



Utility vs. Authenticity: Exploring Teacher Perceptions of AI-Generated Podcasts on Culturally Rich Topics

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Abstract: Given AI's growing use in education, this study seeks to investigate educators' perceptions of its utility and limitations as a learning tool. Participants were asked to find their own sources on Hip Hop and social justice, upload them to an AI podcasting platform, and reflect on the experience and the product. By employing a qualitative, instrumental case study design, participant reflections serve as key data for understanding how educators perceive the value and use of AI in educational contexts, particularly in culturally rich domains. Participants showed mixed attitudes towards AI, weighing its functional uses against its failures to present comprehensive and complex information and analysis. Some participants saw AI as just one tool that needed to be supplemented by other resources and human analysis, while others struggled to see past the "uncanny" nature of the podcast's delivery. The conclusions suggest that any use of AI in education should be paired with a critical discussion of why and how it should be used, especially when exploring culturally rich domains.

Keywords: AI and education, educator perceptions of AI, educator attitudes toward AI, Hip Hop pedagogy, AI and Hip Hop studies

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With the rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into educational settings, educators face added pressure to adopt these new technologies as tools of the future that are impossible to ignore (Dwivedi et al., 2023). AI holds functional benefits across domains of education, but its use in culturally rich domains remains contentious. This study emerges from a specific nexus of this technological push: a graduate-level course on Hip Hop pedagogy populated by in-service music educators. The course paradigm distinguished between "Hip Hop music education," which often adapts Hip Hop into existing formal music education structures, and "Hip Hop education," a more culturally rooted approach that uses the ethos and elements of Hip Hop as the foundation for critical pedagogy. With Hip Hop culture and pedagogy built upon authenticity, lived experience, and "*realness*" (Rose, 1994), we wondered, what is the value of an AI educator versus a human educator? Is a human educator necessary to develop criticality from their own being, or does it arise from students' own humanity in conjunction with AI resources? This context created a fertile ground for exploring the tensions that emerge when a technology like AI, often criticized for its lack of authenticity, is applied to a cultural domain that prizes authenticity above all else. The assignment directive at the heart of this study asked educators to engage directly with this tension. Titled "Exploring Hip Hop and Social Justice Through AI-Generated Synthesis," the task required participants to research scholarly sources on topics like the prison-industrial complex or deficit models in teaching in relation to Hip Hop. Participants then used the AI tool Notebook LM to synthesize these sources into a podcast, and finally, wrote a critical reflection on the process and product. This assignment was designed to force a confrontation: what happens when an algorithmic, data-driven tool is tasked with analyzing and presenting content on a topic that demands deep cultural nuance, historical context, and an understanding of lived experience? The central concern is whether AI can meaningfully contribute to learning in culturally rich domains. As this question is of particular importance for subjects like Hip Hop studies, which require a profound grasp of cultural intricacies (Berkowitz, 2024), we present this study to address the gap in the literature on the perceived effectiveness of AI in the teaching of culturally rich domains. How do educators reconcile the potential functional benefits of AI with the pedagogical imperatives of critical, arts-based teaching?

This study, therefore, employs a qualitative instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) to explore how in-service educators perceive the use of an AI tool for this complex task. By examining their critical reflections, we investigated the intersection of technology, culture, and critical pedagogy. Our study was framed around the following questions:

1. How do educators perceive the utility and limitations of an AI tool for synthesizing academic work on complex, culturally specific topics?
2. What are the key factors that shape educators' positive, negative, or ambivalent attitudes toward using AI in this context?
3. What tensions emerge when an AI's algorithmic interpretation interacts with the pedagogical goals of critical social justice education and the ethos of Hip Hop culture?

As AI tools are increasingly adopted in education, our goal with this research is to offer crucial insights for teacher education, curriculum design, and technology development. With this study, we move beyond a simple "tools-based" assessment of AI to interrogate AI's philosophical and pedagogical implications, forging more critical recommendations for its

application in the humanities and the arts. Specifically, we situate this case within critical Hip Hop pedagogy and abolitionist teaching frameworks that center cultural humility, complex personhood, and students' lived experiences (Akom, 2009; Buffington & Day, 2018; Kruse, 2016; Love, 2016, 2019).

Literature Review

AI and Music Education

In music studies, the acquisition and development of musical skill are shown to result from intense, regimented practice (Ericsson et al., 1993). AI can be used as an educational tool to develop musical skills by providing students with structure and feedback while studying scales and arpeggios (Chen, 2020). In addition, AI tools can provide immediate feedback on musical performances by analyzing technical aspects of music making, such as rhythm, pitch accuracy, dynamics, posture, and deviations from the musical score (Yun, 2023). Lv's (2023) study illustrated how AI can be used to create individualized learning experiences that allow students to learn piano at their own pace outside the classroom, involve students more directly in their learning process, and democratize learning beyond the traditional classroom model.

Going beyond skill acquisition, AI can be used to create learning environments. For example, Cui (2023) demonstrated how AI can support novice piano students in learning basic piano skills and create a shared learning environment that further enhances students' learning experiences. Similarly, Huang et al. (2020) described how exploring the collaboration between humans and AI song-making offers opportunities for joint learning experiences. However, these learning experiences are still tied to the technical aspects of music-making rather than serving the understanding of new musical contexts. While AI is transforming how music skills are taught and expanding access to musical learning, this study sought to show how educators perceive its use beyond technical skill acquisition and development, toward understanding culturally rich domains, thereby addressing a gap in the literature.

Beyond individualized practice and feedback, a growing body of scholarship has examined how digital technologies mediate music teaching and learning and, more specifically, Hip Hop-based music education. Kruse (2016) argued that Hip Hop pedagogies for music education require rethinking ensemble traditions by centering looping, beat making, sampling, and other technology-mediated practices as legitimate musicianship, often enacted through digital audio workstations and recording software. Buffington and Day (2018) similarly framed Hip Hop pedagogy as a form of culturally sustaining pedagogy, in which recording technologies, video analysis, and remix practices serve as vehicles for affirming Black literacies and youth cultural production rather than treating them as add-ons. Drawing on classroom case studies, Graves and Kelly's (2024) *Bloomsbury Handbook of Hip Hop Pedagogy* and Larson and colleagues' (2022) work on doing and being Hip Hop in school showed teachers using digital production platforms, online sharing spaces, and multimodal projects (e.g., playlists, mixtapes, classroom albums) to connect Hip Hop culture, critical reflection, and student agency. Taken together, this literature suggests that technology in Hip Hop and music education is not neutral; it can either reproduce dominant hierarchies or help redistribute power and voice, depending on how it is embedded within pedagogy.

While some research offers insight into ways AI is used to enhance learning, other studies highlight AI's limitations. For instance, Guidotti et al. (2018) explored the dangers of

“black box” models in technology, which hide their internal logic from users. A “black box” model raises questions about AI’s ability to be genuinely creative and to produce nuanced synthesis. This creativity and nuance are not necessary when assisting in the acquisition of musical skill, but our study seeks to explore how educators perceive this deficit when using AI to teach in more culturally rich domains. Furthermore, critics of AI have questioned whether it is a genuine co-creator or merely a fancy mimic (e.g., Savage, 2023; Shah, 2023). These scholars interrogated what it means to make music and the role of AI in music-making, if any, in the absence of direct human creation. Coles and Zane (2024) described the phenomenon of AI mimicking human interactions further through the “uncanny valley” of AI usage (p. 134); when AI tries to copy human conversation in a classroom setting, its failures can feel unsettling or *cringey*, which, ultimately, gets in the way of learning. Building on this research, our study examines in greater depth how music educators perceive the deficits of AI use, particularly when teaching in culturally rich domains.

Hip Hop Pedagogy

Hip Hop culture and pedagogy are foundationally built on principles of authenticity, lived experience, and what is often termed *realness* (Rose, 1994). This ethos is not merely an aesthetic choice; it is an epistemological stance that validates knowledge derived from direct, personal encounters with social realities, particularly from marginalized perspectives. Thus, realness functions as a measure of one’s connection to their community and the unfiltered expression of their truth. Drawing on this conceptualization of Hip Hop culture and pedagogy, our study embeds AI within Hip Hop and social justice, a domain where the culture’s core tenets pose a significant challenge to AI’s inauthenticity.

Critical Hip Hop pedagogy scholarship further sharpens these dichotomies. Drawing on Freirean critical pedagogy, Akom (2009) theorized “critical hip hop pedagogy” as a liberatory praxis that links youth cultural expression to analyses of structural oppression. Likewise, Rodríguez (2009) and Hill and Petchauer (2013) documented how Hip Hop–centered classrooms can cultivate dialogic, student-led inquiry while grappling with discourses of authenticity, gender, and race. Buffington and Day (2018) explicitly described Hip Hop pedagogy as a culturally sustaining pedagogy that honors Black literacies, while Love (2016) theorized the “complex personhood” (p. 414) of Hip Hop as fostering knowledge of self and self-determination. Extending this work, Love (2019) argued for abolitionist teaching that centers Black joy, rage, and freedom dreams rather than mere inclusion.

Within music education, Kruse (2016) called for Hip Hop pedagogies that disrupt Eurocentric ensemble norms and position students as producers and culture bearers. These critical frameworks imply that any educational technology, especially AI, must be evaluated on whether it sustains students’ complex personhood, community accountability, and critical consciousness, or whether it flattens these into decontextualized content. This notion is central to Hip Hop–based educational frameworks. Emdin (2016), for example, championed *reality pedagogy*, an approach that explicitly calls for teaching and learning to be rooted in students’ authentic, lived experiences. For Emdin, effective teaching requires educators to recognize and integrate their students’ cultural realities, creating a classroom that reflects their world and validates their ways of knowing. This pedagogical demand for authenticity creates an inevitable philosophical clash with AI tools, which are often perceived as fundamentally inauthentic (Berkowitz, 2024). AI, by its very nature, lacks lived experience; it operates on vast datasets of

human expression but lacks the consciousness, emotion, or social positioning that give rise to that expression. It can process and replicate patterns associated with realness, but it cannot embody it. While existing research has explored AI in music skill acquisition and general technology acceptance in the field (e.g., Venkatesh et al., 2003), our study aims to bring educators to the center of this discussion by examining how they feel about using AI for analytical, creative, and culturally sensitive tasks. Further, our study takes this critical Hip Hop pedagogy and abolitionist teaching literature as a lens for interpreting in-service educators' responses to AI-generated podcasts about Hip Hop and social justice.

Method

Study Context

This study employed a qualitative, instrumental case study design (Stake, 1995; Creswell & Poth, 2024). The case consisted of a single graduate course designed to foreground Hip Hop pedagogy and critical, culturally sustaining approaches to music education. The course at a large northeastern university integrated readings on Hip Hop history, Hip Hop pedagogy, and critical/abolitionist teaching (e.g., Buffington & Day, 2018; Emdin, 2016; Graves & Kelly, 2024; Kruse, 2016; Love, 2016, 2019) with creative projects such as video analyses, a graffiti timeline, remix assignments, and a final album project in which students produced original Hip Hop–informed work about course themes. Within this broader curricular arc, the Notebook LM assignment was positioned in a module on technology, AI, and critical pedagogy.

For the assignment, each participant was asked to locate and download two to ten scholarly sources related to Hip Hop and social justice (e.g., work on the prison-industrial complex, deficit-based teaching, culturally sustaining Hip Hop pedagogy, or racial healing in Hip Hop). Participants uploaded these sources into Notebook LM, generated an AI-produced podcast episode that synthesized the texts, and listened to the resulting episode. They were then asked to write a critical reflection analyzing the AI podcast's strengths and weaknesses for supporting learning in culturally rich domains such as Hip Hop and social justice. These reflections were submitted as discussion board posts within the learning management system, visible to the instructor and peers. This format allowed participants to represent their thinking in a more deliberate, crafted way, rather than in-the-moment talk. They also wrote with an implicit awareness of their classmates and instructors as their audience, which may have influenced their responses.

Participants

The eleven participants were in-service music educators enrolled in a master's-level music education program who selected this Hip Hop pedagogy course as an elective rather than a program requirement. Participants represented a range of genders and ethnic backgrounds, with varying levels of teaching experience. Although several participants enjoyed listening to Hip Hop in their personal lives, as a group they did not enter the course identifying as Hip Hop artists or culture bearers; instead, they described themselves primarily as band, choir, general music, and instrumental teachers seeking an elective that would stretch their pedagogical thinking. This positionality—as musically skilled educators but relative novices to Hip Hop as a practice—shaped how they encountered both the course content and the AI tool.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participant reflections were the data collected and analyzed in this study. The reflections were autoethnographic, as described by Ellis et al. (2011), a method that blends personal narrative and scholarly inquiry, offering rich insights into individual experiences while situating them within broader cultural and educational contexts. Participants were asked not only to describe their experience but also to reflect critically on the process of using an AI tool to deepen their learning in Hip Hop pedagogy (Hickson, 2016). A total of 11 critical reflections were collected, ranging in length and averaging around 600 words. After submitting the reflections as an assignment, the data were compiled into a single document for ease of analysis and coding.

Data were analyzed through a multi-cycle coding process conducted over a month by two researchers, adapted from Saldaña (2021). In the first coding cycle, open coding was used to identify initial themes, yielding codes such as “reductive nature,” “technical limits,” “uncanny,” and “antithetical to Hip Hop.” In the second coding cycle, researchers employed axial coding to group the initial codes into broader concepts. From this round, we constructed five attitudinal stances from the data: *Strongly in Favor*, *In Favor*, *Neutral/Balancing*, *Not in Favor*, and *Strongly Not in Favor* (Saldaña, 2021).

Findings

The thematic codes from the first coding cycle will be presented first, followed by details of the five attitudinal groups from the second coding cycle.

Part 1: Thematic Analysis of Educator Perceptions (First-Cycle Codes)

The first part of this section explores four central themes that emerged in the first coding cycle: *AI as an Effective Scaffolding Tool*, *Algorithmic Limitations and Failures*, *The Uncanny Valley and Affective Dissonance*, and *Ethical and Philosophical Tensions*.

Theme 1: AI as an Effective Scaffolding Tool

Participants noted that Notebook LM is an effective scaffolding tool, making academic work easier and more engaging. Summarization and connection were key uses identified by participants. One participant stated, “This podcast that was generated really help[ed] me understand the articles better because it was able to summarize and create connections between the readings way faster th[a]n I would’ve done on my own.” In this instance, the AI podcast’s value to the participant is the speed at which it enables the participant to better understand the articles. Another participant wrote, “AI tools can be extremely useful for summarizing complex discussions, identifying key themes, and making academic content more digestible.” This participant identified AI’s value in extracting key themes from complex academic content.

Additionally, some participants reported that the AI podcast helped them engage more with the academic content. One reflected, “I found this format much more engaging than the traditional paper format. AI tools such as this simply make learning and research much more palatable.” This participant highlighted how AI offers an opportunity to engage learners beyond traditional formats, making learning more accessible.

Theme 2: Algorithmic Limitations and Failures

While participants identified many uses for the AI podcast, they also noted some drawbacks and technical shortcomings. One participant discussed how AI misinterpreted a song's purpose and made factual errors in misnaming a key concept from one of their sources. Because this participant had a prior understanding of both the songs and the concept, they were able to identify this error and raised concern about those using the AI podcast as their primary mode of learning who might miss these critical mistakes. Additionally, many participants called out the AI podcast's reductive and superficial analysis. For example, one participant stated, "I found the AI analysis of these articles, particularly its breakdown of deficit-based teaching, to be somewhat simplistic and surface-level." Another wrote, "The quick summaries of the papers were fairly accurate but lacked depth." Although participants recognized AI's ability to extract key ideas and summarize, any analysis beyond this level was found to be insufficient without additional external resources and study.

Theme 3: The Uncanny Valley and Affective Dissonance

While not a prompted area of response, many participants' reflections contained emotional reactions to the AI podcast. Participants identified the AI podcast's inauthentic and "uncanny" performance as a main cause of dissonance with the software. One participant wrote, "I found the interjections and restating of ideas, meant to mimic the conversation quirks of human speakers, to be unsettling and uncanny, which obviously detracted from the listening experience." Another wrote, "The fake reactions like 'yeah... deep stuff,' 'good point,' or 'wow' after reading quotes felt cringey. It didn't add anything to my understanding. If anything, it made it harder to focus on the actual content." For these participants, mimicking human speech patterns began to detract from the learning experience the podcast was supposed to provide. A third participant wrote,

In order to make the voices feel more human, NotebookLM added a bunch of 'likes' and 'ums' to the conversation, but often in places that were not logical for the way people talk. The same thing with breath noises; it's a computer. It doesn't need to breathe.

This participant started to grapple with the fact that AI is a piece of technology and reflected on why it needs to pretend to be human in the first place. While human speech patterns offer a point of entry for some participants, the recognition that the software is not actually human starts to distract from the presented material and, therefore, from the ability to learn.

Theme 4: Ethical and Philosophical Tensions

In addition to specific strengths and weaknesses of the AI podcast as a functional tool for educators, participants also identified broader concerns. Some participants noted that the use of AI to understand their particular topic of study, Hip-Hop and social justice, worked against one another. One participant wrote, "Philosophically, a genre rooted in unfettered creativity in so many different mediums is just not the place for an unfeeling learning model that is only able to extrapolate off of the data it is given, and not create anything new." This same participant

continued, “It's inherently antithetical to the point of Hip Hop as a music genre, art form, dance form, and pedagogical idea.” This reflection on the antithetical nature of AI's use to Hip Hop's ethos raises questions about the value of this technology within culturally rich domains.

Furthermore, participants discussed ethical concerns around using AI in education. One participant discussed concerns of undercutting and devaluing of the creative process and of creators' autonomy over their own work, as well as the related issue of the unlicensed and unauthorized usage of these works by mega-corporations such as Meta and Google (the owner of Notebook LM) to their own capitalistic...ends.

Another participant highlighted the possible effects of this technology's usage overtime on student[s]: “[...students] will in the very near future not have to do research on their own [as] everything can be summarized very quickly with almost no effort.” These participants raise ethical concerns about using AI in the classroom, namely the potential for corporate corruption and the promotion of laziness among future learners.

Part 2: Attitudinal Groupings (Second-Cycle Codes)

In our second coding cycle, five attitudinal stances were identified: *Strongly in Favor*, *In Favor*, *Neutral/Balancing*, *Not in Favor*, and *Strongly Not in Favor*.

Strongly in Favor / In Favor

Participants who were *strongly in favor* and *in favor* of the AI podcast focused on its utility and efficiency. One participant wrote, “I’m genuinely blown away by the quality of the podcast episode it was able to generate. The tone between the hosts was very conversational and easy to listen to.” This participant was surprised by the caliber of the podcast itself, leading to a more favorable attitude towards the AI product and its educational value. Others in favor identified AI as a powerful supplement to understanding academic papers: “The final summary successfully tied the two texts together. I can see this being helpful for students who struggle with academic language and extracting big ideas...[and] would be best used to get an overview before reading the full articles.” This group of participants valued the utility of the AI podcast, which was generally driven by surprise at the quality of the content and by their belief that it could serve as a companion to other forms of academic engagement.

Not in Favor / Strongly Not in Favor

Participants who were *strongly not in favor* and *not in favor* of the AI podcast focused on what they perceived to be AI's failures, namely its reductive nature, uncanny tone, and the philosophical clash with Hip Hop. When discussing the content of the AI podcast, one participant wrote, “...it felt that the AI didn't actually make any connections between the sources, but merely relayed a few facts that could support an overarching claim based merely on some cherry-picked major ideas and the titles of the resources.” This participant did not find any value in the information the AI chose to relay in the podcast; rather, the information it relayed was so reductive that it did not offer any real understanding for the participant. Another participant wrote, “Amusingly there were absolutely NO insights that surprise[d] me. [F]rankly, that's likely because I was so distracted by the delivery of the content.” For some participants, their own

writing tone began to express the frustration they felt with the AI podcast. For this participant, the podcast delivery was so distracting that it prevented them from seeing any educational value in the AI-generated content. For another participant, they continued to weigh what these misgivings meant for the usage of AI in the study of Hip Hop: “AI lacks the cultural and historical lived experience that shapes Hip Hop, meaning it may miss important nuances... Additionally, AI-generated summaries risk oversimplifying deep conversations, removing the very elements that make Hip Hop and its discourse rich, dynamic, and community-driven.” This participant expressed that AI's specific failures make it ill-equipped to teach a complex, culturally specific topic like Hip Hop.

Neutral / Balancing

Participants who held a more *neutral* or *balanced* attitude towards the AI podcast reflected with greater nuance, juggling the pros and cons of the software while still concluding that it had some value in an educational setting. One participant reflected, “The podcast didn't add anything to my understanding of the articles, but I could see this being really helpful for someone as a study guide, in addition to other sources.” This participant expresses an understanding of using AI not as a sole resource but as one tool among others for learning. By drawing on AI's strengths, its ability to summarize and pull out key ideas, this participant expressed how recognizing this reductive ability as a starting point for learning. Another participant made a similar conclusion about the software, stating, “It's definitely not a tool to be used by itself, but it can effectively complement reading the paper by helping clarify difficult concepts which can sometimes be a barrier to learning more about a topic.” For this participant, AI acts as a way to break down a learning “barrier.” This important function is again balanced with the understanding that, after this barrier is challenged, learners should turn to complementary learning tools to further challenge their thinking. Another participant reflected on how AI can be used in Hip Hop studies:

AI tools can be useful in Hip Hop studies and education because they help quickly summarize ideas from multiple texts and show how they connect... However, AI can't capture the full emotional and cultural depth of hip hop, so it should be used as a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, deeper human analysis and experience.

While this participant echoed the sentiments and reflections of the previous two participants, they also concluded that, in addition to the need for supplemental academic resources, AI cannot replace “human analysis and experience.” These participants saw value in AI use in educational settings while also recognizing the software's limits and the additional resources and human investigation needed to fully round out educational studies.

Discussion

In this section, we first discuss the second round of attitudinal codes before returning to our first-round, broader themes to uncover why participants' reactions to the AI podcast were overall mixed.

Explaining the Divide: Utility vs. The Uncanny Valley

Within the participant pool, there existed a range of polarized attitudes. Participants in the *strongly in favor* and *in favor* groups focused on the strengths of the AI podcast as a useful learning tool. This is consistent with user acceptance models, which balance the use of a technology with its perceived usefulness and ease of use for participants (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This group's surprise at the quality of the AI podcast further influenced their positive attitude towards the technology. Furthermore, these participants expressed that AI contributes to cognitive offloading, offering another view of AI's usefulness as an educational tool and aligning with previous studies (e.g., Risko & Dunn, 2015). The participants relied heavily on the practical applications of AI and on how it would make learning more accessible, consistent with previous studies that have identified this as a positive trait of AI use in music teaching (e.g., Chen, 2020; Lv, 2023; Yun, 2023).

However, other participants looked beyond AI's utility as they struggled with the emotional dissonance arising from AI's flawed performance. Much of this dissonance stemmed from AI's inability to effectively create genuine nuance and synthesis in its summaries of Hip Hop scholarship, a limitation echoed by Guidotti et al.'s (2018) "black box." In addition, this limitation to create content that is distinctly recognizable as human creation aligns with other critics of AI's usage in music studies (e.g., Savage, 2023; Shah, 2023). For participants who held *strongly not in favor* and *not in favor* attitudes, the "uncanny valley" of AI mimicking human speech patterns was so distracting that it negated any ease and practicality of the information presented in the podcast itself. This finding is consistent with the work of Coles and Zane (2024), who also identified this AI flaw as a barrier to its use in educational settings. One participant even stated that this dissonance rendered any utility irrelevant, as the content delivery felt "patronizing." With participants able to discern the lack of humanity behind the AI-generated resources, much of the perceived criticality and value of the resources created was diminished.

The Core Conflict: Why Perceptions Were So Mixed

We revisit our first-round broad themes to investigate why participant perceptions of the AI podcast as an educational tool were so mixed. We propose that the mixed results come from the tension between the task's *technical function* (summary) and its *pedagogical purpose* (critical understanding).

Reductiveness as the Central Issue

For some participants, the AI podcast's ability to quickly summarize complex academic information was a strength. However, for others, this reductive summarization was the reason they believed it should not be used in culturally rich domains. Many participants recognized that social justice and Hip Hop studies require deep analysis, which exists in direct opposition to AI's ability to summarize and offer generalized ideas. Although AI described the contents of the sources participants sought to better understand, the resulting podcasts largely missed why the embedded ideas were important and how they connect to larger cultural understandings. Without the layer of lived experience and humanity that a human educator can offer, some participants were unable to see the value of the AI podcast in the study of culturally rich domains. This disconnect reveals that participants saw a level of humanity as necessary not only in their own personal study of Hip Hop but also in understanding the resources themselves. Going beyond the

“uncanny” delivery of the AI podcast, it is this misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and overall lack of critical, human analytic ability in AI that stands as a major point of divergence for participants in accepting AI as an effective tool in educational contexts that require criticality and humanization.

However, some participants were able to overlook the podcast's reductive, uncritical nature, viewing it as only one resource for learning. These participants saw the utility of the AI podcast as a starting point for learning and as a tool for accessibility, in its ability to decode traditional academic language, summarize multiple articles, and present scholarly information in a way that could be engaging to some learners. While the reductiveness of AI stood as a core conflict in this study's results, no participant believed that the AI podcast should be used on its own in the study of Hip Hop, pointing to the necessity of human-made synthesis and analysis in critical pedagogy.

The Antithetical Nature of AI in Critical Pedagogy

Participants presented conclusions on the antithetical nature of AI in critical pedagogy. Since participants were enrolled in a class centered around Hip Hop studies, they understood Hip Hop pedagogy to be about voice, authenticity, and *realness* (Rose, 1994). This stood in direct contrast to what one participant described as the "soul-less machine" of AI that pushed a singular, Eurocentric discourse, making it "inherently antithetical" to the assignment's goals (Berkowitz, 2024). In many ways, participants' critiques resonate with Love's (2019) argument that abolitionist teaching must move beyond technical solutions to center Black students' full humanity, joy, and freedom dreams. A tool that produces “safe” but flattened talk about Hip Hop fails this standard. Participants also echoed Kruse's (2016) call for Hip Hop pedagogies in music education that treat ciphers, beat-making, and collaborative composition as relational, embodied practices rather than disembodied content to be summarized.

For the teachers in this study, AI risked functioning as what Buffington and Day (2018) caution against: a way of invoking Hip Hop without sustaining the communities, literacies, and power shifts that Hip Hop pedagogy demands. This lack of authenticity of AI works in direct opposition to Emdin's (2016) concept of “reality pedagogy” (p. 32) that is rooted in the authentic, lived experience of students. While some participants overlooked this dissonance in favor of AI's utility, others balanced AI's shortcomings by treating it as one tool among others for education, and another group could not ignore this inherent contradiction. Participants with more favorable attitudes towards AI and an upfront understanding of AI's limits were able to overlook the podcast's lack of criticality and authenticity, viewing it as a starting point for learning. From there, these participants expressed that human analysis is a necessary step for learners. This criticality is an expectation of the graduate-level learning in which this study took place; however, it is the role of the human educator to ensure this level of criticality occurs, with or without the use of AI resources.

Implications for Practice and Research

The findings of this study highlight the need for educators to develop critical AI literacy. Educators not only need to know how to use AI-based tools but also need pedagogical wisdom to know *when* and *why* to use them. While much of this is specific to educators' personal backgrounds and teaching contexts, in-service educator training should include workshops on

developing critical AI literacy to create spaces for teachers to critically assess and decide which AI tools are best suited to them and their students. For pre-service educators, the use of AI as a pedagogical tool should be included in courses and discussions pertaining to pedagogy, curriculum development, and teaching.

Additionally, we recommend that AI developers create better tools by being more transparent about their limits rather than trying to mimic human intelligence in a flawed, "uncanny" way. Future studies should be conducted to better understand other AI tools across diverse areas of teacher education and preparation, revealing a more comprehensive understanding of the possibilities of AI use in education and the training educators need to engage with such tools critically and comprehensively in their classrooms. Studies could employ various methods to expand our collective understanding of AI in education, such as interviews, focus groups, and observations.

Moreover, this study was limited by its small sample size, the exploration of only one AI platform, and the analysis of a single data source. While this study's written reflections allowed for deeper understanding and synthesized ideas, they also afforded prepared responses that could potentially be edited and written with caution, given that they were discussion posts that participants knew their peers and instructor would read. Additional research should explore more spontaneous and anonymous ways to collect data, potentially yielding fewer edited responses from educators. Furthermore, including students in future research could provide insight not only into perceptions of using AI tools but also into their effectiveness when employed in a classroom. While participants mentioned benefits for secondary and higher education students, future research should explore perceptions and effectiveness of using AI tools to educate on culturally rich topics in elementary settings, to gain a fuller understanding of how AI tools can or should be used across all educational settings.

Conclusion

While some participants in this study perceived AI as a potentially powerful tool for educational efficiency and utility, most had mixed attitudes about why and how AI should be used in educational settings, particularly in culturally rich domains. These mixed views were informed by an understanding of AI's technical limits, uncanny performance, and the philosophical clash with Hip Hop studies and social justice. In fact, many participants even expressed a general incompatibility between AI and Hip Hop pedagogy, citing the lack of authenticity in AI-generated content and the necessity of authenticity, lived experience, and realness in Hip Hop pedagogy. For educators still considering how to use AI resources in the study of Hip Hop, great care is needed in developing these resources and in their use. The integration of AI is not just a technical issue; it is pedagogical and ethical. In an age of AI, educators' role as critical, culturally aware guides is more important than ever (Hoffman, 2023). When considering AI's usage, educators must continue to question why and how such a tool should be used.

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