receive the same quality of care as their white counterparts (Kahn et al., 1994; Jha et al., 2007; Brooks-Carthon et al., 2011). Through educating Spelman women, communities had an advocate for care that understood both the shared narrative and book knowledge needed to privilege their ways of knowing within the practice of and access to medical care. These individual mission statements are centered around a woman answering a need. But I think it does lend a bit of additional insight into the Black woman’s role as we see it today, as the individual expected to save us all.

#### Howard University

Out of all three institutions, HU’s mission statement (1871-1872) proved to be most difficult in identifying and locating. This was the only catalog that I reviewed during the same time period, that did not have an “Historical Information” or “About Us” section that I could immediately reference to look for a mission statements based on the criteria I developed. As a result, AR was not nearly as explicit either. Instead, the catalog itself was far more direct and to the point as a document. I identified AR in the section of the mission statement labeled Department Description. As noted in the table and mentioned earlier, HU had a stronger presence of Tenets 2 & 3 in comparison to NC A&T and SC. The usage of Tenets 2 & 3 is most prevalent as the catalog places more emphasis on the school’s faculty and administration personnel, whom would share the same lived experiences in developing the institution (Tenet 2). In addition, the mission statement centers the educational needs and outcome for their student body as presented in their course descriptions (Tenet 3). There are spaces where you see faculty members and



student names listed prior to even learning about what the department has to offer. An example of this can be found in the Normal Department section, as started on page seven, which only includes the leaders and administrators—which I think really served as an area for quick reference as opposed to privileging. Yet, upon review of pages 8-16, it is noted that it isn't until page 16 that we learn what the actual program consists of. I like to believe this is a rhetorical move to showcase all of those that are a part of their institution and representing the institution. However, I think Tenet 1, which focuses on student embodiment, is not as present in this catalog, or explicitly written, because it is already understood that the institution was created for the sole purpose of educating Black people. And not just any kind of Black person, but a Black person with money, as they are a private institution, which brings a whole different conversation on what it means to potentially reclaim one's agency in the context of HU. Yet, we do see the move of embodied strategic alignment through the constant use of referencing one's moral character and actual physical wellness, amongst the departments. They also amplify the Board of Trustees and the students can be seen all throughout the catalog, which as indicated early is a part of historical significance—Tenet 1. Essentially, it's the institution's way of puffing their chest. This example of AR also shows a sense of pride.

### **Amplification Rhetorics Two Years After the Civil Rights Act of 1964**

Following implementation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,<sup>34</sup> there became a shift in the need for HBCUs to reconstitute themselves, while also making a point they were indeed relevant

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<sup>34</sup> “The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment in the context of Higher Learning Institutions and the enforcement of the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 sustained the necessity of the continuance of Affirmative Action Policies to enforce Race Conscious Undergraduate Admissions for minorities at colleges & universities allowing institutions of higher education to tailor their undergraduate policies utilizing race as an important criteria.” (Lark, 2012, p. 31)

and still needed for Black communities. However, it is worth noting that prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and even *Brown v. Board of Education*, the fight to desegregate institutions of higher education was already taking place. L. Palmer in 1934 initiated a revolution to see that negroes could be educated in the state of Virginia (Picott, 1958). In 1935 Alice Houston attempted to obtain additional training in the Department of English at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and she was unsuccessful in her admission pursuits (Picott, 1958). Yet finally, in September 5, 1950, there was a successful case (*Gregory Hayes Swanson v. The Rectors and Visitors of the University of Virginia*), where Swanson challenged UVA on his admittance rejection (Picott, 1958; Lark, 2012). His challenge and later admittance led to the “threshold of numerous landmark cases of access denied because of race from Black and Whites well into the 21st century” (Lark, 2012, p. 30), and some made claims for reverse racism.<sup>35</sup> Even though Swanson was successful in his efforts to gain admittance into a PWI, this also raised questions about why HBCUs needed to exist in a world where all people could be admitted into college without their race being an issue of contention. The mission statements reviewed during this time period for the selected HBCUs show an attempt to answer this question, all the while remaining true to their efforts as HBCUs serving Black students. In this era, we begin to see the precursors (syntactically) for the way mission statements are written today.

### NC A&T

By the Civil Rights Act,<sup>36</sup> institutions were desegregated, and women were enrolling at NC A&T again. And as you would know it, these changes were reflected in the mission

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<sup>35</sup> *Fisher V. University of Texas*

<sup>36</sup> I’m still not giving y’all a lesson on the Civil Rights Act.

statement. But what really happened was NC A&T had to, like others, fight for their existence. If Black students were now able to enroll in white colleges, why would the negroes need their own school? The mission statement, which was institutionally labeled Historical Statement, provided additional insight into how the school wished to move forward in their role of educating Black scholars, all the while showcasing the General Assembly's influence as well. For example, the statement includes an excerpt describing what the role of the institution is, as defined by the General Assembly. The usage of AR in which they remind the reader of the student population NC A&T serves by explicitly stating their founding purpose, it provides additional context for the historical significance of NC A&T by mentioning the Morrill Act, and it suggests the ways that Black graduates of NC A&T can contribute to society through use of their acquired knowledge. In seeing the following text, the General Assembly's role is made much more evident. In stating:

The General Assembly repealed previous acts describing the purpose of the college in 1957, and re-defined its purpose as follows:

The primary purpose of the College shall be to teach the Agricultural and Technical Arts and Sciences and such branches of learning as related thereto; the training of teachers, supervisions, and administrators for the public schools of the State, including the preparation of such teachers, supervisions, and administrators for the Master's degree. Such other programs of professional or occupational lecture may be offered as shall be approved the North Carolina Board of Higher Education, consistent with the appropriations made therefore. (The Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina, 1966-1968, p. 29)

It is worth mentioning this text was buried within the mission statement. I believe that by burying this text within the mission statement, is not necessarily hiding it, the authors (institution) wanted to be certain they paid homage to and made apparent who they serve and for what purposes. Yes, I can see how this formatting would make sense to some; however, I would think that this type of information as included in the text, would be mentioned first, especially given the time and the need for an argument for the school's existence. In addition, the mission statement continues to pay homage to its student body throughout as well as aligns student narratives with that of what the institution aims to do.

### Spelman College

In 1966, SC still served as an institution to educate women. However, they too were impacted by the Post Civil Rights Act. They did not have a statement formally named the Mission Statement, but they had a passage titled Aims and Ideals. This area is what I identified as the mission statement based on established criteria. While reviewing the mission statement, there was a major point that stood out to me in comparison to NC A&T's and HU's as it clearly included a strong and clear reference to race in the student population they serve. As stated, "Although Spelman College is proud of its heritage as the first college for Negro women, today it admits women without regard to race or creed" (Spelman College, 1966-1965, p. 7).

This is one way in which Spelman utilizes AR to highlight their institution. They ensure that their history is not forgotten (Tenet 2 & 3), while also offering insight into the ways they are changing and that their goal will always be the education of women (Tenet 1). Furthermore, I wish to highlight the call and the need for students to be able to have real life application for the lessons they learn (Tenet 2), stating:

Attitude toward life is considered more important than the mere acquisition of knowledge. Knowledge must be lighted with insight if the student is to relate her learning to the facts and realities of life. Added knowledge should go hand in hand with practical application of knowledge... (p. 7)

This move to address the need for student's usage of the knowledge they have acquired at the college alongside their life experiences shows that SC is aware of their need and importance in the role of educating women for their lived realities. This is also an example of the mentorship we see at HBCUs taking shape in writing. During my enrollment at ECSU, I was often reminded that the lessons I learned were irrelevant if I did not know how to incorporate that knowledge with the experiences and knowledge I already had acquired from my life as a Black woman learning how to maneuver a white world. This evidence of this thought process and sense of mentorship built into the goals and ideas of the institution serves as a powerful example of AR. What I have identified as a cultural difference when it comes to HBCUs, SC has identified as a part of the overall purpose of an HBCU, to allow students to bring the knowledge they already have, combine it with the knowledge they will acquire, and to prepare students for what is to come following graduation.

#### Howard University

Between 1966-1971, HU did not have a course catalog, thus meaning, I ain't have nothin to review during this time period. And to be certain I wasn't trippin' or the university digital archives didn't forget, I noticed the archives were numbered in the order of catalog release. Now I'm going to assume that maybe the digital archives did not have a copy of the catalog for 1966-1971. But I've also considered they did not have one because it was a transition period for all

HBCUs. The Civil Rights Act led to the Higher Education Act<sup>37</sup> (Hannah, 1996) resulting in the inability to develop any additional HBCUs, or at least institutions with the HBCU affiliation and receive federal aid. Yet, HU was still known as the Harvard of HBCUs during that time, so I find it odd that I am unable to locate the course catalog for so many years. However, I did review the 1971-1973 catalog, which was the next available. There, I was unable to locate what could be identified as a mission statement. The History section, which I had referenced for their mission statements of the other institutions focused solely on their history and accomplishments. Then I attempted to go back to 1964-1965 to identify a potential mission statement. I still did not find one either. However, upon further investigation, I did come across program descriptions that matched the mission statement genre conventions and could serve as mission statements for specific programs. Yet due to the range of program offerings by 1966, these statements still would not be sufficient evidence to make claim as the institution's mission statements, and so my analysis for HU was inconclusive.

### **Present Day Mission Statements**

Even though by present day (2019) Mission Statements can be found online or on university websites, I decided to still look to course catalogs to locate the mission statements. I think it is important to also review the location of an artifact, and in this case, the text surrounding it so as to look at the big picture. The text surrounding an artifact can also provide additional context for said artifact in addition to the rationale for which the written artifact is presented, and in this case, serve as a part of the mission statement. It is just as important to

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<sup>37</sup> “The Higher Education Act was initially passed in 1965 as omnibus bill authorizing a variety of institutional, student, and programmatic aid programs for higher education.” (Hannah, 1996, p. 500)

recognize where the mission statement is positioned in the catalogs, too, as they can serve as a framing mechanism as well. Also, in prior reviews, I utilized the course catalog to locate the mission statements because they were indeed historical texts and TPC documents, but they also included course descriptions, which I needed to complete my curriculum overview since curriculum is influenced by or shows a reflection of the institution's mission statement.

### NC A&T

NC A&T's Mission Statement (2019) can be found alongside the institution's labeled Vision Statement. Now due to my inability to locate these statements in print, the catalog's subpage linked to the About Page on the website, I was not/did not attempt to analyze the statement's location or the order it was placed in text or how it was presented in the print form. Once I was made aware that there was not a print version to provide me the insight, I needed to draw additional conclusions regarding the importance of these two statements that I concluded were in fact the mission statement.

NC A&T university labeled Mission Statement showcases our present understanding of the Mission Statement genre as composed by colleges and universities. In terms of AR, however, there are two pivotal areas for review. The Mission Statement reads as follows:

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University advances knowledge through scholarly exchange and transforms society with exceptional teaching, learning, discovery and community engagement. An 1890 land-grant doctoral research institution with a distinction in STEM and commitment to excellence in all disciplines, North Carolina A&T creates innovative solutions that address the challenges and economic needs of North Carolina, the nation and the world. (North Carolina A&T, n.d)

To begin, I noted the order in which they list their approaches to transform society. By placing teaching first in this list, instead of research, the text highlights the institution's epistemologies as a space for privilege (Tenet 3). Furthermore, the specificity in mentioning their institution's serving as an "research institution with a distinction in STEM and commitment to excellence in all disciplines..." (About, n.d) takes us back to the history of the institution as it was developed as the Black version of North Carolina State University (NCSU) (Tenet 1 & 2). I see this as a nod to their history and reclaiming of their agency in the fields of STEM (Tenets 1, 2, & 3). This is one example where their student population is not explicitly highlighted; however, I think by using this language it implicitly reminds the reader of their founding purpose (Tenet 1). Even though AR are not nearly as apparent as we've seen in the past, I also attribute this to the statement being created by a team of people alongside a set of guidelines in which said committee must adhere to.

In addition, what was labeled as the Vision Statement also spoke to their current outlook of NC A&T and what it is they are aiming to do for the future. This again is an example of where a statement might be named one thing but based on the genre conventions of a mission statement, it is operating as another. The Vision Statement as follows:



North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University is a preeminent land-grant institution where high-achieving scholars are engaged in transformative teaching and learning, civic outreach, interdisciplinary research and innovative solutions to global challenges. (n.d)

This statement was approved by the NC A&T Board of Trustees in February 2018 and UNC Board of Governors in March 2018 (About, n.d), but I was unable to find any indication as to what criteria was used to approve this statement. The policy as mentioned by UNC, that the schools needed to have a Vision Statement but not necessarily the purpose it was to serve. In terms of AR, the named Vision Statement does embody AR as a means of communication. As it (a) references its past (thus referencing its student body), (b) acknowledges their shared history with other land grant institutions (predominantly HBCUs), and (c) mentions the need to answer the call for innovative solutions suggesting the ways in which their student body can add to new ways of addressing global challenges. By NC A&Ts labeling, this would not serve as the mission statement, however, I see it as a part of their overall mission.

### Spelman College

Out of all the mission statements I analyzed during this time period (2018-2019), Spelman's showed the most explicit examples of AR and rightfully so, as they are a college for women, so they need to continue to validate and advocate for their existence as a priority. Their mission statement reads:

Spelman College, a historically Black college and a global leader in the education of women of African descent, is dedicated to academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences and the intellectual, creative, ethical, and leadership development of its students. Spelman empowers the whole person to engage the many cultures of the world and inspires a commitment to positive social change. (Spelman College, 2017-2019, p. 2)

This mission statement is much more explicit about their status as an HBCU and their role as leaders in the education of women of African descent. This shift from their 1966-1968 mission statement to the present one highlights the institution's move to essentially get back to their roots without presenting a space that excludes women of other racial and ethnic identities. Remember, during the 1960s, HBCUs had to remove certain language and revise their materials to reflect the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. So, at that time, the school could not, or it was not in their best interest, to so vibrantly reference their role in the education of women of African descent but instead their role in educating women overall. The first sentence of the Mission Statement is a representation of AR that I believe other HBCUs should adopt. As we are currently seeing a resurgence in the interest of HBCUs, I think it is pivotal that HBCUs use this crucial time to highlight HBCU history within the institution's Mission Statements. By combining their institutional focus, as shown by Spelman (in this case a liberal arts and sciences college) alongside their histories, we see AR show up in ways that would still adhere to the guidelines implemented or handed down by accrediting bodies and Boards of Trustees. Not having the institutional focus and the university history explicitly stated in the Mission Statement slowly diminishes and removes the knowledge that makes HBCUs unique in comparison to PWIs. Essentially, as Spelman has shown us in their Mission Statement, history—in terms of the

history of who that instruction was developed for and what purpose—is what separates institutions of higher learning and their missions.

### Howard University

In moving towards my analysis on Howard’s mission statement during this time period (2019), I noticed that it was the longest. I found this most interesting considering how short and succinct the others were. The Mission Statement reads as follows:

Howard University, a culturally diverse, comprehensive, research intensive and historically Black private university, provides an educational experience of exceptional quality at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels to students of high academic standing and potential, with particular emphasis upon educational opportunities for Black students. Moreover, the University is dedicated to attracting and sustaining a cadre of faculty who are, through their teaching, research and service, committed to the development of distinguished, historically aware, and compassionate graduates and to the discovery of solutions to human problems in the United States and throughout the world. With an abiding interest in both domestic and international affairs, the University is committed to continuing to produce leaders for America and the global community.

(Howard University, 2017-2019, p. 8)

Their Mission Statement combines what we have previously seen named as the Statement of Purpose and Vision Statement at NC A&T and SC. However, as we see at HU, there is only one formally named Mission Statement. In the Mission Statement, we observe the use of AR to further showcase the identity for the individual/ community/ organization in which the tenets are used to represent. For example, in the Mission Statement, HU immediately acknowledges their

history and status as an historically Black private university. The term private alongside an institution has a connotation that the institution may be elite and in turn, the mentioning of this in the Mission Statement highlights their pristine position. I know typically when we think of elite status in terms of institutions there is a bit of a mixed response, but I think this is one moment where it is a good thing. It is an example of the institution declaring their student embodiment and their agency in educating their student body. The statement even goes do far as to explicitly state its stance on the education of Black students by mentioning “...with particular emphasis upon educational opportunities for Black students” (Howard University, 2019, Mission Statement). In addition, the Mission Statement makes it apparent that they focus on what their Black students have to offer and the importance of “attracting and sustaining a cadre of faculty who are, through their teaching, research and service, committed to the development of distinguished, historically aware, and compassionate graduates...” (2019). As research has continued to state, it is important that institutions are more aware of the faculty and their role in student success, especially when working with Black students. By mentioning that faculty need to be historically aware, this alludes to the continued mentorship that takes place in the HBCU space. Throughout history, the community needs that HBCUs help address have shifted. Yet, one of the most obvious needs that has not changed is the education of Black people. This need and focus to be historically aware of the narratives that have come before the institution and the student population suggests that faculty are knowledgeable of the challenges which their Black student population will face in their future following college.

## Curriculum Overview

As I reviewed the course catalogs/bulletins to locate the mission statements, I also conducted a brief overview of courses/degree programs in order to determine if any might resemble the kinds of TPC programs and courses we have today and how the mission statement and its proposed goals and outcomes are made evident in the course curriculum. I suggest that by reviewing HBCU curricula in relationship to an institution's mission statements, we are able to see AR as a means of pedagogy and practice in the field of TPC. Due to project scope, I did not spend an abundance amount of time on this area; however, I see this area of curriculum development and pedagogy as a space for additional research and wished to provide a starting point for myself and other HBCU scholars. Through my investigation of the potential connections between the mission statements and the schools' curriculum, my findings suggest that an institution's mission/purpose often emerged within the curriculum of the specific time period.

Also, while completing my analysis, I took into account the conversations that were taking place at HBCUs by interviewing two HBCU Black Women faculty members with TPC experience: Kimberly Harper of NC A&T and Alexandria Lockett of SC. With IRB review and approval, I was able to sit down for a chat with both women. Harper is an Assistant Professor and serves as the Director of Technical Communication Associate Chair at NC A&T—which is also the only HBCU with a TC Concentration. Her educational background consists of a BA in English from North Carolina A&T, a MA in Technical and Scientific Communication from Miami University of Ohio, and a PhD in Professional and Technical Discourse from East Carolina University. When asked about her TPC experience, formal and informal, she stated;

So, going back to my dissertation research, I, at that time, my expertise was document design and rhetorical choices of publishers looking at textbooks. And, since then, I worked in industry as a grant writer. I worked in a marketing department putting together business proposals. (K. Harper, Personal Communication, March 13, 2019)

Dr. Alexandria Lockett is a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Department of English at SC whom has extensive knowledge in TPC, in addition to tangible experience utilizing and implementing TPC practices in a variety of spaces, such as in a career center. Her educational background includes a BA in English and French from Truman State University, MA in English with a Concentration in Rhetoric, Composition, and Literary Studies (RCL) from the University of Oklahoma, and her PhD in English with a Concentration in Rhetoric and Composition from Pennsylvania State University. When asked about her TPC experience, formal and informal, she mentions that she has not published in the field of TPC,<sup>38</sup> however she has implemented various pedagogical practices that have an impact on the way her students develop TC/TPC artifacts (A. Lockett, Personal Communication, March 15, 2019). I see her pedagogical approach as one way she utilizes her situatedness and educational background to assist students in the development of TC/TPC documents, as all practitioners should.

As I go forth and articulate my overview of the HBCU curriculum over these time periods, I will also include excerpts from my interviews with both women. The following sections provide snapshots of HBCU curriculum during the selected time periods. These examples show evidence of how AR are utilized in the development of HBCU curricula and potential TPC/TC program and course offerings. Finally, I draw attention to the mission

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<sup>38</sup> As you will see later, Dr. Lockett mentions the difference between TPC and TC.

statement declarations and their presence within the school's curriculum to further illustrate the mission statement's potential influence on curricula and their role as a genre that calls for specific outcomes through HBCU curricula.

### **In the Late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

In the earlier stages of the HBCU curriculum, late 19th to early 20th century, there appeared to be more evidence of TPC programs/courses than today in some ways. In using my working definition for TPC, one that relies on the communication of knowledge by someone with specific expertise, there becomes spaces to which that expertise is made present. In addition, my working definition broadens the way one can look to understand a course and/or degree program as TPC. This is most evident in NC A&T's curriculum, which included a program in the Department of Mechanical Technology which boasted courses such as "Contracts, Estimates, and Supervision of Work," which was explained to "consists of lectures, exercises and reading. The law of contracts is explained, and the forms for building contracts, pasting wall contracts, are given in full" (Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina, 1929, Course Description, p. 106). As indicated in the mission statement during this time period, for NC AT specifically, was to educate Black people on how to operate in the field of trade instead of that of liberal arts. These courses are a reflection and indication of said mission statements.

Even though the context of my interviews with both Dr. Harper and Dr. Lockett were situated in present day times (2018-2019), there were many points made regarding TC/TPC and its curriculum that was evident in the past. Dr. Harper described TPC as a way to communicate "technical, highly technical information for a layman's group" (K. Harper, Personal Communication, March 13, 2019). An example of this approach and understanding is made

present in the curriculum for the Certificate in Secretarial Science which was designed for those who could not commit to more than two years of continued education but wanted to “equip themselves for efficient service as confidential secretaries” (Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina, 1929, Course Description, p. 125). The courses showed a strong focus on writing and communicating to an outside audience, such as Shorthand, that was designated to teach students the transcription of simple letters and documents (125). This type of program availability is an example of AR as they are considering a student body that may not be able to attend more classes over the two years; the program provided students the skills to write letters and documents that could be used to enact change throughout their communities; and they were provided a skillset that could be altered and match the needs of those they worked for and with.

However, when asked about her idea of what TPC/TC was, Dr. Lockett provided a much more extensive answer that was centrally focused on the end result of utilizing TC/TPC in practice. Reminding us that TC/TPC, in which she mentions that she does not recognize them as one in the same, operates in various contexts and that the focus of the content should be more so the context than the technicalities (A. Lockett, Personal Communication, March 15, 2019). I believe that in applying this lens as described by Dr. Lockett we are able to broaden who gets to be referred to as a practitioner as the content we create can be tied to our embodiment, narratives, and epistemologies (AR). By suggesting a more conscious effort to focus on content in comparison to context results in a curriculum that is much more tailored to student needs and embeds the mission statement through their goals and initiatives. This thought process which Dr. Lockett offers can also allow for the space to look back to previous curriculums for evidence of TC/TPC as our present-day understandings are redefined. Even though we have come to these



conclusions today of how we understand and utilize TPC/TC, I think these conclusions may have occurred in the past, just not formally named as we see in the courses previously described.

### **Post-Civil Rights Act of 1964**

As earlier mentioned, HBCUs and their English/ Composition studies initially focused on composition and verbal communication as a means to align Black students to fit into the white middle class and/or provide instruction for the trades they were working in. We saw this as an instantiation of AR in mission statements because it allowed Black students access into white communities. However, in the 1940s, there is a turning point in which HBCUs shift from teaching predominantly about writing for trade and instead the use of multiliteracy pedagogy becomes apparent (Mendelsohn, 2017). Then from the 1950s to 1960s, the writing programs of HBCUs move to a literature-based curriculum (L'Eplattenier & Mastrangelo, 2004).

Upon review of SC's curriculum during the 1966-1968 course catalog, it is apparent that there is no evidence of a potential TPC program. Even though this may be expected as SC is a liberal arts college, programs such as Physics and Political Science could benefit from a TPC course, specifically, to expand student's ability to convey information more effectively and efficiently, all the while being a reflection of the institution's mission statement. SC's mission statement mentions that students are to be able to relate their lessons to the facts and realities of life (Spelman College, 1966, Aims & Goals, p. 7) once they graduate from their institution. A program such as Political Science would include pedagogical practices that utilize student's realities and reflection of their life, thus exemplifying the call to action as declared in their mission statement. Yet I want to make clear, by advocating here for a TPC course does not mean that TPC was not occurring in the classrooms during this time. As Dr. Lockett explains, it is very possible to have TC/TPC scholarship take form, without a formally named program (A. Lockett,

Personal Communication, March 15, 2019). I believe that again, even though it is not noted in the course curriculum, the development of documents as described by Dr. Lockett were composed especially given the political time. This awareness of political time ensures the ability to utilize AR in artifacts which are relevant to, in this case, Political Science. I like to believe this example is where we start to see one of the many evolutions of TPC.

### **Moving Towards 2019 and Forward**

Fortunately, course catalogs and bulletins have evolved to include direct routes to the information I wish to obtain (Table of Contents, Structured Outlines, Key Areas of Focus, etc.) and as this is the final course overview, I decided to focus on HU. HU has six colleges. Of those six, I immediately investigated the curriculum set forth in the College of Arts & Sciences and the College of Engineering, Architecture, and Computer Sciences to locate TPC courses and a potential program. Even though evidence of a TPC program and course offerings may be found in the curriculum of the other colleges, such as the School of Business or School of Communications, I suggest (and not to generalize) that the two I've selected would be an area in which other TPC practitioners may look to locate a TPC program. However, I am aware that scholarship does exist investigating the location, as in department housing, of TPC programs (Maylath, Gabriel, & Gurak, 2010; Connors, 1982; Kynell, 2000) such as an Engineering School (Reave, 2004).

Upon completing an overview, I noticed that there were in fact spaces that included TPC/TC writing course offerings such as in the English Department and even the Biology department, yet an official TPC/TC degree program is not available. Even the College of Engineering includes a writing component, which may be a general education course modified to fit the needs for engineering students specifically. At East Carolina University, this course is

referred to as Writing in the Disciplines, with Health Sciences as a major focus. I believe this same course offered at HU would have a specialized writing course for engineering students. In having a course like this with a specific student body focus the department would take on one of the key examples of AR in the mission statement. During the proposed time period's mission statement, there is mention of the educational experience to include "particular emphasis upon education opportunities for Black students" (Howard University, 2019, Mission Statement), thus highlighting one of the ways the mission statement can be made more evident in the curriculum. If HU was to move forward in the development of TPC programs, and other HBCUs, the instruction would be situated in Black communities, addressing the problems of the communities their student body is a part of. And as stated by Dr. Lockett, "by getting students to imagine the relevance of the workplace for the way that they might actualize their potential is very unique to HBCUs" (Personal Communication, March 15, 2019). Even though she is specifically referencing workplace communication, I argue her sentiments remain true across all TPC/TC artifact development.

### **Complete Overview**

We see there is a space in which TPC programs can and should exist at HBCUs and in their curriculum today. HU Mission Statements mentions the university's stance as being a pioneer and champion on being on the edge of various educational breakthroughs, and I believe the implementation of a TPC program can be one of their many innovations for an HBCU. Furthermore, we see that the mission statements can operate as much more than strategic planning for an institution, but it can also serve as a part of the foundation of a course and/or program in ways that may go unnoticed. As one of my final questions to Dr. Harper, "In what

ways can HBCUs contribute to current knowledge and understanding of TPC?”, I conclude with her response as summing this whole section and continued call for TPC programs at HBCUs.

I think obviously moving into conversation about race along the continuum is important, but that's not the only thing we can contribute. Like I get tired of people thinking, oh, "HBCU is the Black experience." It is, but that's not all we're about. So, I think HBCUs have the ability to contribute students who are not only culturally situated but also students who have the skills. But the skills-based knowledge. They come out knowing, audience awareness, they can work on whatever technology, but they also bring an understanding that culture does not exist in a vacuum. (Personal Communication, March 13, 2019)

Knowing and understanding HBCUs as spaces that utilize AR in the development of their curricula can offer new insights into how we move forward in addressing the needs of our students overall. In addition, AR can offer a new pedagogical approach to allowing our student's embodiment, narratives, and epistemologies be included in our classroom. In doing so, and as Dr. Harper mentions, we are able to foster a space in which students are culturally aware and able to lend insights into new ways of reshaping the field of TPC.

### **Final Implications**

After you done jumped through the chapter, I feel like and hope this jawns will continue to live a life of its own. Mission statements as a genre are documents that I believe need additional investigation, and I'm lit that this specific chapter will be able to help gas that research. Outside of the development of committees to sit down, plan, and construct mission statements taking up a coin and folks time, the mission statement is also often times regarded and utilized in speeches by Chancellors and administrators when things pop off at their perspective institution. This

consistent reference to their institution's mission as the foundation for their morals or values furthers my call for additional investigation. Now with my HBCUs tho, and based on my analysis, mission statements have the power to either blast HBCUs or diminish and erase their histories. I absolutely refuse to allow the later to occur, without me sayin' somethin. Mission statements hold far greater power than I think some of us even peep. And now that I've highlighted the way these Mission Statements pop up in the curriculum, it's only right that I leave this chapter with a quote from Dr. Lockett when it comes to HBCU students performing and completing the work of TPC and why it is important HBCUs are able to develop TPC programs on their own terms within the context of its student population and community because, "students are able to really understand that professional and technical communication for us has to include more than just how to do it" (Personal Communication, March 15, 2019). It is imperative that scholars in the field of TPC/TC see this knowledge as valuable and understand what it is HBCU epistemologies have to offer.

## **Chapter 6: Ushering in a New Wave for TPC (Final Implications), Super *Dupa Fly***

### **Sooooo Let's Talk**

Well team, this is it. This is the final break down. The wrap up. The time to go. This where all roads have left us. I am now playin' the original "Before I Let Go," so ya know it is time to get on 'bout ya business. But before you all make your way to the reference list, or where ever you so choose from here, I wish to provide my final conclusions and implications for my project on my theoretical framework Amplification Rhetorics (AR) and their presence at TRAP Karaoke and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). TRAP Karaoke serves as an example of AR with instances of TPC. While mission statements at HBCUs are TPC with instances of AR. The theory of AR also provides scholars with a way we can amplify the discursive and communicative practices of Black communities. But is also provides a way to better understand the rhetoricity of actions that happen within Black communities. AR is both a theoretical framework as well as a rhetorical formation that can be used to analyze Black communicates. This chapter informs you, the reader, of the various rhetorical choices I have made throughout this project and why. To make this project's purpose more visible, I utilize a Black-Feminist Womanist Storytelling approach (Baker-Bell, 2017), as introduced and further explored in Chapter 2 (p. 48 ), to better articulate all of my choices. Storytelling is a part of self-healing, which we all need after writing a dead blasted dissertation. But even more, storytelling for Black women is a "literary strategy" (Baker-Bell, 2017) that provides the possibility to share with people our special knowledge into truth (Richardson, 2013). I see my project as a part of my life's narrative, and I figured it would be best to provide my final implications in a way that mirrored said story. In the forthcoming sections, I will briefly describe additional insight as to

the origins of my theoretical framework, outside of the one mentioned in Chapter 1. Next, I will further detail why I chose TRAP Karaoke and HBCUs as the objects of my study instead of choosing one or the other. Following, I will outline additional reasons why I decided to flip the table on the dissertation genre. And, last, I provide my final implications for the field of TPC and conclude with my closing remarks.

### **Amplification Rhetorics**

So let me take a bit of a moment to let ya know a bit more about AR. For myself, this whole project is essentially a narrative of my life as a Black, trap music twerking, HBCU reppin, God fearing, full of life havin, underprepared, underrepresented, agitated, graduate student tryna finish her PhD. And I took on much of this journey in hopes of breaking generational curses. I look at my maternal grandmother's, Ethel Faulk, story and in so many ways, I thought I was far removed from her experiences being a Black woman with only a 5th grade education, a teen mother, and a survivor in so many ways. Writing my dissertation has shown me that I'm actually not so far removed as I thought, and I assumed. I came into my PhD program barely able to complete a solid research project, having to spend the majority of my first year and a half learning what I should have already known coming in, then trying play catch up—much like my grandmother learning how to maneuver the world with a 5th grade education, while still sustaining her life as an adult. I birthed many research projects with uncertainty of where they would take me all the while understanding it was my responsibility to produce scholarship and nurture it into something that contributed to the knowledge taking place in my field—much like my grandmother having to raise her children to be productive members of society. Finally, I had to do all of this work, maneuver through an unstable and very toxic relationship, all the while keeping my head on straight—much like my grandmother having to overcome her own demons

and experiences with trauma. Our experiences are far more parallel than I thought even though she has never stepped foot on a college campus.

In my introduction to this project, I explicitly stated that this dissertation project was important because when Black people are underrepresented in our scholarship, we are limited in our citation practices, and we may struggle to find ourselves within the scholarship we study. I also mentioned that I wanted to use this project as a space to help bridge the gap between formal and informal spaces of education. However, one thing that I did not specifically mention is why I took on this very broad and very big project—even when my Chair would remind me I may have too much dip on my chip. I wanted to showcase another way that the narratives and stories of past and present Black bodies (researcher or not) can live through our scholarship. When I've gone on up to yonder, my story will continue to live through this project. This project is one that I used to enact my own theory and also amplify my damn self. There were moments when my committee members would ask questions: Who is the audience for my theory? Who does the reclaiming? Who does the validating? Who does the privileging? Initially, I struggled to articulate my thoughts but then I realized, it depends on who is doing the amplifying. In other words, is it a member of the community that is doing the amplifying, or is it someone on the outside looking in with hopes of amplifying the Black community? If it is in fact a member of the Black community that also happens to be a member of the academy, such as myself, doing the amplifying the following questions are considered: are they familiar with and understand their own agency within their community (Tenet 1), where do they see their own narrative lining up with fellow community members (Tenet 2), and finally what are the privileged epistemologies they see within the Black community that they wish to center. Whereas if it is an outsider, they would consider: the lived experiences and agency as enacted by Black community members



(Tenet 1). Then they would consider the narratives and their influence on lived experiences (Tenet 2). Finally, they would consider and/or identify the African American/Black Rhetorics that they could center (Tenet 3).

I, as a Black woman enacted the tenets of AR in this dissertation project. I had to come to terms with my own agency and lived experiences in determining if this project was indeed doable. Did I have the authority, potential, and ability to pull off such a project based on my own lived experiences (Tenet 1) (p. 30)? I had to decide and understand who my audience was for this project. Then decide, if they weren't receptive, does that mean my work is invalid? (Tenet 2) (p. 38) If it is concluded that my work is invalid, then by whose standards and does their assessment actually hold weight in my life? Then I had to decide just how much of the Black rhetorical moves I've acquired throughout my life would be privileged. If my committee were to tell me no to AAVE, Shade, and my digital chapter, what was I going to do as a backup plan (Tenet 3)? These are some of the elements and fears that essentially helped build my theory.

### **Limitations and Things to Consider**

AR ain't a theoretical framework that I assume folks will always get right. There may be times when, as I've mentioned earlier in my project, what one may think is a form of amplification can really be a form of oppression and or fetishizing. These lines of amplifying, oppressing, and fetishizing can, at times, become blurred. Because what I find oppressive, one may find absolutely fabulous. An example of this would be my focus on trap music within TRAP Karaoke. I mention this early because I wanted to foreshadow and make you aware that I had to face this in my project. Yet, in Chapter 2, when providing the supporting theoretical frameworks for AR, I continuously found myself considering a variety of potential audiences for my project.

I utilize this project to amplify Black communities (which I am apart of), and their communicative practices to my dissertation committee—in which I argue is a different audience compared to others in the field of TPC, and the academy as a whole.<sup>39</sup> I also use this project to amplify Black communities to fellow members of the Black community and other members outside of the formal academy. That’s bout five audiences right there that I alone wanted to address. I understand my committee as the primary audience, then others, but I also understand and think it is worth noting that dissertations do not operate in a vacuum and can actually have impact outside of the academy. So, what if one of my white committee members had to take on the same role of amplifying Black communities, reaching each of these audiences, all the while implementing the three tenets I’ve provided. We would see something completely different as a closing project. Point is, AR is not a one-and-done model. It requires the person doing the amplifying to be very aware of how their role as amplifier has a long-term impact outside of just their proposed goals. It also requires the rhetor to be aware and willing to address the tensions which may become a part of amplifying certain elements within a community. My cohort Cecilia Shelton always refers to this as “Impact vs Intent.” What and who we may intend to amplify can very well have a very different or opposing impact. This is something we should keep in mind when utilizing AR but even more so in the field of TPC as I will discuss later.

### **TRAP Karaoke VS HBCUs**

TRAP Karaoke and HBCUs are not necessarily very different spaces, but they certainly provide a different type of context for understanding Black culture and TPC in a new lens.In

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<sup>39</sup> Even though my committee members are a part of the field, I see them as separate because they have already been exposed to my research and the work that it is, I do. Those outside of my committee, but in the field, are essentially starting from a different baseline in understanding my scholarship or the scholarship of other graduate students.

order to communicate these ideas, there were certain needs I had when it came to taking on this magnitude of a project, which led to me changing chairs. So, I start this specific area with y'all for two reasons. First of all, if you have to change chairs, there is not a damn thing wrong with it. I do suggest you do so respectfully with feelings in mind, but I ain't here to police you and your actions. You grown and you not gonna cite me one day saying, "Temp said you gotta do the labor thinking about people feelings over yours!" I'm just leaving this suggestion cause let's be real, considering feelings is def labor, but I think it is labor that I can very well support taking on...at times. Anywho, I tell you all this because the choice to do these two spaces, instead of one or the other meant I needed to have a chair that was aware of the risk we were taking and ready to stand behind me, understand my thoughts, and be willing to help reel me in when I went off the tracks, even when I did not understand. Having two opposing safe spaces of Black community and culture meant that I had to learn to focus to ensure that by the time I got to this section, I could weave them joints together. So let me give you a lil more insight into each specific site of study.

### **Politics of Respectability / Respectability of Politics.**

I chose these two sites because who and what we choose to center in our scholarship can, at times, come down to politics of respectability or respectability politics within the academy. \*gasp\*. The politics of respectability emphasize and enforce the notion that if an individual was to reform and align their behaviors (research/scholarship) with that of the dominant society (safe areas of study), they would be able to reform an entire system of oppression, while still facing awards (publications/tenure) for their alignment (Higginbotham, 1993). Members of historically marginalized groups may shy away from certain topics or scholarship because they do not want to align themselves with such negative associations. As a member of a historically marginalized

community, I am well aware that associating myself with “specialty” research areas or research areas that resist present day norms can limit the access I may have to publication opportunities, co-authorship, and may even cost me a dime or two when it comes to gaining financial support. So, I think it can be a smart move to avoid this type of conflict and be aware of the scholarship we take on and how research can be risky in the grand scheme of things.<sup>40</sup> If politics of responsibility is the reason there is a resistance to certain scholarship, then I take issue with that and want to push back. Damon Young (2016), author of “The Definition, Danger, and Disease of Respectability Politics, explained” does a fabulous job of breaking down the issue with respectability politics into three points. First, it shifts the responsibility from the person or institution that is continuing the oppression or enforcing boundaries, and instead onto the victim (2016), or in this case, the scholar. Leaving scholars to have to choose between developing scholarship that they see a need and call for or potentially risk not being taken seriously or continuously having to prove their work’s validity. Next, engaging in respectability politics through our scholarship can at times provide a false sense of hope. This can be a double edge sword between navigating what the academy gains from my scholarship while questioning what it is I have to lose in producing it. This tension can be and has been very difficult to navigate. Through this research project, in addition to my journey as a graduate student overall, I’ve had to decide just how much of myself I’ve wanted to give up in an effort to adhere to expectations that I did not see as valid, rational, or ideal. Yea, it is absolutely fabulous to contribute to new ways of knowing and understanding, but I think it is so important for us to step back and consider at

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<sup>40</sup> This is kinda like wearing your hair straight to an interview, then showing up to work in a fro. Sometimes we have to be intentional in our modes of resistance.

whose expense? Finally, in engaging with respectability politics within our scholarship, we don't move us forward in breaking barriers for other historically marginalized scholars. Again, there is a fine tension that scholars like me, who are progressive and sometimes resistant, have to face in where we want our scholarship to take us. Is the goal to reshape a system? Or do we have to wait until we are in a position to reshape the system? I don't have one answer for everyone. Yet I do see, and I have seen, where the game of respectability politics has limited the way we produce scholarship and the ways it is received. And in my observations and lived experiences with this game of politics, it actually further motivated me to pick these sites of study in an effort to resist respectability politics.

### **TRAP Karaoke**

I get it. TRAP Karaoke and all that it entails can make people uncomfortable due to the vulgarity of trap music, profane language that is performed and yelled by its participants, and even the cultural references as included on the #Tees4TheTrap. Y'all, even my mom had to check me on some of it. But at what point are we, scholars/researchers/mom/dad/community members, able to be more reflective in the way we validate and amplify different sites of study as credible and its potential to offer new insights and understandings. Even when we are made so uncomfortable to the point that we cannot hear past one element (such as hearing the constant use of nigga in a trap song so you are unable to hear anything else) while completely disregarding the context for the language, its usage, and the community's use of language based on their norms and standards (Gitter, 2010). How do we actually learn from that uncomfortableness? I see AR as a powerful theoretical framework to help with this kind of learning. Instead of continuously dismissing things that may make you uncomfortable, I suggest that you utilize AR to work through that uncomfortableness. My role as a researcher is not to

gauge how uncomfortable you may be or even tell you that your being uncomfortable is rooted in some patriarchal, westernized, engrained/socialized bull. Instead, I like to offer the space for my reader to be uncomfortable, sit with it, and be responsible in how they move forward with it—whether that be completely disengaging or seeking better understanding. It is my hope that by producing a chapter on TRAP Karaoke, the later was able to occur, but if not, I still am able to find pride in producing a piece of scholarship that focused on a Black safe space that did not meet dominant norms of what Blackness should entail and how it should be presented.

My chapter on TRAP Karaoke serves as an illustration for audience members not familiar with the movement and what I've felt for almost the whole duration of my graduate career, lost and uncomfortable. What I've learned over the years and what I've gathered from feedback at conference presentations (now this is not universal, just my observation). When some people, especially people that are not a part of historically marginalized communities, are used to always seeing themselves in scholarship and suddenly encounter something that does not reflect them, they either: 1. Expect you to unpack everything for them. Or 2. Flat out resist whatever it is you are saying. This is not always the case. There are certainly people like my committee members and others in the field that are willing to do the work, learn from their students, and exchange ideas with them so they can better articulate the work they want to do. This unfamiliar scholarship may be also resisted because it can make the audience uncomfortable and potentially force them to sit with their own bias and judgement.

Unfortunately / fortunately, I ain't really had the pleasure of always seeing myself in scholarship and I've had to be uncomfortable, so it has become my norm to do much of that unpacking on my own, before I can consider resisting. However, one way that I see the academy changing is by opening the space for the production of scholarship that will center communities

and cultures that are not dominant, charging readers/scholars alike to do much of that unpacking to understand labor, and even sometimes being uncomfortable. Also, in centering non-dominant communities, I think we are able to open the lane for the types of audiences that might learn from our scholarship. I am not advocating for the listening of false narratives as produced by groups such as the alt-right, or aiming to make sense out of blatant homophobic, sexist, xenophobic thoughts or ideals. Instead I offer and welcome the academy to move forward in understanding the multifaceted ways in which communities are shaped, even when those communities and their communicative practices reject what is deemed socially acceptable, while remaining true to who they are and what they represent.

### **HBCUs**

I developed my chapter on HBCUs to further highlight why I believe it is so crucial that we work to sustain the presence of the HBCUs that are remaining in our nation. Yet, I also produced this chapter to play the game of respectability politics, too. To be clear, this is not the case for all HBCU scholarship, or even for myself. I argue and will always argue for the need to continue to amplify HBCUs and their role in higher education. It just happened to be a very intentional move on my part in my project. I went into this project knowing that TRAP Karaoke was not going to be as palatable for all of the audiences I wanted to reach for my dissertation project. I also remembered how I felt when I could not see myself in the scholarship I was reading and so dearly wanted to be able to so I could relate to what the hell I was reading. In being able to identify myself in the scholarship I was reading, it would better facilitate my comprehension and way of understanding the scholarship's applicability in my own work. So what'd I do? I picked another area that I knew very well, I wanted to amplify it, but I also knew that it would fall in line with how we may identify a site of study as more acceptable or standard.

Here, we have an institution for higher education that we can look to and learn from. As in a matter of fact, I made my best efforts to not throw nearly as much shade in my chapter on HBCUs because I knew it was serving two purposes, or at least that was my intent. It was for the folks still saying WTF to TRAP Karaoke and possibly struggling to make sense of it, but it was also for the people who really wished to continue to learn more about HBCUs and what they have to offer the field of TPC. Whatever the reason or rationale, I'm not here to debate. What I do know and what I am fully aware of, as a Black scholar, I have to provide evidence that I am a scholar that has the potential to produce scholarship outside of Black communities and spaces. HBCUs just happens to be a Black space that intersects with dominant higher education. I utilized interviews with Black HBCU faculty members because I value the narratives that we have to share. In addition, I think it is important to have the voices of those at HBCUs be a part of my project because they were able to contribute to conversations concerning issues of diversity in TPC and TPC programs at HBCUs. But as my research shows, HBCUs have a history and identity of their own that I felt compelled to center and highlight. As much as I hate to admit it, but I believe in transparency, my chapter on HBCUs was my own attempt to still make my work "safe" while still amplifying my work and still showcasing an area of study that I am very proud of. Yet in showcasing areas that I am very proud of, I had to face my own tension with both spaces.

### **Overlooking the Tension all in the Name of Amplification Rhetorics**

As earlier mentioned, the choice for both of these Black spaces was very much intentional. I saw them as places that I have and still am a part of and places that I could see various scholars and researchers benefiting from. However, this does not mean that I did not face tension with both sites. Now as a sister is adamant and determined to be very careful in shining



the light on my community's downfalls, it is fair that I take time to acknowledge one key circle of tension. Both spaces were both birthed out of the need to uplift Black communities; this is something that I argue can be universally agreed upon. But I also think both spaces might be limited in just how much they uplift Black communities.

Yes, TRAP Karaoke opens the door for Black people to be unapologetically Black as f\*\*k. It welcomes a space for community and togetherness. It provides a safe space for various interactions and the communication practices I've mentioned to occur. It also is a movement that can be solely attached to trap music and its misogynistic and violent qualities. As I've mentioned in my digital chapter, there lacks a female presence in the genre, yet, the majority of TRAP Karaoke performers, from what I've seen, are women. So there is this area where participants, specifically women, must navigate or potentially consider just how their performance of trap music further continues and supports the ideas mentioned in trap music. I admit, I love me Gucci Mane or a 2Chainz song like the next one, but I am also very conflicted in the way women are described in their music. So performing these same songs in a public space can call into question just how much I may or may not endorse the way women are degraded in trap music. In addition, it is also a space that is attached to social media and can leave some participants questioning just how far they are willing to go to enjoy themselves. As we reviewed footage and edited the digital chapter, I was able to recall conversations I had with TRAP Karaoke participants/attendees that did not want us to use their image/footage. Their reasoning—because they didn't want their boss to see it. This is a very real issue that some have to consider before going into a space that has such a robust social media presence that is also a Black safe space. I would like to note that TRAP Karaoke does inform its attendees of the possibility of their image being used. And in speaking with Jason, the owner, I would find it difficult to believe that if someone requested their

image to be removed, they would make the choice to not honor their request. However, even as I performed, I had a moment when I had to question if it was appropriate to sing the words as I knew them to be. So is TRAP Karaoke as safe of a Black space as we really think it is? Does amplifying this space actually shine light on some of the negative assumptions that are applied to my community? These are questions I considered when working on this project.

Next, HBCUs have and will continue to play such a pivotal role in the education of Black people. HBCUs also serve as spaces where Black students, can only for a moment, find themselves removed from the reality of the world outside of those dearly beloved walls.

However, HBCUs have also faced harsh criticism for molding students to meet westernized standards of what a productive member of society should entail. Good morals and ethics all coded in whiteness. HBCUs have also served as exclusionary spaces for Black students that do not adhere to the “values of heteronormativity and stringent gender roles” (Njoku, Butler, & Beatty, 2017, p. 783). On one end you understand the goal of the HBCU is to uplift Black communities, but on the other end, we are able to see that HBCUs also aid in the continued enforcement of respectability politics (Patton, 2014). So, where do we draw the line? How can HBCUs serve as safe spaces and enforce such politics and ideas at the same time? In comparison to TRAP Karaoke, this area is where I struggled most on balancing my critique and praise of HBCUs. Often times, my research focuses on HBCUs, but typically smaller HBCUs. Not those that are often referred to as elite. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, I’ve had to be very transparent in my choices for HBCUs because I have openly criticized the amount of media coverage and funding Spelman, Howard, and NC A&T have received in comparison to small liberal arts colleges. In choosing not to amplify smaller HBCUs am I doing HBCUs overall a disservice by continuing to only focus on those institutions that are well known? This is another example of

when utilizing AR can actually have an adverse impact for another community. I believe the HBCU experience is one that cannot be matched, but the access one has by attending Howard in comparison to Elizabeth City State University is a needed space for investigation.

### **Flipping the Table on the Dissertation Genre**

In Chapter 1, I indicated my rationale for this choice already. However, as I am utilizing a storytelling approach, it is still important that I address flipping this damn table. Writing a dissertation is one of the hardest things I've decided to embark on. Making the choice to use my life experiences as the foundation for my theory made things even harder because I was so attached to it. However, my attachment led me to flip this dissertation genre on its head and what I believed it to be. The dissertation genre can serve as one of the various "mountains" that students must overcome (Roberts, 2010, p. xiv). One of those mountains also includes the GRE (Benderly, 2017; Sealy, Saunders, Blume, & Chalkley, 2019; Feeley, Williams, & Wise, 2005). As I've mentioned earlier, I get why the dissertation exists, I only question how and who decided what it should look like? After completing this, I obviously have a different lens, but I still question how many other ways I could have done this very same thing; defending my theory, presenting my research findings and analysis but in a different way. While on the job market, I encountered graduate students that felt so relieved to know there were additional ways to address and attack your dissertation. Bad news is sometimes that new approach can be even more taxing than sticking to the standard "normal" dissertation. By the time I was done composing the script, selecting videos, providing instruction for D'Andra, I knew that writing that chapter would have been much more efficient, but would it have been as effective? And to be real, I completely underestimated the work and the labor that was required to complete the digital chapter. There

was the development of a script, the locating of appropriate video images and timing, conducting interviews, travel, etc. The digital chapter kicked my ass alongside the other chapters.

Presenting TRAP Karaoke and its imagery, instead of using solely alphabetic text, would provide my audience an opportunity to see the theory I've developed and its examples on screen. As a visual learner, I wished to utilize my own pedagogical approach in being adaptive, rhetorical, and critical to showcase a new area of content for my chapter. In following my pedagogical approach, in being adaptive, I've made sure to account for accessibility and provide my script, video links, and captioning the images on the screen. I am rhetorical as I ensured each image as shown on the screen was timed and selected specifically to line up with the audio to have a specific effect. Finally, I was critical in my approach as I engage my audience asking them and reminding them throughout to consider themselves within the context of my digital chapter. I am able to walk away proud that I challenged present day dissertation norms and produced a project that I hope will serve as one way to revise present dissertation norms. I offer my method for a digital chapter and the use of two slightly opposing sites of study to suggest that there are different ways to complete valid scholarship.

Furthermore, I utilized language that I was most accustomed to using. I grew up around aunts that would cut you so quick with their tongue with all kinds of words that your head would spin. I guess it is safe to say I picked up a bit of that. However, I made the choice to use such language as a rhetorical tool to indicate just how serious and/or frustrated I was about something. Tossing, "fuck this," in the middle of sentence may cause the reader to stop and pause for a moment, but it also draws the reader to the content around it. Granted there are a few other ways I could say "fuck this," but why should I? Call me young and free, but I think there is a space to continue the work that is already produced on profane language and implement its usage in our

work. Not to mention, y'all ever been at a bar during one of these conferences??! The language that you hear there ain't got nun on what you have read in this dissertation honey. And in further elaborating on this very idea of privileged language, the dissertation can serve as one space to privilege epistemologies not just in the way research is collected, but also in the way it is presented. It wasn't until I got closer to the end that even in privileging my own epistemology and way of knowledge-making, there were, and possible still, holes that remain in my ability to articulate my ways of knowing. Thankfully, I had mentors that privileged my epistemologies all the while expanding their own epistemologies and ways of knowledge-making. Their ability to take up this labor assisted me in my move to revise the dissertation which in turn has influenced my pedagogical and research practices.

### **Implications for the Field of TPC**

I suggest that through the use of AR, we may be able to offer news way of understanding TPC, its usage, and just how transformative it can be. As discussed by Jason in our interview, we can see that it is possible for Black communities to take up technology and media and subvert them in ways that they become their own movements/industries. Even T.I.'s reference to the making of crack cocaine serves as an instance of TPC. As a field, we must continue to revisit technical, professional, and communication as terms operating on their own, then together. In starting to recognize TPC in other realms outside of its traditional origins as a service to engineering and technology, we are able to see the field expand and become more inclusive. AR can also be utilized as a tool to create curricula that is focused on its student body, their lived experiences, and meets the needs of their communities. The use of AR to create HBCU curricula showcases the institution's awareness of who they are and what it is they represent. As seen in HBCU mission statements, HBCUs are institutions committed to the education and uplifting of

Black people and their community. The situatedness, awareness of positionality, and privileged epistemology makes the implementation and development of a TPC program at an HBCU an example of AR. At the institutional level, the development of TPC/TC curricula using AR is the reflection of a contextualized curriculum based on the needs of Black students need to (re)claim their agency in a westernized society that may limit its understanding of TPC/TC, shared narratives, and epistemologies.

In addition, my project also informs the field of TPC on the various ways we should consider our audience and how it molds the production of our documents. For example, cultural influences can impact how we may present sensitive information to varying audiences. In addition, cultural awareness allows for TPC practitioners to connect with audiences that may be outside of the field and/or academy. As mentioned by Haas, there are intersections between culture, race, and the production of TPC artifacts. There are times as practitioners where we are the sole experts and it is our duty to consider all factors, include cultural influences, that can impact or ability to ensure our message is received. This can further impact community engagement and the way your audience may find the knowledge you have presented as applicable to their well-being. In thinking of how practitioners in the field of TPC can consider their audiences and the way they can communicate their expert knowledge, I decided to sneak an example, of this by titling each chapter of my dissertation after a hip hop album, with the exclusion of the HBCU chapter. In doing so, I am able to allude to audiences that may not be familiar with TPC scholarship, but may be familiar with trap music, hip-hop, and/or Black cultural references to figure out what each chapter may entail. In addition, each chapter centered each artist as an expert and their album as a form of professional communication. The chapter

titles model the context of the albums as they are presented. So not only am I utilizing AR to justify the use of hip hop album titles, I am also showcasing the albums as artifacts of TPC.

The first, *B.O.A.T.S Based On A True Story*, by 2Chainz, ushered in a new sound for the artist. But it was also based on his narrative and varying lived experiences. The album was one way that 2Chainz was able to bring in a new sound and understanding for trap music as a genre. I selected this as my title as it was a reflection of just what AR and this project was and is, and it is based off a true story, my own. Chapter 2, titled *The Blueprint* by Jay-Z, brought in a new sound that were layered from different genres. Much like my theoretical framework, I layer varying theoretical frameworks that are all attributed to Black bodies to develop my theory of AR. Modeling the behavior of Jay-Z and its usage of Black classic sounds intersected with new age genres of rap and hip hop. My Chapter 3, *Trap House*, and Chapter 4, *Trap Muzik*, were both titles of T.I.'s albums. *Trap House* offered more of a direct insight into what the lifestyle of a trap boy consists of. The hardships he or she would have to face and also the methods to make summ' shake. Yet, as we hear in *Trap Muzik* is a bit more of a vibe. It is like a soundtrack to the backdrop or score for a movie on life. Trapper or not, we all making life happen in various ways. Both chapters are reflective of the work I completed in each chapter. From providing direct instructions in my methodology, to providing a visual and soundtrack for TRAP Karaoke, these albums were best suited to exemplify the work completed. Chapter 5, in which I entitled "Lift Every Voice and Sing" is the Negro National Anthem ("NAACP History: Lift Every Voice and Sing", n.d) and I used it as a sign of respect. There was not a single trap/ hip hop album that came to mind when I thought of HBCUs. The Negro National Anthem is typically used to commemorate the start of and represent the struggle and overcoming of obstacles that Black people face. The tune is more of a celebration of how far we have come and how far we can

continue to grow. Finally, I've named my concluding chapter *Supa Dupa Fly*, after Missy Elliott's breakthrough album in which she completely flipped the table on what it meant to be a woman in hip hop. Her sound, with co-producer Timbaland, has continued to influence generations to come on the different aesthetics a hip-hop song can include. The album stands as a true test of time and, in my opinion, will always be ahead of its time. I conclude my dissertation with this album title as I see AR as a new sound to the way we produce TPC scholarship, address new audiences, and amplify Black communities.

Amplifying Black cultural references, communicative practices, and ideas are ways that the field of TPC can begin to take up socially just approaches to our scholarship. Even in looking to performance as an example of TPC, we essentially forge a new lane for a new generation and more diverse TPC practitioners. Black communities create knowledge in ways that I'm sure may not be the same across the board. What I suggest is that as TPC practitioners taking a socially just approach, we work to better understand some of the foundations in how Black communities create knowledge. An example of this would be songs such as "Follow the Drinking Gourd," "Go Down Moses," or "Swing Low, Swing Chariot," which were sang to inform slaves it was time to escape or to provide instructions to the North towards freedom. These songs are examples of TPC, and I argue that they offer insight into the Black community and the technical aspects (such as instruction) needed in order to seek freedom as a slave. Even more so, these songs lead us to think just how we identify someone as the expert. Songs that were passed down for generations may not have one sole expert. I do not have the answer to this, but I think it is important to the field of TPC because we must consider how we in fact identify someone as expert, in addition to how people are accredited for their labor as exemplified through TPC artifacts, if we are in fact to continue a socially just approach. If the field does not take up socially just intersectional



rhetorical TPC practices, as illustrated through AR, then racist ideologies and practices may continue (Williams, 2012). Having a socially just approach means that we are considerate of who we serve and in what capacity are we serving. It's not we are sitting in a room writing, speaking, are just performing for the sake of it for one another. There is always an audience, and a socially just approach requires us to always be cognizant of our audience and the long-term impact that our scholarship and other artifacts can have on various communities.

### **Final Conclusion and Future Research**

As I conclude and reflect on my project, I have come to realize that AR are pivotal to the way we move forward in producing TPC scholarship and scholarship amongst other fields of study. In moving towards the amplification and centering of Black communities, alongside historically underrepresented and marginalized individuals, we move to a more inclusive and socially just mode of scholarship production. In the future, I wish to continue my research on TRAP Karaoke and HBCUs, but individually. As mentioned, and advised by my chair as well as committee members, I could have very well produced a complete project on each site alone. And in a sense, that could have potentially short changed my content in some areas. But that's all good, because I have nothing but time and opportunity ahead of me. In future scholarship, I wish to spend additional time on how traditional karaoke and its usage of TPC, such as lyrics on the screen, are different from those present at TRAP Karaoke. In my project, I focused on the general aspects of the movement. In the future, I wish to focus on each individual element of the movement. Also, I wish to revisit my HBCU chapter to further investigate the shifts that have taken place in HBCU culture that have resulted in missing TPC programs. Even though I provide some historical context for this, I would however like to spend more time on pedagogical practices during each time period, on their own. I believe my project has the potential to branch

off into a vast number of research opportunities. I offer my theoretical framework, which has been inspired by my own life story, to assist and better speak to the lived experiences of other Black scholars just tryna' graduate, offer new ways of understanding, and display the various ways Black communities can contribute to the knowledge made within academia. It's not just about getting a degree, but it is about bringing to the forefront and showcasing some of the ideas, principles, and communication practices that make Black communities unique and Lit. It's about forging a new lane for scholars to come that wish to revise how we think about not just TPC as a field, but also how we present our findings within our dissertation. But most importantly, I offer my theoretical framework to simply do it #ForTheCulture.

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**Appendix A**  
**IRB Approval for Study Letter**



**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board**  
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682  
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834  
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284  
[www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb](http://www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb)

**Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited**

From: Social/Behavioral IRB  
To: [Temptaous Mckoy](#)  
CC: [Michelle Eble](#)  
Date: 11/29/2018  
Re: [UMCIRB 18-001875](#)  
TPC Amplification Rhetorics

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 11/28/2018 to 11/27/2019. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #6&7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
HBCU Faculty Recruitment	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
IRB Questions	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Mckoy_Temptaous Amplification Rhetorics Questions	Surveys and Questionnaires
MckoyTemptaous_MinimalRisk	Consent Forms
Musician Recruitment	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Recruitment Flyer	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Temptaous Mckoy Prospectus	Study Protocol or Grant Application

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.



## Appendix B IRB Approved Informed Consent for Participants



### Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: “Y’all Call it Technical Professional Communication, We Call it *#ForTheCulture*: The Use of Amplification Rhetorics in Black Communities and their Implications for Technical and Professional Communication Studies.

Principal Investigator: Temptaous Mckoy  
Institution, Department or Division: Department of English Address: Bate 2147  
Telephone #: 910-286-8935  
Faculty Supervisor: Michelle Eble, PhD  
Telephone #:252-328-6412

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Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

#### **Why am I being invited to take part in this research?**

The purpose of this research is to better articulate the Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) practices found within two Black spaces, TrapKaroke and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). These sites of study were selected because they heavily rely on Black cultural identifiers and knowledge. You are being invited to take part in this research because you are a TrapKaroke participant or observer, you have decided to take part in the #Tees4TheTrap movement, or you wish to discuss how you define Black culture and how it has influenced your participation in TrapKaroke. Or, you are a faculty member at an HBCU specializing in technical communication and have knowledge about HBCU’s history. You must be 18 or older to participate in this study. The decision to take part in this research and an interview is yours to make. By doing this research, I hope to learn how members of the Black community enact and display Amplification Rhetorics through their written, textual, and embodied performances, and whether these practices can be identified as TPC.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 20 people to do so.

#### **Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?**

You may not want to take part in this research if you do not approve of your image or voice being recorded. The interviews conducted for this research and their findings will be used to support the claims made within my dissertation.

#### **What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?**

You can choose not to participate, or you may provide answers to a set list of questions as approved by the East Carolina University Institutional Review Board.

#### **Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?**

*Study Title:* “Y’all Call it Technical Professional Communication, We Call it #ForTheCulture: The Use of Amplification Rhetorics in Black Communities and their Implications for Technical and Professional Communication Studies.

The research will be conducted at TrapKaraoke events prior and following the event, as well as, on the campus of two HBCUs, Spelman College and North Carolina A&T. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is no more than 10 minutes following or previous to the event. However, you may be asked for a follow up interview after the completion of the event, as well as following the completion of the video editing. The follow up of the video editing ensures that your narrative is not misinterpreted and that it is of satisfactory standards in showcasing who you are, your narrative, knowledge, and what your embodied experience means for you.

### **What will I be asked to do?**

You will be asked to do the following: To detail your experience as a self-identifying Black individual that is aware of the influences and impacts that Black culture can have. It is solely up to you to use whatever language or display of your narrative as you see fit (this excludes the promotion of violence and nudity). These interviews will be videoed and may be used within my project. Only my faculty supervisor and I will have access to these recordings through a secured hard drive space at my university. Once I complete my dissertation chapters, the originals recordings will be erased. By agreeing to take part in this research, you are giving permission for me to use your video-recording in my dissertation project.

### **What might I experience if I take part in the research?**

We don’t know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you, but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

### **Will I be paid for taking part in this research?**

We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study. However, we can offer a coupon to purchase your selected Krispy Kreme doughnut from your nearest location. In addition, you will be placed in a drawing a \$20 Amazon gift card.

### **Will it cost me to take part in this research?**

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

### **Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?**

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.

### **How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?**

Video recordings will not be shared with anyone, with an exception of, co-editor, and dissertation chair. Research data, including consent forms, will be stored for a minimum of three years after completion of the study.

### **What if I decide I don’t want to continue in this research?**

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

*Study Title:* “Y’all Call it Technical Professional Communication, We Call it #ForTheCulture: The Use of Amplification Rhetorics in Black Communities and their Implications for Technical and Professional Communication Studies.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at MckoyT15@students.ecu.edu (any day, between 9:00am and 5:00pm)

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of the ORIC, at 252-744-1971

**I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?**

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

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<b>Participant's Name (PRINT)</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
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If you’d like to be entered into a drawing, please leaver your email below:

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**Email Address**

**Person Obtaining Informed Consent:** I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above and answered all of the person’s questions about the research.

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<b>Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
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<b>Principal Investigator (PRINT)</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
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**Appendix C**  
**IRB Approved Invitation to Study (Trap Musicians)**



**Invitation to Research**

Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: “Y’all Call it Technical Professional Communication, We Call it #ForTheCulture: The Use of Amplification Rhetorics in Black Communities and their Implications for Technical and Professional Communication Studies.

Principal Investigator: Temptaous Mckoy

Institution, Department or Division: Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Department of English

Address: 2201 Bate Building. Greenville, NC 27823.

Telephone #: 252-328-6041

Faculty Supervisor: Michelle Eble, PhD

Telephone #:252-328-6412

Dear Trap Musician,

I am Temptaous Mckoy, PhD Candidate at East Carolina University in the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Department of English, I am asking you to take part in my research study entitled, “Y’all Call it Technical Professional Communication, We Call it #ForTheCulture: The Use of Amplification Rhetorics in Black Communities and their Implications for Technical and Professional Communication Studies”

The purpose of this research is to investigate the intersections of culture and Technical and Professional Communications (TPC) within Black community discursive practices. By doing this research, I hope to learn how Technical and Professional communications are made present in Black communities and their implications for the field of TPC. Your participation is completely voluntary.

You are being invited to take part in this video interview because you are a musician that has influenced the Trap music genre. The amount of time it will take you to complete this interview is a maximum of 30 minutes.

If you agree to take part in this interview, you will be asked questions that relate to your knowledge concerning Technical and Professional communications discursive practices in Trap Music as a genre, Trap as a movement, and TrapKaraoke.

If you have questions about your rights when taking part in this research, call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, call the Director of ORIC, at 252-744-1971

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my research.

Sincerely,

Temptaous Mckoy, Principal Investigator

## Appendix D

### Chapter 4 (Digital Chapter) Script

- Warning. Please be aware that this chapter includes explicit language a bit of vulgarity, as well as some ass-shaking here or there. In the event you are a bit concerned, I wish to foreshadow and warn you that this chapter is unapologetically Black as . You're welcome. This is my digital chapter. The chapter that all of this hype has been built around. Yeah, I know some of y'all trying to see this in practice. But, y'all got to see the digital chapter first. Y'all see? Y'all trying to figure out how a sister like myself finessed her way into a digital chapter. Or how an experience at Trap Karaoke singing my favorite song by Gucci Mane, "I Think I Loved Her", met us here. Even I wonder how we got here sometimes. But, as the saying goes, scared money don't make no money. Or in this case, rejecting regular dissertation norms does not kind of really stop the show. But, nothing keeps it the same. This digital chapter, my God, this is for the culture. This is for my book-loving, back-that-ass-up-while-driving, bicken back yellow singing "Bodak Yellow", turn up, Black boy magic, Black girl magic, trap music loving people. This digital chapter focuses on amplification rhetorics at the movement Trap Karaoke. What I thought was just a night out at Howard D.C.'s Theater in 2017 turned in to something so phenomenal. So, when you guys see Trap Karaoke, Trapping Yoga, best believe they all find their roots back to Trap Karaoke. Trappin' is a movement. And it's a movement that all Black people have taken part of whether they know it or not. You see, all of use have all been told we gotta work three times as hard to get one of what they got. And that's what's trappin'. So, by walking y'all through my analysis on Trap Karaoke and embodied rhetorical practices, we're gonna look at Trap Muzik Genres, #Tees4TheTrap, and the actual participants at Trap Karaoke. So, in doing this I hope to provide a way for us a way to understand TPC in a complete different lens. Trap Karaoke is a space that exudes amplification rhetorics in various forms of technical communication practices. I suggest that folks at these conferences and everywhere else pay attention and rethink the various ways that they understand TPC. All right, for those of you just now tuning in for the digital chapter only meaning you ain't reading the rest, let me first put y'all on to what technical professional communications is, as well as, amplification rhetorics. So, first I define technical professional communications as discourse, written, oral or performed aimed at moving or directing an individual or community to action. This discourse can be enacted by an individual or a group of individuals with specific expertise or insight that is dependent upon community knowledge. Want an, example, keep watching my boy fellow Elizabeth City State University Alum and Marine, DJ Just Drew. ♪ I'm on Hypnotic, exotic ♪ ♪ This Polo on my body, got a bad girl beside me ♪ ♪ What cha going and we swaggin', surfen' ♪ ♪ Swaggin' ♪ ♪ I'n surfen' ♪ ♪ Swaggin' ♪ ♪ I'm surfen' ♪

- Some of y'all like to think of TPC as this software manual instruction manual. Some formal document thing-a-ma-gin. I mean that is TPC. However, my research offers you a new way of defining TPC as well as understanding it. Next, is my theory amplification rhetorics. Amplification rhetorics are discursive and communicative practices, both written, textual, embodied, and performative, typically implemented by individuals that are Black that center the lived experiences and epistemologies of Black people and potentially other historically marginalized groups. Amplification Rhetorics are characterized by these three tenets. First, the reclamation of agency which is the ownership of embodied rhetorical practices. Second, the

accentuation and acknowledgement of narratives with is validated lived experiences. And finally, the privileging of marginalized epistemologies which is the additions to new ways of learning. These three tenets are derived from various theories that originate from Black scholars and focus of amplifying historically marginalized groups and their communicative practices. I use critical race theory, womanist theory and African-American Black rhetorics, to construct amplification rhetorics. So first, critical race theory asks individuals to acknowledge and evaluate how race can shape the manner in which they move in their day to day practices. Next, we have womanist theory. Womanist theory helps to better situate the need to listen to and understand the lived experiences and narratives of the bodies present in historically marginalized communities. And finally, we have African-American or Black Rhetorics that places an emphasis on intersections that shape the manner in which the epistemologies within historically marginalized groups can contribute to various fields within the academia with they are centered and privileged. But you know what, these ain't the only theoretical frameworks I'm building on. But, they are the most prominent. So, now that we done did this whole theoretical framework thing again and we done got it out the way, let's go ahead and jump back to the chapter. So, this chapter gone take y'all on a bit of a journey leading up to a Trap Karaoke event in Raleigh, North Carolina. So, let me go ahead and foreshadow some stuff, though. Me and Drew, we could have very well finessed this chapter and never let y'all know we had to do some stuff out of order. So, like interviews, travel, events. All that stuff. But I want to make sure I'm as transparent as possible with y'all. Some scenes were shot and then we had to edit them to fit chronologically. So don't be trying to figure out the timeline. Don't be trying to add up my social media posts. Just know, the stuff we recorded and documented and we put it in order, a'ight? Dang! A'ight, bet. Let me tell you the order that we gonna do this. Now y'all know that y'all can't understand Trap Karaoke without first understanding the trap music genre. So, that's where we're gonna start. Then, I'ma take y'all on a journey to Raleigh where we got to go to a Trap Karaoke event. Now since this digital chapter focuses on embodied rhetorical practices, amplification rhetorics. We're gonna first chat with some people that are wearing their tees for the trap. But we gotta have a little bit of fun, too. And we're gonna talk to some of the participants, all right? Y'all ready? Let's go! Now I ain't 'bout to leave y'all hanging in understanding just what trap music is. Trap music is music that reminds you that you gotta make some boot. You gotta get to the money. You may have to be a dope boy, but not for long, and as some artists are showing us today, trap music serves as a autobiography that you ain't gotta become a victim of your circumstance. You can come up from that situation. You can make change and I guess you can buy Phantom or Rolls Royce or anything else that lets the top back. The trap music genre emerged in the early 2000s as a musical outlet detailing the experience of those in troubled neighborhoods, drug usage, and other illegal activities. However, it is worth noting that this style of music is not something new. It was present in the early 80s and 90s, and being performed by artists like Three 6 Mafia and UGK before trap was coined to represent this specific genre. At one point, it was referred to as chop this groove and even crunk music was believed to fall into the category of trap music. Trap music can be identified by its lyrics and sound. Sounds such as the soulful synths, the 808s, the pan flute, sharp snares and long, syrup-slurred vowels. The lyrics of trap music share these same narratives of drug-dealing usage and other illegal activities, but they are also describing systems of oppression, the need to overcome, get into the money, and most importantly making some shit shake. So for example, here is Future's "Move That Dope," in which, might I add, has some pretty explicit examples of TPC at play.

♪ Whippin' the yam, whippin' a fifth of the yam ♪ ♪ Turn the whole brick to a Lam ♪ ♪ Been rockin' the dope, soon at it get off the boat ♪ ♪ Keepin' it soft like a mink ♪ ♪ Gold on my link, coke in the sink ♪ ♪ Choppin' that work like karate ♪ ♪ Swerve in the new Maserati ♪ ♪ In a brand new Maserati ♪ ♪ That's a whole lot of new money ♪ ♪ Snatch it, then hide it from 12 ♪ ♪ Movin' and squashin' them bells ♪ ♪ Servin' the rawest of yayo ♪ ♪ Beating that china like Kunta Kinte ♪ ♪ Whippin' it, whippin' fishing ♪

- Trap music is a genre that finds its roots in the American South and T.I. has been credited for being the father of the genre or the first to capitalize on it. However, there has been a little debate about that, a little speculation, but I ain't picking sides. So, due to the timing and the scope of this project, I will not be able to provide a chapter on trap music and its histories. However, I do see this as a space for a later research. I just want to give y'all a run down on the portions that are relevant to my research and the studies of amplification rhetorics in technical and professional communications. So the trap music genre finds its home in the Atlanta area. Home of Coca-Cola and that bomb ass aquarium, but it's also home to Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University, as well as Morehouse. So it's only right that we took you guys there. All right y'all, so back to the music. Specifically, the music as amplification rhetorics. We are able to identify all three tenets as we oftentimes hear in the lyrics of trap music. We just don't know it. So to make it more apparent and to show you guys amplification rhetorics, it is time that we go ahead and analyze one of my personal favorite songs and its music video. "Proud" by 2Chainz, featuring YG and Takeoff. ♪ Everybody's on the video set ♪ ♪ The countdown to Mother's Day 2018 ♪ ♪ Trying to make my momma proud ♪ ♪ I ain't trying to let my momma down ♪ ♪ Let's go ♪ ♪ I'm just trying to make my momma proud ♪ ♪ I ain't fucking round with it ♪ ♪ To you ♪

- [Temptuous] A'ight, so first of all, tenet one can be seen straight out the gate. One of the first things you may notice is the landscape for the video. Man, we in the trap, we in our neighborhood, we even gambling on the table. The next thing you notice is fam got his momma rappin'. She doing the lyrics, y'all. If that ain't reclaiming your agency and your story, then man, I don't know what is. This imagery poses the question and challenge present notions of what a mother should be and what she should embody and who she should identify as. All right y'all, so tenet two we're gonna pay a bit more attention to the lyrical content. ♪ Me and momma got busted at the same tim ♪ ♪ Same time ♪ ♪ Went to court and told judge the damn same lies ♪

- [Temptuous] Not only do the lyrics provide us with narrative of their lived experiences, such as 2Chainz when he talks about him and his momma standing before the judge, which I might add, is a very descriptive lyric. Each artist provides a narrative of how they have moved in their life to make they momma proud. Now all communities wish to make they momma proud, but there is something that I'm gonna go ahead and make assumptions and provide my own specific outlook on this, that Black communities take up in making they momma proud by whatever means necessary. And even neater, the lyrics are such explicitly TPC, as they provide the instruction on how they attempted to make their momma proud. Don't believe me? Check YG's lyric out. ♪ I was runnin' up a check with the homies on the disk ♪ ♪ I was fuckin' up the pork, I ain't ever do the feds ♪ ♪ Got some YGs from the gang, they'll do you for a check ♪ ♪ And you know I'm gang gang ♪ ♪ 'Cause that's the only thing I rep ♪

- This is a shared experience, y'all. Well, not the gang part, but y'all get me. ♪ You are the reason I bought that choppa ♪

- [Temptaous] Finally, in thinking of new ways of knowledge making a.k.a, tenet three, you gon' definitely catch it when you hear the final verse with Offset. You hear the call and response that Migos, the group he is from, is essentially known for. ♪ I ain't trying to let my momma ♪ ♪ Momma taught me how to get that bank roll ♪ ♪ Mama ♪ ♪ Yeah, vault up in my loft in case the bank close ♪ ♪ Vault, yeah ♪ ♪ Momma ain't have it all, we wore the same clothes ♪ ♪ Have it all ♪ ♪ I kicked the door, I kicked the door ♪ ♪ I risked it all for dough ♪ ♪ Kicked the door ♪

- Even though call and response is something that's been happening in rap music forever, and personally I think DMX is the best at this, this particular style of call and response has influenced the way that many hip-hop artists today engage with their audience and just develop lyrical content overall. In my opinion, it creates a better understanding for emphasis on lyrics, as well as the meaning behind those lyrics. But anyway, we gotta talk about my ladies and why they missing from this genre. Now, we know good and well women are just as capable of rapping and doing the trap music genre. But they are missing. However, I have the perfect example of my favorite song of a woman performing amplification rhetorics as a trap music genre. Check out Esther Dean's and Gucci Mane's "I Think I Love Her". ♪ Well, my name is Susie and Gucci think I love him ♪ ♪ That sucka think I'm loyal ♪ ♪ But I fucks with all the hustlas ♪ ♪ I be wit all the ballas, I be at all the spots ♪ ♪ I might be in yo' kitchen, nigga cooking with yo' pots ♪

- [Temptaous] Here we see that she is taking on the roll of trap star. She running it and she does not simply become an object of his obsession and love. And quite frankly, she lets him know not only is she TTG, but she ain't here for the fuck shit. So check this lyric. ♪ Nigga always talk, but I run the block ♪ ♪ This bitch it so hot, my clip I close shop ♪ ♪ My wrist froze with rocks, I cop all the drops ♪ ♪ Unfold all the knots, expose the have nots ♪ ♪ My ho's hoes will pop like young Goldie Locks ♪ ♪ We got white bulging rocks, zip lock stocks the car ♪ ♪ We never close the shop, we hot steaming hot ♪ ♪ I'm Susie Sarah plot a click clack pip pop pop ♪

- Now even though she has two verses on the track, she uses both times to focus on the power of a woman and the new ways of understanding what trappin' and trap music can represent. But don't worry, we definitely gon' talk about that a little bit more. So again, where are my ladies at? You know, I took the time to Google woman in trap music 'cause female just wasn't cutting it for me, y'all. And the first three hits were, is trap music misogynistic? a question posted on Quora. Followed by trap music versus my morals as a woman, posted on the lovely Blavity. Followed by some random-ass YouTube videos and stuff, and an article on the Black woman that helped turned trap music into a museum. Even though porn also came up. Y'all, I legit kept searching and it further highlighted the missing woman presence in the trap music genre. Hell, even I know the genre is misogynistic as hell. But I mean so is pop, country, rock, alternative and all the other stuff. But you know what, we just gon' look past that because you know how that go. But I could still rock with a few trap music joints. I mean, I do like the music, though. As stated by Maciah Lions, the trap music genre is the epitome of double consciousness.

You see see, you can enjoy, love it, sing it, and be conflicted about it all in the same body. But based on how we define trap music, which is based on its specific sound, we find ourselves on a much more blurred line and slippery slope on what constitutes trap music, especially when it comes to women. It's not nearly as explicit lyrically as when it comes to male artists. Basically, it's a dick genre. It's male dominated and it's missing some ladies. You all know that. I attribute some of this to the content that women are discussing their delivery and their location as where they're from. Which in turn, leads to argument or confusion as to if these woman are a part of the trap music scene or not. And as you will hear later in our interview with T.I., the genre itself has some pretty interesting roots. Yeah, women are into trap, but what other ways are they trappin' outside the bando? And to give the guys some credit, they do speak to the various ways women have played a role in their trappin' ways. So just taking the charge, helping in the kitchen, and distribution, and their general role of his safe space. I'm not saying that this can't be problematic because like hell it is, but I argue we do have some women who are reppin' in the trap scene. So people like Rico Nasty, Love & Hip Hop's Tommie Lee, Summerella, singer and rapper, Princess and Diamond of Crime Mob, Khia, and of course Cardi B. Now I'm sure we have plenty of other women performing trap music. The problem is how do they become identified as trap music musicians? Obviously, the sound is there. However, it could be the content area, which is very different. But don't worry, my final chapter will have a little bit more discussion about this. So now that y'all done got a little history, a little background, ya done learned a little bit about trap music, it's only right that we take a trip to Atlanta. Yes, the home of trap music. I gotta show y'all just how influential and just how much the city has played a role in trap music. But also how trap movement as a whole has influenced a culture of its own. 'Ey, we finally made it, we got here at six a.m. after a drive from North Carolina to Georgia. We out here, we're ready to hit the trap museum. Hey, welcome to Atlanta! ♪ Welcome to Atlanta, jackin' hammer and vogues ♪ ♪ Back to the mackin' and jackin' the clothes ♪ ♪ Adolescent packin' a fo' ♪ ♪ A knock on the door, who is it, ♪ ♪ I would happen to know the one with the flow ♪ ♪ Who did it ♪ ♪ It was me I suppose ♪

- A'ight, so me, D'Andra, and a friend, we battled nine hours overnight from Elizabeth City to Atlanta, Georgia. We only had a weekend to make this stuff happen. So once there, we visited some of the famous Atlanta sights, but we also visited the freshly developed Trap Music Museum. Now the timing of this thing going up was absolutely perfect because I was doing my dissertation on the topic, so you know the stars just kinda aligned. But also, I am always intrigued and empowered when I see the development and curation of museums are artified specifically for my people. So shouts out to T.I., as well as Brandi Win for ensuring that we were able to get some private access. So this is another way in which amplification rhetorics are established in spaces outside of the academy, and/or formal spaces for education. So check it out. We finally made it to the Trap Music Museum. We have access to the museum before anyone gets here. Luckily was able to work that out. So we're here because we want to go through the exhibits and we want to see exactly why does trap music matter, as well as how did we get to the trap music movement as a genre and just overall as a major big thing. Thus, leading us to Trap Karaoke. So we're gonna go ahead in on through. We're gonna see the exhibits and I hope you guys enjoy. ♪ Hey hey hey hey ♪ ♪ Hey hey hey hey ♪ ♪ Hey hey hey hey ♪ ♪ Hey hey hey hey ♪

- So what we have here is when you come through the walkway you guys are directed to this little hallway area where they have the Trap Music Museum and trap defined, and then you have the timeline for trap music. So what I want us to look at here is the definition for trap. We have here two definitions. There is one that most people are already familiar with when we think about trap music and trap overall, which is informal. Which is structures, zones, or capacities where narcotics suppliers prepare, operate, and distribute their products. So that's what most people know trap for. However, what I like to focus on, especially in my dissertation project, is on another definition that some people completely forget about, which is a place where one hustles and grinds for financial gain to change one's circumstance. So that place of grind can be at the university, it can be at a job, it really does not matter, but that's one thing that I always want to make sure that we highlight. That trapping is not just this selling drugs thing. Trapping is just being able to get to a way of making a better life for oneself. But there is also people who also look back to artists in Tennessee that also did a different type of trap music. We're gonna definitely make sure that we unpack some of that, as well, throughout my dissertation project because it all leads to, of course, Trap Karaoke. We do have here an art piece that was created by DL Warfield who is known in Atlanta for a lot of the artwork that he does. Since some people really don't know who these people are, I think it might be fun for me to kinda go ahead and let you guys know who they all are. We got here at the top, it's my boy Meek Mill, followed by Young Jeezy. This is Takeoff, right? Takeoff. Then we have have Boosie. Of course, T.I. the man himself, followed by Offset, see? I mean, I was trippin' him, too. We got Kodak, Kodak Black for those that do not know. Mr. 2Chainz, Future with the baby locs. Quavo, who's is also a member of Migos, which we talked about in the first chapter. We have Gucci Mane, Mr. Burr himself, and then we got Webbie down there at the bottom. I'm loving that they took a moment to really reflect on these mugshots and then really highlight that we did it for trap music. So a lot of their experiences in the trap or getting to it and making all those things happen, it does take form and it shows up in their music. Again, one of the biggest things that we have to remember is that it's not just necessarily about the glorification of selling drugs or doing any type of violent activity because that's not what it is. It's always a grind to make things happen differently and as well as highlight how that narrative can take shape in different ways, and in our case, it takes shape through trap music. ♪ Hey hey hey hey hey ♪ ♪ Hey hey hey ♪

- Finishing up lunch now. We gotta go back to the exhibit to get some stuff signed off on. Then everyone's gonna take a nap because everybody's tired. What I want us to do to take some time to focus on here are the 10 commandments on the trap. So let's make sure we take some time to read those off. The first one, this will be a little bit explicit, family. So our first one. Don't put shit pass nan' nigga, even if you ran with them. Trying my best to read them. That is our first trap commandment. Commandment number three. Never go to sleep around a stripper. Some of this stuff you may not understand, but for those of you get it, you will get it. Trap commandment number six. See shit but don't say shit, recognize but never talk about it. I like that, somebody needs to put that on a shirt. And now that we've done all of that, given you guys a bit of a literature review and a better way of understanding the trap music genre, now it's time I show you guys how I was able to get all of this stuff done. So check it out. So as I said before, this chapter of my dissertation came out of my attendance at Trap Karaoke in August of 2017. I don't know why, but I was beyond moved by the TPC I saw in that space, and what I've come to call now, amplification rhetorics. I mean, that stuff was everywhere. From their social media

presence, I was made to feel like I had to be there. I had to experience it. I had to know what in the world is this Trap Karaoke. As I thought of how I could make this dissertation super lit, I decided instead of just writing it, I should actually do a digital chapter. Now there is some composition that had to take place. However, I wanted for the digital chapter to be the actual medium. Now I wanted rewrite, oh the irony of that word, the dissertation genre as a whole. Now I've read some good dissertations as well as some pretty boring dissertations. But again, I wanted my dissertation chapter to be for the culture. So instead, we did a digital chapter. I wanted to make sure that my chapter was not only educational, but also entertaining. I wanted to show people in the ivory tower that, look, there is something that you can learn from here. Not to really mention, I didn't want my dissertation to serve just one purpose, which was putting that Doctor in front of my name. So during the time of my prospectus, there was a time when I went to my dissertation chair and was like, "Ey, I wanna do a digital chapter." And he was like, "A'ight, let me run it through the committee, cool?" And I'ma keep it all the way 100. At first they was cappin', but we made it work. We had to make sure that everything was understood and a part of the argument that I made was based on A.D. Carson's work. Clemson University graduate, he received his PhD in Rhetorics, Communication and Information design.

- The dissertation is really just a, I guess in a real practical way just say it, I guess, a rap album. It's a rap album that is the text of the dissertation. So rather than it being about rap or it being about spoken word, it's actually done through those particular modes of presentation.

- He developed a music album to go along with his dissertation. I also used a couple more citations. We got my committee on board for the digital chapter. So not just a video to go with the chapter. Y'all, the digital chapter is the actual medium. It does not serve as a supporting document or something that you can just grab off the bat. And as a matter of fact, I'm gonna possibly put this transcript and narration in the back somewhere in the appendix where you gotta go really find it. I hit my fellow Elizabeth City State University alum and asked him to join me on this project. I wanted to amplify the work that it is he does and the vision that he could help me create. Diondre Drewitt has a certain aesthetic that I knew I was going for and I knew that he was the only person that could do the job and make sure it was done the way that I envisioned it. To begin, I knew I had to contact the people at Trap Karaoke and make sure that they were okay with me covering their event. So the first way I went about it was through social media. And yeah, that kinda didn't work. So as you all would imagine, Jason is pretty busy guy. But check it out. I saw they were having an event in Atlanta and I knew I had to be there. So we was like, bet, look, we gonna go to Atlanta, we gonna enjoy Trap Karaoke. I'ma connect with Jason and it's all gon' work out. But Mother Nature had other plans. So there was a hurricane that came, and at first I really wasn't worried about it, but I just could not afford to get stuck in the A. So that meant I had to regroup and quickly. So all the while this was happening, T.I.'s preparing to drop his new album Dime Trap, and then I see that he is gonna be at Trap Karaoke. So now I am hot, I am pissed, I am streaming hot. As a matter of fact, he posted on Instagram that he was giving away a stack to anyone who learned his song. Seven hours, I could've definitely learned that song in time. But it did give me an idea on what I needed to do next. I turned right back to social media. For three whole days my social media followers and myself blitzed the heck out heck outta Heat and 2Chainz's social media pages. Man, these folks are the two most prominent artists in the trap scene right now and they both got albums that was on the chart. Not to mention, the



worst they could've said was no. And before someone says it, I definitely want to have one woman and one male, a'ight? So we hit up their social media sites, The Shade Room, everyone that we could possibly think of. We even made a commercial. Hey y'all, my name is Temptuous McKoy and PhD candidate at East Carolina University and I'm working on my dissertation project. Y'all Call It Technical & Professional Communications, We Call It For the Culture. I have a digital chapter on Trap Karaoke and I need y'all's help getting in touch with T.I. and 2Chainz. So every Tuesday we're gonna take over T.I.'s comment section, and every Thursday, 2Chainz's. Be sure you use the hastag IssaTrapDissertation as well as DrMcKoy2019. But don't forget, keep hitting up The Shade Room and Trap Karaoke. Remember, issa trap dissertation, y'all. We had a campaign, we had t-shirts. Man, we had hashtags, we had all of that. But my people retweeting and reposting was another example of amplification rhetorics in action. My followers amplified my work because we shared the same embodiment. We have the same narratives of trying to make something happen, and they all, well, for the most, knew that by having T.I. or 2Chainz, we would break barriers in the academy. And on the third day, ironically, like Jesus, and it's Easter while I'm filming this, but I digress. T.I. responded with "I'm in." All I needed to do was have a sit down with him. The next day or so, I received a phone call from T.I. We spoke briefly, but he had some insight to share. I was even more excited at that point. However, our schedules just kept clashing. But he did hook us up with the opportunity to have private access to the Trap Music Museum, as you saw. I still wanted that interview. So when I was trying to prepare for the Trap Music Museum, I had ended up getting in touch with a gentleman by the name of Brandon Wynn. Turns out that he was a part of T.I.'s team. I made sure that I stayed in contact with him as he assisted me in staying in the loop with T.I.'s management and I continued to also DM T.I. Every couple of weeks I would follow up with T.I. And look at God. The man had a function in Durham, North Carolina at North Carolina Central University, another HBCU, might I add, and they had a lecture series, and we just had to pull up. Unfortunately, my videographer was already booked. So it was just me and my homegirl Akiyah Salon, and my iPhone. We had to make it work. I talked with his team about what I could ask and I quickly learned that I would have to chop some stuff up from my questions. So I got it down to a solid three. As his team suggested, he will potentially answer the questions repeatedly, but we just wanted to make sure it was right. So check out our interview.

-I knew it, but you don't write that.

- Well no, it's writing, then rhetoric.

- Oh, writing and then rhetoric.

- Then professional communication.

- Oh, okay, okay, okay.

- Well, you do write rhetoric, though.

- I don't, I don't.

- You don't?

- Give me an example.

-So if I were to tell you, potentially. Actually, a contract was served as a means of rhetoric in your art of finesse. So I can sit up here and I could not because if it's not in writing, it doesn't exist, correct?

-No, actually, verbals, as long as two or more people in the room can be accounted for, will hold up in court.

- Oh!

- Yeah.

- See, I thought--

- Verbal agreement, they are submissible. However, to have the most fool-proof iron-clad agreement, yes, a contract is necessary.

- That thing you're writing.

- Yeah, you know what I'm saying, I think improvisation is--

- It got it--

- From what you have described as rhetoric.

- Yes, yes.

- You know what I'm saying? Improvisation, because most of it. On finesse, you taking what the circumstances has given you, so if you write something down before you even get to the circumstances, you don't know if that's gonna actually work for you. You gotta get there, observe the ambiance and the environment so you don't know--

- That's the rhetorical situation.

- Yeah.

- So it is.

- I guess.

- Well that's, I'ma move this. First of all, this man had me shook and not in a starstruck kinda way, but he had me one my toes. So as I attempted to describe my degree, he also

asked me what TPC means. He really wanted to know and he wanted some insight on what I was doing. And here is where I first him. To move an individual or community to action.

- Okay.

- You know how we look at a software manual? It's telling you the directions to move to action is to build whatever that may be.

- Mm-mm.

- Are you, okay, you're looking at a book. All right, you're looking at a bookcase manual.

- You're talking over my head.

- No, no.

- You just started talking about software.

- Okay, I'ma bring it to--

- Okay.

- When you produce a song, right? You're in the production and you're trying to get all that stuff knocked out. So say that you guys need to be able to communicate who has the royalty for that song.

- We just come up with it in the room.

- You come up in a room and then you put it in writing somewhere, correct?

- Okay, yeah.

- That will be your professional technical communications.

- Okay, so you're saying like contracts and agreements.

- It can be contract obligation, but the argument that I'm making is that it's performative, as well. Me sitting here talking to you was one way that I'm providing technical professional communications.

- Okay, you just said technical professional. So how'd you add the technical on the end there?

- You add your technical on there, because, again, it's providing a specific type of instruction. The way that I decide to convey it to you can be construed for professional. If I decide I'ma sit here right here, we gon' have a regular conversation. I'm providing you a new insight to how we define professional within a Black community.

- Well, I think what makes a professional is the value of the discussion or the information that you're providing and the means in which you choose to provide it.

- Exactly, so our current--

- I don't think how you sit got nothing to do with it.

- Well no, because that's a part of it. I'm arguing that it is a part of your performance. If I was to come in here with a suit or anything else besides a t-shirt and jeans, that would have a different idea. So when people look at--

- That's a preconceived notion of what a person has been trained and conditioned to think.

- Exactly. Exactly, that's coded in whiteness, correct?

- But that's what I'm saying, though. If you looking for that, I know how to trick you.

- Well see, now you got your rhetoric back. See? That's all a part of one streamlined thought.

- Okay.

- Those are the things I think of.

- All right, so now let's get down to the--

- As a result of this stumble, I actually revised my definition for TPC to what you see it as today. In addition, this also lead to my inability to ask questions down the line 'cause I was really thrown off by the experience. All right, you guys, it is one of the biggest parts that we have been waiting for for the digital chapter. I am sitting here with a very important person. Who are you?

- I'm Tip T.I. Harris and I'm sitting here with a very important person, as well. Who are you?

- I'm Temptaous McKoy better known as Quick Demeanor 'cause I been blowing up on Instagram.

- Now that we know each other.

- Yes, that is fabulous.
- Yes, you have been very persistent.
- Well, that is one of my strongest qualities.
- All right then.
- I have three questions here for you in regards technical professional communications, cool? Our first question would be--
- Are we gonna get a grade for this?
- I will get a doctorate, so I'll be Dr. McKoy.
- Okay, that's good. But are we gonna get a grade for this?
- They don't grade it, it's like a holistic.
- You just pass, you just like--
- Well no, you have to defend it. You have to present it all and defend it.
- So it's an argument.
- Yeah.
- Okay and what's the basis of this argument?
- My argument is that Black culture influences technical professional communications.
- Well, I mean, there's no argument there because Black culture influences everywhere.
- Yeah, but not everybody knows that.
- They might not--
- Endorse, acknowledge it.
- Acknowledge it.
- There you go, so let's not acknowledge. I was speaking to someone earlier. If we don't have our own people to write about this, who are our students gonna cite? All they have is other scholars who are not influential, not within our community to talk about our community. Instead, where I'm stepping in, I wanted to write about it and go out and for

students to be able to cite 'cause citation practices are political within the academy. So it's all that.

- But you do know there's a huge world outside of the academy.

- Oh yeah, that's what I was talking to your gentleman here about.

- But that's what I'm trying to say. I don't think you can fit your application of skill into what suits the university if you're trying to prepare yourself for dominating the world outside of the university.

- Well, I'm glad you said that 'cause that was one of my questions.

- What was it?

- So one of my questions--

- You ain't asked one question yet.

- Well, 'cause I was gonna let you finish. I didn't wanna talk over you.

- Well let's get to it.

- My question is what can the academy learn about how we operate outside of academy in our Black culture? What can they learn and take away from that? Especially in regards to the trap music genre.

- Wait a minute now. So especially as in regards to trap music genre, what can the university take to apply to the world outside--

- Uh-uh, what can they learn from it?

- What can they learn--

- Exactly.

- From the world outside of it? I mean, that's such a broad question.

- So they're not embedded within the trap music genre. Don't know nothin'. If they were to sit there and they listen to Dime Trap.

- Okay.

- What could they take away from that?

- It really depends largely on the perspective of the person. First off, something that I think that can be just as broad of an answer as the question is first of all, you gotta look at trap music as a survivor's story, you dig? We were placed in. Ever since the end of slavery, we kinda been directed and forced into certain areas or pockets of the city. The educational system was subpar. All of the nutrients that are in those areas are subpar. And the experiences, they're far and few between and so are the opportunities. The drug trade is something that we kind of had to take up on.

- [Temptaous] Fortunately, he had so much to say about the trap music genre that I really didn't see a need to stop him. I just kind of let him go on for a minute because I was learning so much. As he continued to talk, I became very interested in the way he tapped into TPC as a concept. Even though he did not refer to it as such, he knew what it was, he just didn't know. Also, he utilized amplification rhetorical practices as he reclaimed the agency of Black people in their community 'cause he referenced the destruction of the crack cocaine epidemic and how it definitely impacted the Black community and his belief that this was an initiative to destroy Black community. In addition, he shared the narrative that he has had to experience by Black people and as a dope boy. Finally, he highlighted new knowledge making practices, even if it was just simply making crack.

- Arm their militia for their uprising. That was put into our communities and someone taught a Black person how to turn cocaine into crack. Didn't nobody just figure that out. That wasn't something that was haphazardly done like, "Oh well, I'm just in the kitchen, I wasted some baking soda "and some water and I came up with crack."

- [Temptaous] Even more so, he continues to speak to amplification rhetorics in additional pieces of our interview. Especially as it pertains to trap music. Pay close attention to the way in which he again utilizes amplification rhetorics as a way to further explain the influence trap music has had.

- Looking for some cocaine.

- Cocaine.

- You dig what I'm saying? I think that was an initiative to enslave us and to pigeonhole us, and keep us downtrodden for generations. And it would've worked.

- Got something about that?

- If not for hip-hop and trap music. I feel like trap music is God using for good what the Devil meant for bad.

- That's what I gotta add.

- You know what I'm saying? I think that us using those experiences and the things that we went through, setting them to music, I think that has created a certain level of

commerce, a certain diversification of revenue streams, and changed the standard of living for us, our families, and our children for forever. I take it back, I'll tell you what. Let's say... This is how important the crack era was.

- [Temptuous] One of my personal favorite usages is when he speaks of how the drug trade can be used as a means to move to a higher level, all the while speaking to tenets one through three.

- If you look at someone like Eazy-E, okay? Young man, just a normal drug dealer in Compton. Has a homeboy named Dr. Dre, has a dream. He don't sell drugs, but he got a dream. Eazy with the proceeds from his operation was able to invest in this young Dr. Dre and they built some shit that couldn't have been built if not for the proceeds of the start-up that came from the drug trade. That's our version of subsidation. You know what I'm saying?

- That is true.

- That's our version, that's a community grant.

- Exactly.

- You get what I'm saying? Dr. Dre now a billionaire. And that started from the investment, the humble modest investment from his friend who put himself in a position by taking advantage of the drug trade.

- I do have one final question for you. What about for those of us that didn't grow up in the trap? How do we--

- Don't pretend you did.

- How do we connect with that same experience or is there space to connect with that experience?

- Of course it is. I think you can always learn things from different places and use them for your own good. Even if it's learning what not to do, you know what I mean? Even if it's learning the example of okay well, see I didn't turn that, let's not go there. I think all of it is useful, and you can identify with it because no matter where you come from, no matter what walk of life, what social status you may claim, everybody has been affected by drugs.

- Exactly.

- Everybody's been affected by drugs, whether they had a family member who was an addict or whether they had a family member who was a drug dealer that went to prison, or somebody died. You know what I mean? Everybody has been affected by the drug trade



some way shape, form, or fashion. That is the true meaning of an epidemic. This affects everybody. All walks of life from the top down. You may not relate to the actual distribution of narcotics, but you still can relate to the effects of narcotics in the community based off your experience and based off, you know, how you've been affected by it. And I think that directly connects you to trap music.

- Exactly, 'cause one way that I was thinking about it is that persistent grind to make things happen. That's how we definitely, well at least I was thinking about various way that we could connect to that experience. 'Cause that's not my experience. As you said, I have family members that have been a part of that. I learned what not to do, as you're saying, right?

- I think trap music is information to some. To people who don't really know about that side of life, it's inspiration to them. Excuse me, it's information, information to them. Because you haven't really experienced what it's like to whip crack up in the kitchen or stay up all night getting off a load and having to do the same thing over and over again.

- I'm shaking my head, I ain't never had to done that.

- I'm just saying.

- Upon completing my interview, I really began to feel much more confident in my analysis of Trap Karaoke. So bear in mind, the interview with T.I. was the very last piece that we captured for this chapter, and I am glad it was. It allowed me to look at my analysis with fresher eyes and have a better understanding for trap music as a genre, the trap music, and Trap Karaoke itself. So you know, it's finally time that we gonna go ahead and go to Trap Karaoke in Raleigh, right? So if you made it this far and you still don't know what Trap Karaoke is, buckle your seat belts 'cause this is the time you've all been waiting for. So y'all remember when I told y'all that this all started from my attendance at Trap Karaoke event in 2017? Yeah, finally you will all get to see why I've been so infatuated with this event and this movement for all of this time. Trap Karaoke's a celebration. It's a movement to simply be. It is a time to celebrate all things that are Black. From singing melodies from Heaven or your favorite Gucci song. Trap Karaoke's where amplification rhetorics comes to life as performance. Now whether you want to identify amplification rhetorics as a proponent for TPC, that's up to you. However, I do see a space for this implementation in the field of TPC overall. Knowing these songs word for word as shown is one way in which we can look to TPC as a means of performance. For example, not only is this person performing the song or they know it in this specific genre, they know the physical form. They understand the dance moves, the voice pitch, the crowd involvement, it all matches that of the song. But not necessarily in this weird ass hokey pokey kind of way, but more in movements that are far more tacit. Now, I could sit here try to talk to y'all this whole time about Trap Karaoke or I can allow you to experience it for yourself. I decided to take a auto-ethnographic approach to my data collection and decided to go to a Trap Karaoke event in Raleigh, North Carolina. There I interviewed these for the trap participants as well as those that took the stage. So here are amplification rhetorics at Trap Karaoke. To begin, I made sure that I conducted an

interview with Trap Karaoke founder and CEO, Mr. Jason Mowatt. Check it out. So how did you come up with the idea of Trap Karaoke?

- The whole of Trap Karaoke started as a joke between me and a friend. He's actually from Raleigh, North Carolina. My friend John Wall. One day we were texting, it was the summer when Future came out with that song "Fuck Up Some Commas". I created this browser plug-in as a joke that when you press a button it'd replace all the commas on a page and start playing the song in the background, and so at the time John Wall was the biggest Future fan I knew. I was like who would love this more than him? I sent it to him to get his feedback on it and he was giving me ideas and suggestions about how to tweak it and stuff, and then I think one day I hit him up with some changes I made and he, I think he was going to karaoke with his co-workers or something? And then I was like, "Wouldn't it be funny "if you could do Migos or Future karaoke?" And then he was like, "Like a trap karaoke?" And I'm like, "Yeah." And then we both kind of like ha ha ha. I'm pretty sure he still has the text conversation. And then about a month later Trap Karaoke came into being. For most people it probably stayed as a joke, but because of my background doing events, doing social media marketing, I saw something that was perfect for all the different skillsets I have. And also, the grander vision of trying to find ways to bring fans closer to the artists, the music that they love. I got my start in this business, I guess, doing music festivals and over time I just saw how the gap became bigger and bigger between the fans and the artists and it just seemed like we were kinda regressing 'cause in an age where you get more personal with the artists who you follow and that you love on social media, but at these performances there was still this huge separation.

- Stage audience, typically.

- I wanted to find a way to bridge that gap and bring both together. And so that kind of lead to Trap Karaoke.

- Question, so I see that you describe the event as a user-generated concert experience and you kinda already tapped on this, too. So placing fans at the center of the concert experience. Would you care to elaborate more on why this model and language, to describe this model. Why not just say, "'Ey y'all, let's get up and perform?" Why the choice to say a user generated concert experience?

- That's an interesting question. No, it is. There was a lot of thought that went into that. Coming from the festival world, I wanted to create an experience where fans could be at the center of it. Where the experience would be more about them and cater more to them. Because of the way Trap Karaoke works, it's the fans who are generating the experience. If it's fun it's because they're making it fun.

- Exactly.

- But this falls into a broader, how could I put this? This falls into a broader thesis that I've been working on around user-generated experience design, and that's kinda how I see what I do. Trap Karaoke's one project, but I have a few other projects, as well, that I sort of really tap

into this user-generated powered energy. I think today with social media being such a big thing. Yeah, so it's almost like--

- Captions live, I've seen that like, "Oh, I could do that." Why have I heard of Million Swag Surf?

- I'm really excited about Million Swag Surf 'cause it's an idea I had before Trap Karaoke while I was working on music festivals and the idea was why hasn't anyone tried to do a Guinness Book of World Record for the biggest swag surf? So I was like, "That would be really interesting." But I also think there needs to be a purpose to go along with it. You don't want to waste an opportunity like that.

- Why the choice of Trap Karaoke instead of Black Karaoke or Urban Karaoke? Especially given the negative connotation that goes along with the term trap. It's something I've been talking with my committee members who are all white, and they struggle with why is it not Black Karaoke. And I was just like, "Let me go ask Jason "and I'll find out why." Is there a specific reason behind it?

- Again, I thought sort of the way this whole thing came about was the conversation I was having with my friend and sort of how I felt like trap embodied sort of the energy of the moment.

- 'Cause yeah, we all know Future while we paintin', but what does this mean to the community while we're sitting here painting this image?

- What we've been able to do now is we've transcended the name, you know what I mean? We made it something new and even if you see our marketing for this year, the tagline is This Is Trap Karaoke, and it'll be paired with an image or with a moment that we feel embodies what it represents, and those moments range from us doing the R&B set, to us playing Kirk Franklin, to us playing "Before I Let Go". It's about really encompassing the whole Black experience. The trap is a part of it, that's part of the stuff that we play but we really just wanna take people on a journey through what it means to be Black and being your whole self. Communicating the concept, which in marketing is it's like something

- Sprayin'.

- That you're going for, yeah.

- Yeah, it is true.

- We're able to find a lane that we're able to make our own. I think Black Karaoke sounds very generic. It also sounds weird. I don't think any Black person would go to an event called Black Karaoke. Honestly, honestly.

- Well, that's why I wasn't...

- Sounds like a trap to me.
- That would be very true, actually.
- No pun intended.
- I'm also thinking of the other events. You have your Trap and Yoga, Trap and Paint, Trap and--
- We were the first one's that everyone start like--
- That's something that I talk about.
- Share whatever you wanna share about yourself, about your personality, about who you are, and then in response to that, most of the time people validate that through applause or through cheering or whatever. Someone who used to work on my team, she would call it likes in real life. We're reverse engineering that, that people post photos or stuff on social media in order to get likes or retweets, but we kinda reverse engineer that.
- I like that.
- And brought that into real life. Where it's like this is your family and whatever thing that you felt unconfident about, here are people who are gonna back you up and lift you up and give you positive energy. Celebrating that, even those long form articles are great, too, but even when people tweet about Trap Karaoke, what their experience was, one of the things I like to do is screenshot them and repost them on our Instagram just to sort of really lean into the idea of making this a fan-centric experience. Everything that you're being shown is user generated. Whether it's the testimonials, whether it's the photos from the shows. Even after shows now we project the photos. Everything that you experience is just a reflection of you.
- Exactly.
- And we just try to create the space and get out the way. It's not about us trying to be like, "Hey, I'm the founder of Trap Karaoke." Blah blah blah. It's like, you know, we create the platform for people to express themselves however they choose. The first is you can create things for Black people. So many people are afraid to do that because they say, if you say this is a Black thing we're not gonna get sponsored, or blah blah blah. But I've worked with literally every... All the top 10 brands in the world, we've worked with them from Apple, to Nike, to HBO, and so forth. We were unapologetic about the audiences that we serve. And so I think a lot of times creators, they doubt themselves, especially creators of color saying, "Yo, I can't make this--"
- Exactly.

- "Seem too Black," or whatever. Because they may miss out on an opportunity and I think that's bullshit.

- It happens in the academy as a student, it does. 'Cause I go through that like, "Uh, this might be a little too Black of a dissertation." So you're right.

- Authenticity is super important. This is the other thing I would say, we just try to do our best to be a reflection of the people who come to our shows and who form our community. People of color, we need to recognize our genius, and we need to harness it, and we need to figure out how we can use it to empower ourselves and empower our communities. 'Cause these same meme creators, they could be copywriters, you know what I mean? If they knew how to take that skillset they had and build the infrastructure around it, again, they could be using their talent to empower themselves and empowering their communities. That's the last thing I wanna end on is hoping that people of color recognize the influence we have on popular culture and how we can use that influence for social good.

- Thank you so much for your time, I appreciate it.

- Thank you, thank you for having me.

- Yes, thank you, and we out. All right, so now that Jason done provided y'all a little bit of background information about Trap Karaoke, now let's head on to Raleigh so y'all can enjoy the event yourselves. Let's go. Hey, y'all! It is Saturday, December 1st and it's the day we've all been waiting for. We are here in Raleigh at the Ritz and in case y'all can't tell, it's raining and it's cold. But it's Trap Karaoke, so in case you couldn't remember why we were here, let me remind y'all. We will be interviewing tees for the trap participants as well as those taking the stage. Make sure y'all are paying close attention to those amplification rhetorics as displayed through the performances. Y'all, it's goin' down now. All right, wait, wait, wait. So in case you did not know, and I might need to remind y'all, let me tell y'all what tees for the trap are, as well as how we identify Trap Karaoke participants. Tees for the traps are shirts worn by participants that hold historically marginalized identities and in turn enact performative rhetorical practices through their t-shirts. Now Trap Karaoke participants are attendees as well as performers at Trap Karaoke events. Got it? Initially, we wanted to show you guys the footage of our interviews based on the questions as provided in chapter three, as well as approved by my committee. Y'all catch that? If not, just pause it, rewind it and go back to it. For those of you just now tuning in, especially you, pause it, rewind it, and go back to it. Now I know that in order for something to be identified as amplification rhetorics, it must adhere to three tenets. However, I want to make clear again, that sometimes you're gonna see one tenet more than the others. It doesn't mean that it's not amplification rhetorics or that the other tenets do not exist. It just means that one tenet may shine a little bit brighter than the others. You'll see this in the upcoming analysis. Check it out. All right, so y'all, we are here for Trap Karaoke and I'm here with my girl.

- Aisha.

- [Temptaous] So, why have you decided to wear this shirt for Trap Karaoke?

- This shirt, I'm definitely saved, I love Jesus, but I don't want you to get it mistaken that you can still .

- [Temptaous] When you say that motion with your hands, let us know what you mean.

- It's mainly bless you, I bless you. It's all right, don't worry about it. The blood is off my hands. I'm saved, I am with God.

- [Temptaous] What is your name?

- Shirelle Lawrence.

- [Temptaous] All right, what brought you to the Trap Karaoke event?

- My love for music, right?

- Hey now!

- I'm in the middle of finals, right? So I go to ECU, too. I'm in the middle of finals and I'm like you know what, I need a break. I just need to get out and let some energy, too, so yeah.

- [Temptaous] Why are you here today?

- My name is Sharice.

- [Temptaous] For the academy, who may not know, who is City Girls?

- City Girls are from Miami and they a music group basically talking about gettin' money and finessing niggas.

- [Temptaous] How does your shirt connect you to other people in this space?

- I guess my culture 'cause I don't have to say anything. You just look at me like, "Girl, I like your shirt."

- [Temptaous] Why do you feel compelled to use your body to show on you to communicate something or a message through your shirt? In other words, why do you feel the need to do it with your body?

- I think my body because sometimes as African-Americans, especially as African-American females, we don't get a chance to say things or people will pre-judge you before you even just open your mouth, so the things that I want to say, I can say on my shirt, I can say on my, like you gotta read it.

- [Temptaous] Exactly!

- You standing behind me in line, you gonna read it. I feel like it's a really good way of self-expression.

- [Temptaous] Who do we have here with us?

- Yo, this Tory.

- [Temptaous] How many Trap Karaoke events have you attended?

- This is my first event and actually you know how you say you speak something into existence? I was destined to perform. I wanted to perform a Jay-Z performance and so I walked up and I was gonna try to get as close to the barricade as possible and that's what happened and I just threw my hands up and they chose me.

- [Temptaous] Are you familiar with technical professional communications?

- Yes.

- [Temptaous] And how do you suggest your shirt enacts a definition of technical professional communications?

- I would say, again, just the way in which you're able to express yourself visually, in a way that people can sorta kinda get a sense of who you are and what you support, what you represent without you having to say anything.

- All right, so we are here, what is your name?

- Mike, Big Mike.

- [Temptaous]. How does your shirt connect you with other participants, other people here?

- Everybody knows this verse. It's the control verse, Kendrick. If I asked anybody about what translate skill and verse, they'll be like it's a song verse. I think if I ask anybody, they'll recognize the lyrics like "Oh yeah!"

- [Temptaous] What should someone take away from the Trap Karaoke experience?

- To me, this was like, I've never been in a room with so many people that look like me, and act like me, and participate in the same things as me. So it kinda feels like a family reunion in the way even though I only know the people I came with. So if you're just

looking for a real scene and being comfortable around other people, I totally recommend this.

- The experience to celebrate hip-hop, being around the ones you love.

- Absolutely.

- Being around everyone that loves good music, whether it's ratchetness, whether it's consciousness, whether it's whatever, and just those lines, those quotes, those beats, whatever. It's just all around good round fun and yeah that's it. Trap Karaoke is best.

- [Temptaous] How many Trap Karaoke events have you attended?

- This is my first event and actually you know how you say you speak something into existence? I was destined to perform. I wanted to perform a Jay-Z performance and so I walked up and I was gonna try to get as close to the barricade as possible and that's what happened and I just threw my hands up and they chose me.

- [Temptaous] Why have you decided to wear this shirt to Trap Karaoke?

- Given the times we goin' through right now, I think a lotta stuff gets put to the wayside and all the things I've seen of being a man, I know that I should respect women. I want all men to respect women because without them there is no us. Life does not continue on.

- Hey y'all, it is now 11:14 and we are still here at Trap Karaoke. In case y'all can't tell, a sister's becoming tired, but we got a little bit more to go. I want to take some time out and be a little bit more reflective on what I've seen so far here at Trap Karaoke. So for those of you that did not remember, amplification rhetorics are discursive and communicative practices both written and textual that focus on embodied performances that come out in different spaces. The three tenets for amplification rhetorics. The first tenet is it focuses on the embodied lived experiences. So what you guys have seen so far is you've seen people that's performing, that all connect with one another, and one of the ways they connect is through Black culture. How do they embody that? Through dancing with one another, by performing a song and turning the mic out into the crowd. All of this is embodied shared experiences of which rely upon one another while here at Trap Karaoke. The second tenet that we have here is the reclamation of narratives and all of that great stuff. Again, it's kinda going back to our embodied lived experiences, but the difference is here is what thing you'll notice is everybody, once they perform their acts on stage, they are asked where are they from, what is their story. Even in looking at the conversations from our interviews, you hear a lot of people speak well about where they're from and why does it matter for them to be here. And for our final tenet is the inclusion of marginalized or moreso the acceptance and the showcasing of marginalized epistemologies and ways of knowing and knowledge making. We see that take place and we see the lyrics happening and other people, who may or may not know the lyrics, but for the most part the crowd knows it. One thing you may have noticed is there is not a



single lyric posted on the screen. That becomes a part of the tacit knowledge that takes place, as well as shape amplification rhetorics. We're almost done, we're at our final round. I think its five wild cards, four or five wild cards. But just wanted to check in and let you guys know the trap doesn't take shit, it's still goin', y'all. So even though that you guys just saw me recap everything while at Trap Karaoke, I think it's best that I let my boy here wrap it up with tenets one, two, and three all in one. All right, so given the opportunity to blast or promote Trap Karaoke to other professors or scholars, people in the academy like me, that are not familiar with this event, what would you say? In other words, what could someone in the academy learn from the Trap Karaoke experience?

- What I would say is unity. Unity is what I would say as far as Trap Karaoke. I don't know if they're able to hear what's going on in the background at the present time, but what you hear is an audience of people who are united as one currently just to come together all over music. If nothing else, there's two things that people, as a whole, have as one. Food and music and that's what you have brought together. One of the two, so you can't deny it.

- Hey y'all, it is officially 11:59, about to be midnight. If y'all can't hear the song in the background, y'all hear everybody singing it. So one thing that Black culture knows, when that song come on, it is time for you to go home. Thank you so much for tuning into a trap dissertation. Thank you to my videographer, SayDrewitt Media, Mr. D'Andra Drewitt himself. Thank you for all of my friends who came out and helped me do consent forms. Thank you to my committee. Thank you for everyone who has helped me produce Issa Trap Dissertation. Thank y'all.

-You see, trap music and Trap Karaoke ain't just about knowing your favorite song. It's about a movement to share Black-lived experiences and to utilize amplification rhetorics in a space that is not the academy. As T.I. and Jason Mowatt mentions, Black people share various narratives that are influenced by their embodiment and their epistemologies. Look, just 'cause they ain't coming in the room on some 'ey, this is my TPC shirt does not mean that they are incapable or do not understand what techcom is. It just means they may not be using the formal language, which a lot of you all are comfortable are used to hearing. And to honestly be real as I mentioned before, the swag surf is a form of TPC. But some of y'all can't even swag surf so who's the one who really doesn't understand TPC? What I argue and what I've always argued is that TPC and various fields of study can learn from Black communities and their rhetorical practices in ways that they may have never known. As a quote that was shared with me by Black powerhouse TPC Dr. Natasha Jones, "It is not that elites produce theory "while everyone else produces mere thought. "Rather, elites possess the power to legitimize "the knowledge that they define as theory as being ideal." Now some of y'all may be walkin' away from this wondering why in the world did Dr. Michelle Eble, alongside my committee members, allow me to do this. While some of y'all may still be confused as hell, and some of y'all might be like yes! Either way, I welcome whatever your response may be. I ask that you all please reconsider the way that you're thinking about TPC. I ask you to think of the ways that you can use amplification rhetorics in your project. But most of all y'all, I ask you all to really consider why did you even watch this. So remember, I thank you, I appreciate you, and issa trap dissertation, y'all.

♪ Yellow Benz with a spoiler kit, with my spoiler chick ♪ ♪ Yellow diamonds on my neck and wrist ♪ ♪ Match this yellow bitch ♪ ♪ She a trip, shawty, she the shit ♪ ♪ She know she the shit ♪ ♪ If you don't buy her what she want then she throw a fit ♪ ♪ She a bitch, shawty, mean as shit but she super thick ♪ ♪ And she act silly like a kid, give her candy stick ♪ ♪ She a bit, make her flip a brick, make her sic a chick ♪ ♪ Since legit, I've been swanging dick, ♪ ♪ Gucci Mane the shit ♪ ♪ I met a girl named Susie, I let her join my group ♪ ♪ I know she not a groupie, so I let her in my coupe ♪ ♪ I snatched her in my fender while I stashed her in my tire ♪ ♪ Susie is a money maker ♪ ♪ But that bitch a liar ♪

- She's a liar, she's a liar. All right, ladies. You ready? ♪ Well, my name is Susie and Gucci think I love him ♪ ♪ That sucka think I'm loyal ♪ ♪ But I fucks with all the hustlas ♪ ♪ I be wit all the ballas, I be at all the spots ♪ ♪ I might be in yo' kitchen nigga cooking with yo' pots ♪ ♪ I think I love her ♪ ♪ Nigga you don't love me ♪

What? ♪ Nigga you don't love me ♪

What? ♪ Nigga you don't love me ♪ ♪ I think I love her ♪

[Man] Keep singing. ♪ Nigga you don't love me ♪

What? ♪ Nigga you don't love me ♪

What? ♪ Nigga you don't love me ♪

- So are we gonna get a grade for this?

- I will get a doctorate, so I'll be Dr. McKoy.

- Okay, that's good.

- Yes.

- Yeah. But are we gonna get a grade for this?

- They don't grade, it's like holistic.

- You just pass, you just like--

- Well no, you have to defend it. So you have to present it all and defend it.

- So it's an argument.

- Yeah.

\*Script Over\*