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Giving a voice to adolescents Hip-Hop Therapy

“Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent,”

Victor Hugo.

Amanda G. Francis

A research project submitted to the Graduate Faculty

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Educational Specialist

Graduate Psychology

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project to all of the mentors, teachers, and professors that have influenced my life. I would like to specifically recognize and thank my band director, Doug Lane, for his guidance. He and his wife, Sheba Lane, showed me how to appreciate and love music, without them, my emotional expression through music would have been lost. I would also like to dedicate this project to my parents, Sharon M. Miller and Terry L. Francis, for their love and support. In addition, I would like to dedicate this project to my brother, William Howard, for his music input and mind expanding discussions. This Ed.S is also dedicated to Nancy Gaston, for her companionship, love, encouragement, musical talks and in-depth discussions.

I would like to remember Percy L Brown Jr., rest in peace Uncle Percy.

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Abstract

Hip-hop therapy is a new, thriving therapeutic approach for adolescents and young adults. Extensive research is being done utilizing this approach with adolescents as a way for them to express their emotions and experiences. Through group counseling in a school, students can begin to express their experiences by learning to create their own emotional story through writing rap songs. The creation of their song can be accomplished in eight group sessions, starting with finding music that expresses who they are and ending with the creation of a song.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Tap, tap, tap. My hand hits the rough head of the drum. I can feel the hairs that remain on the skin as I strike the center. The sound is filling the room; a heartbeat of people expressing themselves. As I sit here striking the drum in an automatic rhythmic manner, I think of my week. I think back to how chaotic everything was and how I could not put words to my experiences. My thoughts are swirling everywhere and I feel the tension building up again in my chest. It feels as though my chest is constricting and it aches. As I am listening to the heartbeat of the group, I notice I am playing faster and faster, louder and louder. Our beating pulse stops; there is a release that comes over me. It is as if I have purged all of that tension from my chest.

There are times when I do not have words to put to the emotions I am experiencing. During my high school career, I endured many hardships, and my outlet was drumming. Growing up, music was my escape from home. By playing the drums I found my voice, identity, a community and a family I did not have. Distinctly, I remember my first week at college being very overwhelming. While sitting in my room waiting for my roommate to come home from band practice, I felt lost. My roommate and I had grown up together and had created our identities in our school band. She had been able to continue band and I had not. I sat there struggling with whom I was if I did not have band to identify with. Who would I hang out with? It took one week for me to decide I needed to express the feelings I was experiencing. I needed an outlet. I needed to speak the language I felt safe with and understood. I needed a drum.

Over the years, I have realized I used music and drumming as a way to “talk” about my feelings. When my home life was disastrous, I found comfort in playing my drums. Often I would sit in front of them and play until my arms would barely lift, and for that amount of time my troubles seemed to be pouring out of me onto the heads of the drums. Through my involvement in band, I found a support system and family structure that was missing in my life. Music healed the wounds that the trauma left behind.

After I graduated from high school, I continued to work with a program associated with my school for “at-risk” students, PULSAR. During the many times I volunteered, I would bring out my drumsticks and play beats on the tables while the students would rap lyrics to them. This appeared to be their favorite time during the retreat, you could see all of the students coming together and expressing themselves. All of these experiences of playing the drums remind me of a quote by Victor Hugo, “Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.” I use music in every aspect of my life and in all forms possible. Music is my self-esteem builder, and healer from the trauma of life, one that can be enjoyable.

As one looks around college campuses and high school campuses, it is rare to see students without their iPod attached to their ears. Music is important to adolescents and can be a creative therapeutic tool. Musical interventions are used in various ways, many grief groups use drum therapy as a way to process emotions, and substance abuse groups have used drums to help build a feel of community and acceptance. Over the decades, generations of youth have had special connections with music, each of the generations believing that their respective genre speaks to their experiences, challenges, passions, fears, and hopes (Elligan, 2004). The types of music that the youth have chosen as their

voice has taken different forms, however most often their choice of music has been that which adults opposed. According to Elligan (2004), the rebellious music of the youth culture can be traced back to the beginning of the rock 'n' roll era in the 1950's. The youth of the 50's related to music from artists such as Chuck Berry ("Johnny B. Goode"), Little Richard ("Good Golly Miss Molly") and Elvis Presley. Presley was one of the most controversial of his time, and described by *Columbia Encyclopedia* as " 'horrifying' older people (parents)" (Elligan, p. 13).

Music gives youth a voice not only for personal experiences, but also as a way to form political ideals and opinions. With limited power in our political arena, youth historically have made themselves heard by listening to "protest" music from artists such as Bob Dylan. This protest music was especially popular during the Vietnam Conflict, where many young men were being forced to fight a battle that they did not agree with. Much of the music during the 60's focused on topics such as sex, war, and drugs; all of which were looked down upon by the government and the adults of the time. Popular artists from this generation were the Grateful Dead, the Beatles and Jefferson Airplane.

During the 1970's, rock 'n' roll music made more of a shift towards "punk rock." This style of music took a more violent approach in its lyrics and stage presence, although the messages of political protest remained the focus. The 70's was also the beginning of a new genre of music, now known as "rap music."

Although the birth of "rap music" was in the 70's, it started to make its mark on the youth in the early 80's (Elligan, 2004). Rap is the music of a bigger culture that is known as hip-hop. Hip-hop got its start in the Bronx during the 70's. In the last 40 years,

this music has turned into a billion dollar industry and is often the topic of many discussions among cultural critics.

When one takes the time to look at how music has evolved in our society, it cannot be denied that youth have been at the center of its evolution. Historically, adolescents have used music to find their identities, rebel against the main stream society and their parents, and to have their political opinions voiced. Often older generations comment on how the music of today is not as good as the music of their time. Statements like that show how powerful music is and can be for people; especially for adolescents who do not have a voice and are learning to develop one.

Music and Counseling

It can be difficult to trust a stranger with all of one's being: the good, the bad, and the painful. Many find it intimidating and awkward to sit with a stranger and be vulnerable. It can be extremely hard for an adult to allow himself or herself to get to that point of vulnerability, one can only imagine what it must be like for an adolescent, who does not feel connected or understood by the person for which they are to confide. Often a trusted adult can be linked to the troubles that have been present in an adolescent's life. Why would an adolescent willing sit and bare their soul to an adult?

Music is created from the emotions of the musician; it only makes sense that music can be used to voice one's emotions. Most adolescents listen to some type of music, and music can be easier to discuss than the pain with which they are afflicted. Music can be the bridge that links the adult counselor to the adolescent client.

In counseling, the counselor is trying to understand the client, and get an idea of the client's experience. Clients often struggle to explain themselves; they can see it and feel it, but articulating what that is like for them can be difficult. To aid clients in explaining their emotions and experiences, counselors often attempt to use metaphors. Musicians also use metaphors in their lyrics to illuminate the emotions of the song.

Metaphors can be a great tool to use in articulating experiences and emotions. Using and creating metaphors can be difficult, especially for adolescents who may not have a wide range of examples. However, music can be an easy metaphoric tool. Many people play songs that represent the mood that they are in, or wish to be. A song is simply an emotional expression of the artist. The expression can look like playing something fast and loud when the person is angry or playing something soft, lyrical, and melodic when they are attempting to relax.

According to Gold, Voracek, and Wigram (2004), a meta-analysis of the effects of music therapy on children and adolescents showed that music therapy had a medium to large effect on clinically relevant outcomes. Gold et al. also stated that music therapy creates an environment where the children are set up to succeed (Gold et al. 2004). This gives some indication that the medium of music can make the room less intimidating, especially for adolescents who, at times, have a hard time finding the right words to use that effectively articulate what they are experiencing. According to Tervo (2001), "music can relax, stimulate or open up channels of self-expression at a deep personal level. The effectiveness of music therapy is based on transference and self-expression, not musical skills or ability" (Tervo, p. 86). Tervo supports the idea that most people can relate to

music in one way or another, and one does not have to be musically talented for music to be meaningful.

Finding the right type of music that the client is truly interested in is vital. Adolescents are an especially challenging population to work with; often it is not “cool” to get along with adults. Building a strong working relationship depends on the counselor’s ability to understand and listen to the adolescent. When a counselor takes a genuine interest in the things in which the client is interested, such as music, respect starts to be built, and the foundation to a working relationship is laid.

According to E.H. Tyson (2005), “Rap music has become a vital part of youth culture and, consequently, is now a central component in many programs that serve youth” (Tyson, pg. 59). In *Exploring Hip-Hop Therapy with High-Risk Youth*; Allen (2005) offers insight in the use of rap music with adolescents. Allen describes hip-hop as “modern mainstream young urban American culture” (Allen, pg. 30). Allen also states that hip-hop is primarily a musical form that is more expansive than most music genre, thus reaching a larger population. Hip-hop therapy is defined by Tyson as a synergy of rap music, music therapy and bibliotherapy (Tyson, 2002). This therapy, according to Allen, is a tool that is best used in psychotherapeutic or educational environments with high-risk youth or young adults (Allen, 2005).

One component of hip-hop therapy (HHT) is the use of narrative therapy. Narrative therapy focuses on having the clients construct their own stories in therapy (Allen, 2005). Through the process of constructing one’s story, and having stories to validated, clients can begin to shape and reshape their lives (Allen, 2005). According to Allen, many adolescents take pride in sharing their stories, and often relate to hip-hop

because it often discusses “street reality” and helps them give voice to issues that may otherwise be kept silent.

Allen states that HHT can be used in an individual or group setting, and it can be used as a long term therapy or a short term therapy. Hip-hop is so diverse and new, that many different creative approaches to its use are emerging. Considering all the research on HHT and all the approaches that have been implemented, I have decided to set up a group for adolescents in urban areas, utilizing different parts of Music Therapy, HHT, Narrative (Poetry) Therapy and Drum Therapy. This group will consist of no more than eight participants, and will have eight sessions. The purpose of this group will be to put a voice to the emotions and experiences that are often unspoken by adolescents. Group members will give voice to their stories by creating their own rap songs, by learning to write poetry, and by putting drum beats to their written words.

CHAPTER TWO

Music Therapy

Music therapy is a tool that has been utilized with clients and researched for over 20 years. According to Tervo (2001), Music therapy is defined as the prescribed use of music to effect positive changes in the psychological, physical, cognitive and social functioning of individuals. Tervo states that from his experience working with adolescents using music therapy, there are three stages: interest, learning and improvisation.

During the interest stage, adolescents become interested in music therapy through their peers, and the therapist. The adolescents' interest level is also affected by the environment which has been established for their counseling. If that environment fosters and supports self-expression, and youth culture, then they will more likely be engaged. Tervo states that the "unconscious fantasies and hopes of the adolescent are central in this stage" (Tervo, 2001, p. 81).

The learning stage is where adolescents often begin to understand and master the musical medium which they may be using, typically a musical instrument. During this stage the adolescent feels inadequate and frustrated with the inability to become the master over the instrument. If the counselor is successful in aiding the client through this process of mastering, then a foundation for the relationship will begin to build.

Tervo (2001) states the improvisation stage is the last stage the adolescent goes through in the music therapy process. The improvisation stage is compared to free

association in psychotherapy. Once an environment of safety and acceptance is created, clients, even those not very musically strong, begin to openly express themselves with instruments. Due to the risk and investment, therapy starts to become more intense and personal.

Tervo (2001) explains that once a client becomes interested and invested in music therapy, the client will begin to co-operate with the counselor. As the counseling continues the client becomes more and more self directed, learning skills of self-expression without the assistance of a counselor.

Most of the literature on music therapy speaks of a certified music therapist teaching clients how to play musical instruments. Can other counselors, not specifically trained in music therapy and potentially not musically inclined, still utilize music in their sessions? According to Kimbel and Protivnak (2010), utilizing music interventions, especially in school systems, can increase counselors' effectiveness with their students. In their article the authors state that having a degree or certification in music therapy is not necessary to utilize music with students.

Music interventions are strategies implemented by counselors who utilize music in some form with their clients in positive and constructive ways. Counselors may not have a degree or certification specifically in music therapy (Gallant and Holosko, 2001). These interventions provide a way to develop rapport and work towards a therapeutic working relationship. Kimbel and Protivnak (2010) state that school counselors can personalize groups and individual counseling sessions to their students, and find what music interventions work best for them.

The literature on utilizing music in guidance lessons, individual and group school counseling sessions states that music can serve as the bridge for the counselor and student to develop a common language (Kimbel and Protivnak, 2010). Music can be used as an icebreaker to ease students into the counseling realm and create a comfortable environment for them to share personal concerns.

Kimbel and Protivnak (2010) suggested four specific interventions for school counselors: music listening/sharing, lyric revision, improvisation and classroom guidance. The music listening/sharing intervention asks clients to bring in music of their choice to the session for the counselor and student to listen to together. The school counselor encourages the client to bring in the lyrics to a music selection, which the student will share, in an effort to make the meaning of the song clear. This intervention aids in the bonding that needs to occur in the beginning of sessions with clients, in order to develop a solid working relationship. By bringing in the lyrics, clients and the school counselor are able to explore together how the song is meaningful to the client.

The lyric revision intervention has clients creating, co-creating, writing or re-writing lyrics to current songs. This activity provides a forum for the clients to create a song that more accurately represents them personally, and creates a situation where the client and counselor are potentially working together to create the story. The third intervention is one mentioned in other research and is known as improvisation. This activity allows the client to create a song or music without the guidelines of a pre-existing song. While this intervention can be somewhat intimidating and complicated, it can be made as simple as clapping hands or banging on a desk to create rhythmical beat.

Finally, Kimbel and Protivnak (2010) list classroom guidance as the last school counseling intervention. In this intervention, school counselors utilize appropriate music during their guidance lessons. This can take many forms and may look like playing a song in class, then having a classroom discussion on it; having music playing softly in the background; or having music clips in a powerpoint presentation. Counselors could also use songs and/or the song lyrics to raise awareness about topics that are important for student development.

There are three fundamental themes that the majority of the research reveals having music that the client is interested in; allowing them an opportunity to describe and share their music in an effort to help establish a solid relationship; allowing clients the opportunity to create their own story through music.

CHAPTER THREE

Hip-Hop Therapy (Rap Music)

Rap music emerged from the “interaction of poverty, music, dance, graffiti, and fun” (Elligan, 2004, p. 26). The start of rap music was previously about youth expression, and is one facet of the broader culture that is hip-hop. As the 80’s approached, rap music became more of a voice for African American adolescents to express their anger, opinions on politics, and the issues/challenges they were facing. “The Message,” a song created by the Furious Five about the struggles the young adults in their community faced, is credited as the turn in rap music towards being utilized as a voice for African American adolescents and young adults (Elligan, p.16). During the 80’s this genre of music also became significantly influential on art, media, youth social development, and even other forms of music. Elligan states that children born in 1985 and later are considered offspring of the hip-hop era. More recently, rap music and the hip-hop culture have been utilized as an intervention tool in education and therapy.

Hip-hop and Rap Therapy has emerged as tool in counseling. Tyson (2002) conducted an exploratory study of the therapeutic potential of rap music with youth in a group setting. The study was conducted in a residential facility, in Miami, for runaway, abused, abandoned, neglected, truant, and homeless youth. There were 14 participants divided into two groups: those that received the HHT, and those that did not. This research showed that there was a slight improvement in the hip-hop therapy group’s

Index of Peer Relation. The IPR was a scale used to measure the severity, or magnitude of peer related problems. The HHT group was given a selection of positive rap music to listen and then directed to discuss their reactions, feelings, and thoughts

about the lyrical components of the song. By using a music medium that is popular with this population, clients are more likely to feel as though they can relate. When using a form that adolescents feel can accurately express what they are going through, they are able to share more openly and deeply what may be going on with them.

DeCarlo and Hockman (2004) did a similar study, in which they took 21 eighth through tenth grade African American males and divided them into three different groups. The groups included seven violent offenders, seven status offenders and seven students with no criminal background. Participants in these groups came from upper middle to low socioeconomic status and were representative of the community's demographics. These males were given the RAP therapy assessment scale (RTAS), to evaluate the usefulness of their group work. RTAS is a questionnaire that was designed to measure group members' degree of affective response, prosocial skills acquisition and preference for method of intervention (DeCarlo and Hockman, p. 51). The participants would utilize their time in the session discussing topics and looking for topics to discuss in song selected by the group. At the end of the study, the results revealed that the average high school students were as comfortable and excited about HHT as those that had a criminal record.

Much of the research indicates that the use of HHT therapy can aid in creating a stronger therapeutic alliance between adolescents and the counselor. HHT also allows adolescents to hold on to some control over their lives. Adolescents are at a difficult time in their development. They are not children anymore who need to be attended to constantly, however they are not quite adults yet, free to make their own decisions.

Having some control over little things, such as using or playing music they like, can make a huge impact.

There has been a negative view on the hip-hop culture. Often the older generation places blame on the culture for the present crime among the youth (Elligan, 2004). In 1992 the song “Cop Killer” by Ice T, was blamed for many of the Los Angeles riots that took place. There have been political officials whom protested against the hip-hop culture, especially rap music. The research indicates that while there are many negative incidents referenced in rap music, a lot of positive information and processing can occur with this music.

CHAPTER FOUR

Poetry Therapy

One component to HHT is writing, or rewriting, rap lyrics. Rap music, much like all music, takes the form of poetry, with musical beats behind the words. Poetry can be described as the written emotions and experiences of the author (Bell, 1982). Often poetry is somewhat abstract, and meaning has to be unveiled because it is not blatantly stated. Poetry utilizes metaphors a great deal to bring forth the experiences and emotions the author is trying to share. Studies done in poetry therapy state that poetry gives clients a chance to figure out what they are actually experiencing, make it real for themselves, and can give them a chance to perfect how they want to share it with another (Bell, pg. 30).

Carlyle (1986) states in his article, poetry is one of the “natural human resources for healing” (p. 343) According to his literature, effective healing is more likely to happen when the writing of poetry can be somewhat spontaneous. When the clients are free to experiment with words and images, their experimentation will eventually turn into something vivid and powerful (Carlyle, p. 343).

There are different ways in which to utilize poetry therapy, some being reading aloud poems that clients are connected. Reading the poem can be powerful, as the client finds an author that articulates something similar to what they are going through, and voices it aloud. Often clients can be affected by hearing words that articulate the experience they are going through. Another technique used in poetry therapy is having the client construct his or her own poem. This can be done in group settings, having each

person write a line in the poem, and creating a group poem. The counselor can also give the client (s) a topic in which to write about, and have the client freely write on the topic.

There are different ways in which to aid the client in the creation of his or her poem, which for some can be extremely intimidating. No one wants to embarrass himself or herself, or feel as though they are not good enough to be successful at anything. It is important to establish a process where the client will be successful at creating a poem. One might do this by writing a poem using the letters of the client's first name as the beginning of each sentence, perhaps describing who they are (Stepakoff, 2009). No matter how one goes about helping a client create a poem, it is important to make sure that the client understands there are no "right" ways to re-create experiences on paper.

Howard (1997) did a study to find out what the effects of music and poetry were on a group of adult females and adolescents. There were two groups: one was strictly adolescents, which were of mixed gender, and the other group was female adults. Both groups of participants had a history of substance abuse. The groups were exposed to both music therapy and poetry therapy equally. After each respective session, the clients filled out surveys about whether or not goals were met by the intervention. Goals were based on weekly topics of self-disclosure, encouragement, trust, patience, and accepting changes. The results from this study indicated that each respective intervention approach, music and poetry, were equally effective. Howard also noted in this study that several times during the sessions participants would become overwhelmed with emotion. Howard indicated that the use of creative arts as interventions can have a powerful effect on the clients, and the tool utilized can create a comfortable environment to express the emotions genuinely.

CHAPTER FIVE

Drum Therapy

The first rhythmical sound a human being hears is his or her mother's heartbeat. A heartbeat is consistent. Some will argue that we are drawn to music because of the drum's core beat in the music, which replicates that of a heartbeat. Often in marching bands, and most other bands, the drums are considered the heartbeat of the ensemble. The drums are deep, rhythmic, and consistent. That driving beat of the drums keeps the ensembles' music together.

There have been studies that look into the use of drums as a therapeutic tool for counseling. Some of the research indicates that drumming can aid clients in the expression of their emotions; provide an emotional release they sometimes cannot get elsewhere; drums can be a musical instrument at which a client can be successful; and which create a strong bond among those in a group or community (Camilleri, 2002).

In Camilleri's (2002) article, she states that students with self-esteem issues or an inability to express emotions can be given a voice through drumming (cited in Slotoroff, 1994). Drumming gives students an outlet to express their intense emotions on the head of a drum, instead of the head of a classmate. The article states that drumming is a powerful way to unify, reaching beyond our belief systems and languages to bring people together (cited in Hawkins, 1999). Using drum therapy as a tool to bring groups of students together helps create a foundation of support for them. This support can often be an element missing for students today, especially those classified as "at-risk."

Winkelman (2002) observed drumming activities at a substance abuse clinic and found that counselors using drums would allow clients to have experimental time with

the instruments. Clients were allowed to get familiar with the drum in an informal way; they were not given instruction at first on how to play but rather given freedom to figure that out on their own. As the clients became more comfortable, the counselor began a “call and response” activity to connect them to one another. This call and response technique is common during most drum circles, no matter what the topic, as a way of introducing participants to utilizing the beat of the drum as their voice. Participants are asked to go around in a circle and share their emotion on the head of the drum. Sometimes the group will repeat the beat back to the one sharing it, and sometimes the group just allows space enough for each to share without repetition.

Winkelman (2002) concluded that drumming addresses many things conscious and unconscious in the participant. Drumming can create relaxed environments for participants, a sense of community and connectedness among group members, and can be a release of emotional trauma. The expression of one’s emotions through the drum can be quite vivid. For instance, if one is expressing anger on the head of the drum, often the beat will be loud and fast, and while the client is playing this beat, his or her body will experience some similar effects as it would when he or she is angry. The participants’ heart rates will be increased and they may become tense in their muscles the faster they play, the same as when they are allowing the anger to build up. The counselor can process these effects of playing different musical beats, and begin to highlight with the client the different emotions they may not cognitively give voice to.

Each intervention discussed is aimed at giving adolescents a creative and more in depth way to express what is going in their lives. Music can break down all the barriers of culture, and if utilized correctly, more people can be reached. By having a systematic

procedure, a counselor can aid the client in exploring these different creative interventions as a way to express oneself.

CHAPTER SIX

Lesson Plans

Often at the beginning of the year, school counselors will do a needs-assessment with their students. A needs-assessment is a survey handed out to students, in order to identify any potential issues with which students may be struggling. Based on the results of the needs-assessments, many counselors will then start to create groups for the year. It has been my experience in the schools that often there are many issues that come up, and not all can be lumped neatly together into one group. With the limited time of a school day and school year, a counselor must be selective about what groups are done.

As I thought about this, and how there are students whose needs were not being met, I began to ponder what I thought the most important function of the group was. I have concluded, at least in the work I do with students, the most important function of a group is to create a space for the clients to learn how to give voice to the emotions they are experiencing, and to recognize they are not the only ones whom experience these emotions. I believe that a group can be formed around the need for emotional expression as opposed to being focused on specific events in a student's life. We all have the same emotions, and most of us at one time in our lives have struggled with how to express these emotions. Many different events occur in one's life that will result in the same type of emotions. For instance, divorce, death, and the loss of a friendship could all possess the emotions associated with loss and loneliness.

In order to accomplish this, I have created a series of group lessons where clients will begin to create their own emotional song. The literature has used both terms, hip-hop and

rap therapy to describe the use of rap music. In this paper, the use of the term hip-hop therapy is used with the understanding that the creation of a rap song is just one facet of the larger culture that is hip-hop. Each of the upcoming lessons represents a small portion of the cultural expression that is hip-hop, from the use of poetry and drum beats to the final product of a rap song.

To begin the process of creating HHT group, a needs-assessment should be given to the students on the counselor's caseload. The counselor would evaluate the types of traumatic events indicated on the assessment and create a group based on the similar emotions associated with the events. The emotions will be the connecting factor that will be the foundation upon which relationships and community will be built during group. The needs-assessment should include a question that inquires about the type of music the student likes, if indeed the student is interested in music at all. The research on HHT or music therapy is clear that the client must be interested in the style of music being used in the therapy if the intervention is going to be successful.

Once the assessments have been collected and reviewed, counselors should create a group of six to eight participants. The counselor will want the group to be manageable, to meet all of the clients' needs. It will be the counselor's decision to have a mixed gender group of students or not. Middle school and high school groups can be more challenging with mixed gender. The challenge with mixed gendered groups is attributed to adolescents being in the developmental stage where they are discovering their sexual identities. However, having a mixed gendered group can add different perspectives and dynamics to how the group functions. This decision is determined based upon what the counselor is comfortable with and can handle.

After the counselor has selected potential students, a release form must be created and signed by the parent. The release form should include that hip-hop music will be used as the intervention, and because the group will occur in school, the use of censored music is essential. A brief description of how the music will be used is important; most parents will have questions about HHT, and some will question its usefulness.

Lesson 1

When students return the release form, they should be prompted to bring in their favorite hip-hop song and what it means to them, to the first group meeting. The first lesson or group session will be a foundation session. Participants will create rules and norms for the group. They will take time to get to know each other by sharing the songs they brought. To set the stage for the students and establish oneself as a member of the group, the counselor will also have a song to share. It is important to be a member of the group, while also keeping clear the role of the counselor. To do this the counselor must be selective about what he or she share; song selected is very important.

This first session will be a time for the participants to become familiar with what the other sessions will be like and how hip-hop music will be utilized. Towards the end of the session, the counselor will start the process of creating a group identity. This will be done by encouraging the group participants to pick a song that represents the group; this song will be played at the beginning of each session.

During the session, the counselor will explain to the students the purpose of the session. Adolescents often have no control over their home lives, and what happens to them. The group experience is a chance for the students to have some control over themselves. Explaining to the group what is being done and what the rationale is behind

it, is not only respectful, but helps to create working relationships. At the conclusion of the first session, the counselor will explain some about what will be happening in the next session.

Lesson II

Each participant will have been selected for the group because of something occurring in their lives in which they are having a difficult time expressing. In the second session, the group members will be asked to bring in a song (and lyrics) that represents what they are going through. The counselor will give the participants time and space to share their songs, and the opportunity to explain why they chose them. During this session, members will begin to examine what emotions they are associating with the songs they have chosen. The counselor can aid this process by asking questions:

- How did they decide on that song?
- What do they think the artist was writing about?
- How does their meaning of the song relate to that of the writer?

The importance of this lesson is to begin to dig deeper, and help the group members to highlight what emotions they are experiencing.

The participants will need enough time to process, and sit with what might come up for them in this session. This meeting may become very intense for some group members, as some may have never looked at music in this way. The participants may not be very conscious of how the music relates to what they are going through. Once these connections are made between the music and the participants' experiences, emotions that have not yet been explored may emerge. Throughout the rest of the group sessions, counselors will be containing the emotions in the room as they are able, and making sure

to have clear guidelines on how the members will respond to their peers emotional exploration.

Lesson III

During lesson three, the group will begin to start experimenting with metaphors. The participants will use the lyrics from the songs they brought to group the session prior, and will look for metaphors used by the author. If the students are unclear of what metaphors are, the counselor will explain them and highlight a few examples from the song lyrics that the participants brought to group. As the members get a grasp on what metaphors are and have found a few, the participants will then try to identify what the author was intending when using specific metaphors.

This session is the first phase of the song writing process. Music lyrics are composed of metaphors that articulate the emotions of the artists in a creative and vivid way. By having the members explore and experiment with their own metaphors, the foundation for their future song/poem writings is laid.

Lesson IV

Lesson four is a challenging one, and may take more than one group session. This is the session that members will begin to write their own hip-hop song. There is no correct way to create a song, or poem. Some of the students may struggle and become intimidated with the task of writing a poem. This creative piece of writing is for the participants to begin to find a voice for their emotions. If the students need guidance on how to construct a song or poem, the counselor can have them refer back to the lyrics they brought in during the first session.

The songs or poems should be a story of what the group members have been or are going through. Participants will have some freedom with this. Their stories can focus directly on the event that has occurred or on what they are experiencing in the moment. What is most important from this session is not that the songs or poems are perfect, or that the participants specifically share about the event which they have had difficulty emotionally expressing, but rather that they begin to learn a new way to express emotions. The purpose of this group is that the participants will learn a new way of communicating emotions.

This process will take time, and participants may feel rushed if enough time is not allotted. Students may write several drafts, and that can be helpful for them to experiment with how they want to express what is occurring for them. The counselor could encourage the members to step away from their writings for a while and return to it later, instilling in them that these are living documents. Similar to our emotions on situations that occur, these writings can be ever changing. The process of writing and re-writing can also help the group members thoroughly process what they are experiencing.

Lesson V

Lesson five is a shift from the lyrical expression of HHT, to recognizing the musical beats. During this session, the members will listen again to the songs that they brought to the first session. While they are listening to these songs again, participants will focus not on the lyrics but rather on the beats behind the words. Members will be asked to think about the meaning that the artist intended, and to see if they can find a connection between the lyrical meaning and the beats. Do the beats represent the emotions in the lyrics, if so how are these emotions represented?

The group members will begin to pay attention to how fast the beats are, how loud, soft, and slow. Participants will attempt to connect the tempo, and dynamics to emotions they may experience. For instance when someone is angry his or her heart pounds and they feel like screaming. Maybe a beat they listen to when this occurs is loud and fast. The purpose of the session is to have the participants connect not only the lyrical metaphors to their emotions but also the beats and how it all works together in a song.

Lesson VI

This lesson may be the most fun for some of the participants. During this session members will have a chance to create their own beats on a drum. Often people become intimidated with playing an instrument, just as they can be intimidated at the thought of writing their own poem/song. The counselor will set the stage by reassuring the members that they will all be successful at playing the drums and that there is no correct beat.

To ease members into using a drum and expressing their emotions on a drum head, participants will all sit in a circle for an emotional drum check in as the counselor demonstrates how to express emotions on a drum. Group members will then have a chance to experiment with playing their emotions on the head of the drum. Once the participants have had some time to experiment with creating beats, members will listen to each other play. The members will take turns going around the circle, each one sharing their examples of certain emotions, such as happy, sad and angry. By having the participants each share and listen to the beats they establish for specific emotions, they start to become more comfortable with playing their emotions.

After the members have all played the assigned emotions, members will play how they are feeling in that moment. This will become the group's drum check in and will

happen in each session thereafter. As each of the members share where they are emotionally in that moment, the other participants will be observing the tempo and dynamics of the beats being played. This will be the foundation for the creation of the participants' own beats to the lyrics, or poems they have already written. The members will begin thinking about what beats might fit with the words they have already put on paper.

Lesson VII

During lesson seven, group members will begin to put beats to their written words. This will be the lesson when members create their emotional songs. Some of the members may feel as though their written stories are not suitable to put beats. The members may experience some anxiety with creating beats that match the words they have written. Participants will have the freedom to create a musical song, in addition to their lyrical one if they feel they cannot combine the two. The emphasis again in this session will be that there is not a correct way to go about creating their emotional song.

This session will begin with an emotional check in. The participants will sit in a circle and play on the drums where they are emotionally in that moment. This session will be the participants chance to put beats to their words. The members will think about what dynamics and tempos they desire for these beats and how that will correlate with the emotions of their lyrical songs. Participants will explore how the words and beats fit together, much like the songs they brought their first day. Even if the some participants decide to create separate musical songs from their lyrical songs, they will be exploring how the two themes fit together.

The members will have time to work on their beats, and if needed they may get ideas from their songs or others. Participants will be meeting once more after this session to complete their artistic emotional expressions. Some members may feel anxious about the ending of group and may feel rushed to have a finished product. These songs are working pieces. Much like these songs, our emotions are fluid; they can always change and evolve.

Lesson VIII

Lesson eight is the last lesson, and will focus on tying up any loose ends. This will be the session in which the members can share their finished products. This session emotions may become intense for the members. During this session in which the participants will be performing their songs, they will be exposing themselves wholly to the group. There may be anxiety around this process of exposing themselves. A few may be resentful that the group is ending. This may have been the first time any of these participants experienced a bond with others or experienced safety when revealing themselves. If a strong bond has been created, the group members may be experiencing feelings of abandonment. At this point in the group, the counselor will attend to all of the emotions in the room, as best he or she is able.

The session will start with an emotional check in on the drums. The counselor will explore where everyone is in the moment, especially with it being the last session. This will be an opportunity to have the group members express what it is like for group to be ending, utilizing any of the artistic forms they have learned. The participants may want to write a poem, or play a beat. A space will be created to allow members a chance to express themselves how they feel comfortable.

After processing what this group has been like for the participants, members will have a chance to share their songs, or poems. Once each of the members has performed their song, the counselor will encourage the members to share the meaning in their songs.

CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

It is often difficult for adolescents to express the emotions they are experiencing. There are various reasons why adolescents may feel unable to adequately express the emotions they are experiencing. Some adolescents may mistrust adults in their lives, developmentally some do not have the words to articulate what is occurring for them, and often adolescents feel as though they have no control over what happens to them. Why should they take the risk to share?

This poses a challenge for the counselor who wants to help and connect with the adolescent population. The best approach for the counselor is to meet the adolescents where they are and attempt to relate to in a way the adolescent understands. Music can be that way. Historically music has been a voice for the youth culture. When society ignored what teens had to say, the youth were able to express themselves through the music they made and listened to.

Today's youth are no different from those generations of the past; the only thing that has changed has been the musical style in which adolescents utilize as their voice. In today's society, hip-hop music is a very popular genre, and many adolescents, especially those considered "at-risk," feel as though hip-hop music expresses who they are. By using a medium with which adolescents feel comfortable, the process of exploring their emotions is easier.

Hip-hop therapy is a way for today's youth to give voice to their emotions. This therapy is diverse and there are many aspects which adolescents may be able to relate. Clients can write in a lyrical form their emotions, find already established pieces that they

relate to, or create their own musical beats that give voice to the emotions they experience.

HHT reaches today's youth, and helps to create a strong working alliance with the counselor. It is a buffer for the intimidation that can occur during verbally expressing oneself with a stranger, especially an adult. This is a new and somewhat controversial tool that thus far has proven to be beneficial. What follows in the appendix is the eight lesson plans that were outlined in the body of this paper. These lessons give the counselor more information about the details of the group, including amount time suggested for each lesson and the materials needed. It is suggested that all eight of the lessons be done, in sequence, in a group setting. Each lesson adds a layer to the end goal of creating a rap song to express one's emotions. Many of these lessons could be adapted to individual sessions and isolated for desired purposes, that should be decided based off of the literature and goals of the counseling.

Appendix A: Lesson plans for counselors to use for group counseling sessions in schools. These lesson plans will give insight into the purpose of each lesson, materials needed and the amount of time required for each lesson.

Lesson 1 – Intro: Favorite Hip Hop Song— What does it mean to you? Why do you like it?

Time: 30 mins.-1 hour

Goals: break the ice and set Group Rules/Norms

Materials: Group Folders, Computer, Song Lyrics, Paper, Pens or Pencils, Dictionary/Thesaurus

Activities:

-Prior to the first group meeting, when the students return their permission slip, tell them the in first session they will be sharing their favorite hip-hop song, along with what it means to them. Let the members know that the song they pick should be a song they really enjoy and can talk about the meaning it has for them. This will ease the students into what the sessions are going to be like.

-Before each intervention, let the participants know what you are doing, what the purpose is. This aids with the adolescents developing some ownership over their therapy.

-At the beginning of the first session, have them talk about some rules they would like to establish. This will allow the students to feel as though they have some ownership over themselves and the group process. If they are unable to think of any rules, suggest a few

basic ones, such as confidentiality and respect, along with consequences to breaking the rules.

- Have a song, and a computer available with internet access to look up lyrics if needed and to play snippets of the songs.

-Have them create their own folder for the group, to store their poems/songs.

-Suggest having a group song that will be played at the beginning of every session, to get things going (do this at the end, after the students have listened to the songs that represent them somehow, and talk about a song that they could agree upon, that would represent their group).

-Ask the group members to bring a song that they believe represents the significant event for which they have joined group to the next session.

-Ask the members to print off the lyrics and bring them.

Lesson 2 – Hip Hop Song that represents a significant event

Time: 30min. – 1 hour (Ideally one would take as much time as needed, depends on participation, and group size. This activity may need to be spread between two group meetings.)

Goals: break the ice and begin the conversation of recognizing emotions in music. It will also set the tone for the rest of the group. Contain the emotions in the group.

Materials: Group Folders, Computer, Song Lyrics, Paper, Pens or Pencils, Dictionary/Thesaurus

Activities:

-Play the group song to get the students in the mood for group. Do a check in to see how things are going and if there is anything that needs to be attended to from last group session or their week.

-Have each member share their song. In the beginning do not try to have them dissect it. Share a song you have chosen, pick certain lyrics in the song that represent your event. This will model for the group how to go about dissecting the lyrics in the songs.

-Ask the members to think of why you might have chosen those lyrics. If it is appropriate, share some of the event with the group and why you chose the lyrics. Be careful about how much you share; this group should not focus on the counselor. It is important that you become part of the group and model desired actions of the group members; keep in mind that you are the facilitator and must maintain that role distinction.

-As the members feel comfortable, have them start to break down their songs.

Once each has shared their lyrics, allow some time for discussion and reflection.

~What makes it easier to express ourselves through music?

~Did we think about the connection between the song and the event before this activity?

~How often have we openly expressed ourselves as the artist of the song has?

~What meaning do you think the artist made of this song?

~How is it easier to play the song, as opposed to just talking about their emotions?

These are suggested discussion questions, go where the group goes. Make sure to get the points across that these are poems and the words are metaphors for the emotions that the artist and the students themselves have. Begin discussing the idea of writing metaphors to express the students' emotions. Explore some with the students what it means for them to overtly share.

Lesson 3 – Metaphors, and the beginning of writing poems/expressing emotions through metaphors

Time: 30mins to 1 hour

Goals: To start building the foundation for the participants to write their own rap song, to express what it is like for them having gone through the experience they have gone and expression of emotions. Contain the emotions in the group.

Materials: Group Folders, Computer, Song Lyrics, Paper, Pens or Pencils, Dictionary/Thesaurus

Activities:

-Play the group song to get the students in the mood for group. Do a check in to see how things are going and if there is anything that needs to be attended to from last group session or their week.

-Have the students look at the lyrics of the song they brought in the previous session. Have them find metaphors in the lyrics. When the group has found a few, have them each discuss what the writer was saying with the metaphor. Be aware that a few members may not feel comfortable sharing and that is ok.

-Have them write a few metaphors that apply to them. Make sure they understand what to do, and what they are searching for

-As always, it is important that the facilitator participate in an effort to model and be a part of the group, however make sure to keep the boundaries and roles clearly defined.

Lesson 4 – Poetry/Hip Hop Song writing

Time: 30 mins – 1 hr. [This lesson may take them two sessions. The writing process can take time. Encourage the students to take their writings home and work on them. It is important to have a copy made of what the members have completed at the end of group in case they forget to bring it to the next group meeting. Give them time to formulate their poem, and edit it continuously.

Goals: Having participants write their own poem which will eventually be their own hip hop song, that expresses their emotions. Have the participants attempt to express their emotions (for which they are in the group), however if the student goes in a different direction go along. The importance of the group session is teach the students skills on processing and how to express their emotions. Contain the emotions in the group.

Material: Group Folders, Paper, Pens/Pencils, Computer (internet access), Dictionary/Thesaurus

Activities:

-Play the group song to get the students in the mood for group. Do a check in to see how things are going and if there is anything that needs to be attended to from last group session or their week.

. -Have the participants begin to write their story, poem/song. This will be a quieter session. Allow students to have their own space and resources to write. Express that there is not a correct way to do this and that they may reference the songs brought to the first two sessions, along with the metaphors that they found and wrote in the last session.

-As always, it will be important for you to write your own along with them.

- Have the students take a copy of their songs with them. The student may want an opportunity to work on it more during the week. Let the members know that they do not have to work on it outside of the group, but that they may if desired. Keep a copy of what they have started, just in case the student does not remember to bring the song to the next session.

-If the students are stuck and cannot write, have them list some adjectives that describe their significant event. If the students are hesitant to do this, then have them write down what it is like to be in the group.

- What they like about group.

- What they do not like about group.

- Their favorite song.

- What that song means to them.

-From there the counselor can work with the student to create metaphors, and a story/poem/song about the current moment.

Lesson 5 – Finding the beat

Time: 30mins – 1 hr.

Goals: To have the members listen to the beats in the songs that they brought in the second session, and discuss how those beats reflected the emotion the artist was feeling.

Contain the emotions in the group.

Materials: Group Folders, Songs, Computer (internet access)

Activities:

-Play the group song to get the students in the mood for group. Do a check in to see how things are going and if there is anything that needs to be attended to from last group session or their week.

-Have the group members listen to parts of their songs. As they are listening ask them to think about how the beats might be representative of the emotion in the lyrics.

-Have the participants explore the connection between the lyrics, metaphors and the beats in the song.

-Engage the members in a discussion about the emotions.

-Ask them to listen again to their group song (if there is time) and see if it matches lyrically and musically to the emotion of the group. If the group feels it does not, explore with them the possibility of changing their group song.

Lesson 6 – Making the emotional beat

Time: 30mins – 1 hr.

Goals: Have group members to create their emotional beat, musically express their emotions. Contain the emotions in the group.

Materials: Group Folders, Hand Drums, Computer (internet access)

Activities:

-Play the group song to get the students in the mood for group. Do a check in to see how things are going and if there is anything that needs to be attended to from last group session or their week. Also check on the participants' song writing progression.

-Have each member pick out a drum that they will be using through the entire session. [You can use drums that require sticks; however, this might be more challenging. The goal is to have the participants feel successful at playing the instrument, and by having hand drums it is easier for this to occur.]

-Get the group in a circle and have them do a drum check in. Have each member create a beat that represents feeling good (happy, excited) for them. You can start and have them go around in a circle. Then have each member go around and do a beat that represents upset (angry, sad).

-After each member has done this, have them each go around and make a beat that represents what they are feeling in that moment. Ask the participants to pay attention to how the beats sound different. Discuss the differences with them.

-Have the group start thinking about a beat that would match their poem/song.

Lesson 7 – Making the Emotional Beat (continued)**Time:** 30mins – 1hr**Goals:** Have the participants make their emotional beat that matches their poem/song.

This beat can match their words/ flow, or it can just be the musical part of the poem, leaving it open will help to insure success and freedom over their therapy. Contain the emotions in the group.

Material: Group Folders, Hand Drums, Computer (internet access)**Activities:**

-Play the group song to get the students in the mood for group. Do a check in to see how things are going and if there is anything that needs to be attended to from last group session or their week. Have the group do a drum check in; have them playing the emotion they are feeling at that moment. Allow them time to discuss these emotions if they desire.

-Have the participants start creating their beat for their song. Explain to them, that it can match the “flow” or can be separate. If needed play their original song for them or other songs to get beat ideas.

-Also mention to the participants that the next session will be their last. Allow them space to express thoughts/reactions about this.

Lesson 8 – Last meeting, Rap up**Time:** 30mins – 1hr.**Goals:** This will be the last meeting, wrap up any untouched issues, and perform/share songs. Contain the emotions in the group.**Materials:** Group Folders, Hand Drums, Computer (internet access)**Activities:**

-Play the group song to get the students in the mood for group. Do a check in to see how things are going and if there is anything that needs to be attended to from last group session or their week. Have the group do a drum check in; have them playing the emotion they are feeling at that moment. Allow them time to discuss these emotions if they desire.

-This is the final session. Allow room for the participants to talk about this, or express what the group ending is like for them. The group may want to express their emotions by writing a poem, or playing a beat on their drum.

-Allow time for the participants to share their finished products, which may take the form of a song, with poem and beat, or each separately. Give the students time to practice their songs then ask if someone wants to perform.

-Allow a respectable amount of time at the end of the session to discuss how the students might use HHT outside of the group setting. Explore with the group how they can use the tools they gained in the group for their everyday lives.

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