Speaker 1: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Nicki Donnelson: Hip-hop is its own unique culture complete with music, fashion and art. Dr. Ashley Payne, Assistant Professor of psychology at Missouri State University, studies hip-hop based education and identity development of black adolescent girls and college aged women.

 I'm Nicki Donnelson and Payne is my guest today on the Missouri State Journal. As she studies how hip-hop plays a role forming racial, gender, sexual and academic identities, she also looks at a major player in culture; social media. She elaborates.

Dr. Ashley Payn...: At this exact moment, I'm focused on the intersection of hip-hop and social media in general. So how are hip-hop artists presenting themselves on social media? How are they represented themselves with their music on social media? And how are adolescents looking at that, and how are college women looking at that, repackaging it and implementing that into their own identity development processes?

Nicki Donnelson: Payne points out that social movements and political discourse have long shown up in hip-hop music. The music has often shown a light on disparities and tragedies of the black experience. She shares how movements like Black Lives Matter and Me Too permeate hip-hop culture.

Dr. Ashley Payn...: Hip-hop has always kind of been at the center of these different political movements. Black Lives Matter is no different. We see a lot of hip-hop artists really shedding light on Black Lives Matter and how it's impacted them as black artists, how it impacts how they navigate the industry, how it impacts how they represent themselves on social media or within their music. Kids, adolescents, and also college women are looking at that. They're looking at our artists to see how they are navigating themselves within the Black Lives Matter movement. How are they integrating the Black Lives Matter movement, Me Too as well. How are they integrating those movements into their music persona? How are they integrating those things into their online presence? They emulate that. They see the strength in the women artists who are doing these things, and they take that strength and implement it into their own social environments.

Nicki Donnelson: We all represent multiple identities, Payne points out. In her research, she noticed that even within one identity like the academic identity, for example, a person might present multiple layers, depending on the course, who else was in the classroom, relationship with the educator or other factors. To gather much of the data for her research project, Payne collaborated with central high school teacher, Armando Johnson. She tells us more.

Dr. Ashley Payn...: One of the ways that I really explore my research is through student groups and mentoring programs. Before I came to Missouri State, I had a hip-hop based educational program that was grant funded that provided young black girls with the space to connect hip-hop to what they were learning in English and language arts. These were middle school girls. They were met with high school mentors who helped them through the tutoring, but also gave them some life skills to navigate this world as black girls and black women. They talked a lot about hip-hop. They talked a lot about different identities that they see within hip-hop and within social media and how to navigate that as a young black woman.

 Since I've been at MSU, I've replicated that, but it's no longer a tutoring program; it is a mentoring program. So this semester I kicked off a mentoring program called Black Girl Talks. I have college women who go into a local high school and they mentor young high school girls about these very same issues. I'm starting small now, but hopefully as the years progress, we will be able to go into different schools.

Nicki Donnelson: That was Dr. Ashley Payne. I'm Nicki Donnelson for the Missouri State Journal.

Speaker 1: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at ksmu.org.