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Refusing to relax my smile : building resistance through hip hop therapy : a project based upon an investigation at Beats, Rhymes and Life

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Refusing to Relax my Smile:
Building Resilience through Hip Hop
Therapy

ABSTRACT

This study explores how hip hop therapy programming promotes resilience in youth. Based in Oakland, CA, Beats, Rhymes and Life (BRL) provides hip hop therapy to 12-24 year olds through their Therapeutic Activity Groups (TAGs). The purpose of this study is to establish evidence of how TAGs improve psychological resilience in youth program participants and of BRL's effectiveness as a culturally congruent mental health provider. This study is part of a larger program evaluation in efforts with five other student researchers completing Smith College School for Social Work theses. Additionally, this study in particular serves as a pilot of a larger project exploring TAGs as a resilience-builder.

This mixed method study analyzed a short pre-interview survey and a semi-structured interview with seven participants. Findings demonstrate that all youth were positively impacted by participation in TAGs measured by individual/psychological and external/social resilience indicators. Most youth reported enjoying writing rhymes in TAGs- noting it was helpful to them- and feeling that they could share with someone in their TAG. Participants discussed improved perception of their future, self-esteem, and prosociality (less isolative). There were patterns that emerged regarding the overall culture of BRL and TAGs as an honest and nonjudgmental community, as well as one that instilled positive thinking in youth. This research adds to hip hop therapy and social ecological resilience literature. Future research may look to expand the sample population and broaden exploration of resilience indicators not examined in findings, like self-enhancement.

REFUSING TO RELAX MY SMILE:

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH HIP HOP THERAPY

A project based upon an investigation at Beats,
Rhymes and Life, submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Social Work.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

This study explores how hip hop therapy programming promotes resilience in youth participants through culturally congruent group therapy mental health services. Beats, Rhymes and Life (BRL) is a strengths-based hip hop therapy program based in Oakland, CA. BRL's Therapeutic Activity Groups (TAGs) seek to provide at-promise youth 12-24 years old with tools for success in school and in life, positive coping strategies, conflict resolutions skills, avenues for creative expression, and supportive networks. Theoretically, TAGs aim to meet the needs of a community: youth whose life stories are reflected in the culture of hip hop. The purpose of this study is to establish evidence of how TAGs impact psychological resilience in youth program participants and to identify BRL's effectiveness as a culturally congruent mental health services. This study is part of a larger program evaluation in efforts with five other student researchers completing Smith College School for Social Work theses. Additionally, this study in particular serves as a pilot of a larger project exploring TAGs as a resilience-builder.

Psychological resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity – the phenomena by which individuals adapt in the face of significant adversity or risk (Masten and Powell, 2003) and by which persons experience positive outcomes despite serious threats to adaptation or development (Masten, 2001). One youth participant in this study echoed this when she described resilience as "refusing to get run over, refusing to get knocked down, refusing to not stand up for you." Another component of resilience is that the people are part of their environments. Ungar's ecological perspective of resilience decenters individual characteristics of resilience and adds important aspects to the concept of one's ability to bounce back from adversity: that resources be available for persons to do so and this be done on the individual's own terms (as cited in Masten

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& Powell, 2003). BRL, a hip hop therapy provider, is such a resource. Hip Hop Therapy (HHT) can be best described as the "synergy of rap music, bibliotherapy, and music therapy" (Tyson, 2002). It uniquely engages youth who like hip hop in therapeutic change by channeling a familiar interest that traditional forms of therapy are often challenged in doing.

BRL offers youth the opportunity to make meaning from their experience and improve their long-term mental health functioning through culturally congruent and accessible services. It theoretically engenders resilience by utilizing hip hop experience and culture as a resource on youth's *own terms*. This study adds to the growing, limited literature on culturally congruent programming for hip hop culture youth, a large group of people in need of mental health programming that speaks to their life experience and interests. In all, this study explores how BRL, as a culturally congruent mental health provider, strengthens resilience in at-promise youth.

Author's Relationship to Hip Hop

People who live and love hip hop are experts in this research. I did grow up living hip hop and I do not live hip hop now. I do not write rhymes. I do not make beats. I am no expert, instead arriving at this research with "outsider" status. Famed socially conscious rapper and producer KRS-One says academics who do not live hip-hop (writing rhymes and performing) end up objectifying the culture and spirit of hip hop (KRS-One, 2015). I think what he means by this is that academics look at hip hop from the outside and break it into parts that they do not *know*, like an explorer washing ashore on new lands and describing someone else's cultural practices. It is colonization. Whose voices does the academic world or dominant culture "lift up" to "validate" hip hop therapy as a culturally congruent practice? My position as a researcher of hip hop in this study and my intention to support the growth of a culturally congruent mental

health practice is complicated because of my relationship to hip hop and my social identity (discussed later in this section). Hip hop as a change agent is at the center of this research. Considering this and KRS-One's wisdom, I arrive at this research unable to truly understand what my study explores.

My best approach to mediating the objectification or colonization of hip hop is through a cultural humility framework. Healthcare workers Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) in the San Francisco Bay Area developed the cultural humility framework as an alternative to the idea of cultural competency. Cultural competency can be described through a wide range of definitions. An analysis of the construct of cultural competency is beyond the scope of this paper, in part because I choose to address my research and social location in it through a cultural humility lens. Briefly, I see cultural competency as the ongoing, active engagement in increasing knowledge of and practicing skills that facilitate working with culture. I draw a definition of "culture" from my field, seeing it as the "thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group" (NASW, 2000b, p. 61).

A challenge with cultural competency is its historical tendency to mislead folks into believing that there is an end-point to understanding experiences of persons from cultures different from one's own. Cultural humility holds that one can never really know what a person or group's cultural experience is. Cultural humility includes lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique, limiting power imbalances, and community advocacy on behalf of individuals and groups. Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington and Utsey (2013) add that it is the "ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [other person]" (p. 2).

I come to this research as a white, cisgender woman. I view hip hop through my identity and lived experience lens. The majority of people who listen to gangsta rap are white, suburban teenagers (Alexander, 2001, p. 102), like I was, commodifying hip hop from an unlived experience of the music. Yet hip hop and rap never landed with me in my upbringing because of my class status, gender, etc. As a woman, I did not like the language men used about women in mainstream hip hop I heard on the radio. And stories of "pimpin'," cars, or gold teeth did not make much sense to me either. It was not until I heard women's stories in hip hop, like Destiny's Child saying they paid their own bills or TLC questioning expectations of beauty that hip hop began to resonate. Coming from this place and listening to what lyricists have to say and trying to understand why they say it, the culture of hip hop makes more sense to me now. I have an appreciation and admiration for the stories hip hop artists tell, joining from a place of activism. The beats are dope, too. Hip hop's ability to lift up voices of people who are otherwise not heard is a place where I join and come this research as an ally.

As an inherent oppressor as a white woman in my social location, it is my goal to pass the mic, or stand with, voices of people who live hip hop by presenting and developing this research through a cultural humility lens. My research is funneled through me, so I can understand if there is limited trust in my ability to do this. I worked with the support and consultation of my peers who know hip hop in their hearts. I deferred to the support of fellow researchers and advisor, as well as BRL staff and program participants, in the development and analysis of themes relevant to hip hop and this study. I continue to grapple with a challenge inherent in my being a white, female social worker and academic coming into this work whose contributions will often be seen by systems and institutions as more "valid" (by way of language I use, the way I spell my name, the school I attend) than those who are in a better position to speak about the

cultural responsiveness of my research content: hip hop therapy and lived experience of

resilience. I ask readers to sit with this. I add that I intentionally use nonacademic works as

sources in this research as act of resistance in this regard.

In all, I ask readers to remember my social position and limitations in my research as they

read. I encourage you to make your own interpretations of this research and defer to the stories,

music, and advocacy of people who shared their experiences with me and who live hip hop.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This literature reviewed below provides evidence for the importance of hip hop therapy as an effective tool support individual psychological resiliency and identifies constructs that help to inform this. The chapter is divided into four sections. We begin with a brief history of hip hop to orient the reader to the principles that shape the therapeutic program at BRL. Next, we discuss hip hop therapy principles, its relevance to at-promise youth, and its associated outcomes. This is followed by a description of Beats, Rhymes and Life principles and an orientation to their practice and programs. Finally, we look at resilience, exploring how it is defined, psychological characteristics of resilient people, and ways to support resilience-building.

A Brief History of Hip Hop

"Hip-hop is all about victory over the streets," as KRS-One says. Hip hop was born out of the South Bronx, New York, during a period of racial unrest and racial segregation. When an expressway was built in the Bronx in the 1960's, many white, middle class families relocated, leaving poor, African American families in the neighborhood (Henry, 2004). Access to legal employment became a problem for African Americans, Hispanics, and other immigrants living here who were limitedly prepared by public school education for available skilled positions. By 1965, the illegal drug trade was rampant in the communities of the South Bronx, and increase in the cost of living along with the crime and gang violence associated with the drug trade led to financial strain on the city's resources. New York City gave little support to this neighborhood, systematically oppressing its inhabitants. Yet this was a home to a blend of cultures and rich musical history.

The combination of stressors for African Americans in the Bronx of being poor, marginalized, and discriminated against for multiple generations along with the heavy influence of jazz and the blends of cultures within the area influenced the creation of hip hop (Hadley and Yancy, 2012). On one track, community empowerment groups influenced by the Black Power movement grew out of that landscape. On a parallel track, communities in the South Bronx created social clubs from which new forms of expression emerged.

DJ Kool Herc is often credited with creating the sound that is hip hop: DJ'ing with "breaks" in music where the beat drops. These influences merged when the Universal Zulu Nation started in 1974, led by former gang member and DJ Afrika Bambaataa. The Zulu Nation was the first to bring together DJ's, graffiti artists, b-boys and b-girls, and MC's ("masters of ceremony") along with a political agenda to support the community. Graffiti, break-dancing, MC'ing, and DJ'ing, along with Knowledge of Self, took rise in the streets and became the Five Elements of hip hop. At block and house parties, in schoolyards, basketball courts, and later in night clubs, community members from a variety of backgrounds and experiences used creative talents to construct a meaningful social and cultural experience.

Thus far, we see that hip hop is the product of inner-city Black and Latino communities plagued by poverty, community decay, and the proliferation of illegal drugs and gangs in the 1960s and early 1970s in New York. By the early 1980's, however, hip hop had made its way out of New York (for example, Too $hort, a grandfather to Bay Area hip hop, started releasing music at this time). With this also came the mainstreaming of hip hop. From Hollywood to Madison Avenue, b-boys and rappers were in full corporate swing and rap was the most popular aspect of hip hop among the masses as it was easiest to sell. Rap and hip hop veered from its political and community empowerment roots.

The LA Riots in spring 1992 and Ice-T's "Cop Killer" created controversy with opposition from political leaders and dominant culture. Conscious and controversial rappers were dropped or released from labels owned by the major label Time Warner. Later, national laws in the mid-1990's created station homogeneity, further pushing conscious MC's from access to the masses.

While mainstream hip hop today may seem a disparate call from its roots, the elements are alive. From major label artists to new players to novices, hip hop is a stand for victorious expression. Outkast, Nicki Minaj, Kendrick Lamar, Jay-Z: everyone has a story to tell in a different way. Speaking messages of resilience, racial strife, and cultural criticism, hip hop's style, culture, and history offer a genre of rich expression that is relevant and accessible to many.

Hip Hop Therapy

At-promise youth and hip hop. At-promise youth of color have a clear relationship with hip hop music, and Travis Jr. and Bowman (2011) explored the continued influence hip hop has on its listeners. They examined 128 high school and college students' attitudes toward hip hop culture, risky health behaviors, identity, and the criminal justice system through a questionnaire, as well as the relationship between these variables. In their discussion, they argue that that hip hop has the power to sway individuals, whether it be as a means to empower or as a means to encourage risky behavior. Their results also indicated that hip hop can aid in helping individuals feel more connected to their community and in their relationship with hip hop: youth felt inspired to contribute positively to their communities. Ultimately, hip hop seemed to shape its listeners choices, values, and lifestyle, and deeply influences individuals who participate in the culture.

Hip hop not only influences the mindset of youth, it can also be an attainable escape for their circumstances. Baszile (2009) argues that through hip hop, at-promise youth are able to create a viable market for their new forms of entertainment and use that to negotiate their conditions. As such, rap not only becomes a political tool, but also a financial tool. For example, youth may aspire to be rappers and also have strategies for how to make rapping a viable career. Youth who present with complex health and social needs tend to come from neighborhoods that are low-income, crime ridden, and lacking governmental resources, much like the Bronx when modern hip hop began. Rap seems to appeal to youth both for the normalization of their day-to-day life, but also as means to achieve monetary success and escape the oppression they are surrounded with.

Specifically, the musical element of hip hop seems to be an unavoidable force amongst at-promise youth culture. Hip hop is not only integrated into the youth's everyday life, it is also an enjoyable outlet (Daykin et al., 2012; MacBride & Page, 2012). Youth are found to listen to four or more hours of music a day (Travis & Bowman, 2011). Many youth face systematic oppression listen to hip hop throughout the course of their day and many can be heard rapping lyrics under their breath (MacBride & Page, 2012). Needless to say, music and hip hop are part of youth culture. As Allen (2005), Ciardiello (2003), Daykin et al. (2012), and Travis and Bowman (2011) found, hip hop represents an integral part of a youth's identity by helping them understand and make sense of their reality.

Overall, since a youth's identity is constantly developing and shifting, youth have the ability to be impacted cognitively and behaviorally from therapy (Daykin et al., 2012). By using musical preferences of youth, successful interventions have the power to assist in coping and promoting resilience. Since hip hop music best represents the culture of youth, therapeutic

interventions that embody these elements – such as Hip Hop therapy and Rap therapy- have emerged as inclusive and innovative forms of therapy aimed at reaching at-promise youth who would otherwise be disengaged in traditional therapy.

What is rap therapy? At-promise youth may have different forms of expression other than simply talking about them, and in fact, these "other" forms of expression are likely primary modes of communication for youth. Youth at-promise can be typically difficult to engage in therapy due to the unfamiliarity of self-expression consistent with traditional psychotherapy approaches and to difficulty identifying feelings (Olsen-McBride & Page, 2012). In addition, at-promise youth may not have the desire to verbalize their emotions or experiences due to institutional mistrust, shame, difficulty expressing vulnerability, or even fear. Therefore, at-promise youth typically disengage from traditional therapy (Allen, 2005; deCarlo & Hockman 2003; Gann, 2010; MacBride & Page, 2012). Non-traditional forms of therapy, such as Rap therapy, have emerged to appeal to youth. Rap therapy uses the analysis and creation of rap lyrics as a means for emotional and psychological exploration. Rap therapy encourages reflective dialogue in which participants can engage in critical thinking and analyze the lyrics and messages in relation to themselves (Allen, 2005).

The rap genre encompasses many rap subgroups both with positive and questionable messages. Since clients have the ability to access and listen to all subgroups, practitioners should be informed of them and prepared to engage with all rap subgroups in a therapeutic fashion. Elligan (2000) identifies six rap subgroups: gangster rap, materialistic rap, political/ protest rap, positive rap, and spiritual rap. *Gansta rap* contains misogynistic, violent, and profane lyrics. *Materialistic rap* contains lyrics about money, wealth, women, and material goods. *Political rap* contains issues about politics, racism, sexism, equality, and one's ethnic

identity. *Positive rap* values of education, emphasizes responsibility, and ethnic pride. *Spiritual rap* blends traditional gospel music and rap (Elligan, 2000). Youth have the means to be exposed to all subgroups due to the accessibility of music through the radio, streaming websites, the television, cellular phones, and computers. Music is unavoidable, being played at malls or even by other cars on the streets. Therefore, rap therapy should not be limited to conscious or positive rap. Instead, rap therapy should be open to any subgenre and the therapist should use their clinical judgment to engage the adolescent in critical dialogue (deCarlo & Hockman, 2003).

Rap therapy provides a linear framework in which practitioners can utilize to inform their practice. According to Elligan (2000), there are five non-linear, fluid phases of rap therapy: (1) assessment, (2) alliance, (3) reframing, (4) role play, and (5) action and maintenance. Throughout these phases, rap therapy should be a dynamic process, where both the client and therapist are equally engaged (Elligan 2000; Gonzalez & Hayes, 2009). The *assessment stage* focuses on understanding the client's interest in rap and their relationship to it in order to assess if a client is appropriate for the treatment. The *alliance stage* focuses on establishing a strong, empathetic bond with the client, especially by deciphering the meaning/messages of rap lyrics. This phase is especially crucial in the beginning of treatment, but remains equally important to aid throughout the rest of the phases. The *reframing and restricting stage* is when the clinician attempts to broaden the client's perspective of rap and tries to help the client gain an appreciation for other forms of rap. The *role-play and reinforcement stage* includes written exercises, allowing the client to reinforce and model the rap he or she listens to, and aligning written content with client's treatment goals. Finally, the *action and maintenance stage* aims at turning the client's written goals into action through positive

reinforcement. Ultimately, therapeutic change is facilitated by modeling and reinforcement. By utilizing the framework, rap therapy can be successfully integrated as an effective treatment intervention.

Rap therapy, as an innovative treatment intervention, has the means to engage youth who present with complex health and social needs due to systemic oppression in therapy and promote therapeutic change. Through rap therapy, youth are able to find, formulate, or create their own voice, thus forming a reflective conscious identity (Elligan, 2000; Gonzalez & Hayes, 2009). Rap therapy allows youth to express themselves creatively through rap lyrics and engage in critical conversation about their life and/or personal beliefs. Associated outcomes further outline the benefit of rap therapy.

Outcomes associated with rap therapy. Although there is a lack of empirical studies examining rap therapy, case studies exemplify the positive outcomes of rap therapy. Elligan (2000) described a case where cognitive restructuring was possible for a client that would typically disengage from therapy. An African American male, whose father had died, was able to speak about the death of his father and appreciation of his mother through his narrative in his rap lyrics. Elligan argued that rap therapy is a culturally sensitive approach, in particular for African American males, who are significantly influenced by rap. Due to using the familiarity of rap, the client felt comfortable expressing himself through the creation of verses. Similarly, Suetani and Batterham (2015) found that rap lyrics, both mainstream and original, are useful as a basis for exploration of developmental history. Trauma that could not verbally expressed in traditional therapy was unveiled through writing individual rap lyrics.

Another study exemplifies the importance of non-traditional forms of therapy for engaging youth at-promise. Daykin et al. (2012) conducted a systematic review of various music

therapy modalities focused on service for youth at-promise across the world from the UK to

Canada to Australia to South Africa to the United States. The criteria for evaluating the music

therapy was that youth involved had to identify as high-risk, meaning youth who present

with complex health and social needs due to systemic oppression. Daykin et al. (2012) analyzed

four qualitative studies that focused on rap and/or hip hop therapy. Common outcomes included:

positive identity, collective conscious development, increased sense of purpose, higher self-

esteem and increased positive behavioral outcomes. Daykin (2012) also found that youth were

often disappointed when the therapies ended. Rap therapy seemed to have profound impacts on

the clients.

In light of the impact on youth, rap therapy can be a preferable form of treatment and can

aide in treatment engagement. Of the studies that were included for hip hop and rap therapy in

Daykin's systemic review, the study by de Carlo and Hockman (2003) directly analyzed Rap

therapy with at-promise adolescents. Participants consisted of 21 African American males, ages

13 to 15, who experience complex health and social needs due to systemic oppression. These

youth were separated into three groups: a group of seven violent offenders, a group of seven who

were on probation, and a randomized group of seven. All groups met twice weekly for six weeks

for rap therapy. After completing the therapy, all participants stated they preferred Rap therapy

over traditional, psychotherapy groups. In addition, all participants reported feeling excited

about past sessions. Specifically, 81% reported feeling excited about upcoming sessions, and 81%

reported feeling excited during sessions. Since they deal with complex systems that often do not

meet their needs, adolescent males tend to be reluctant to engage in therapy; this study

exemplifies how rap therapy can be assist in treatment engagement. Moreover, the participants

also reported that the rap therapy assisted in positive moral development, impulse control, desire

to avoid delinquent behavior, improved social relationships, anger management and better decision making strategies. Not only were participants of all three sample groups engaged, but they also developed prosocial skills. It is important to consider that rap lyrics that contain both positive and negative social messages which can be used to foster a critical lens around social, communal, familial, and institutional issues (de Carlo & Hockman, 2003).

What is hip hop therapy? Innovators in the field of Hip Hop Therapy (HHT) argue that HHT can be best described as the "synergy of rap music, bibliotherapy, and music therapy" (Tyson, 2002). As in rap therapy, hip hop therapy uses rap songs as a tool to analyze the social, cultural, and political content of the lyrics (Allen, 2005). However, HHT therapy emerged to be more inclusive of the hip hop culture in its entirety. HHT uses multiple elements of hip hop including, but not limited to, rap, beat making, graffiti drawing, breakdancing, history lessons on hip hop, or any a combination of the mentioned elements. HHT embodies the values, beliefs, and incorporates some or all creative forms of expression. HHT pays tribute to not only the creative outlets, but also the history of hip hop. All in all, HHT embodies the culture rather than simply focusing on the art form, such as rap therapy. Similar to Rap Therapy, music becomes a medium for clients to explore their experiences and internal emotions through critical analysis of the lyrics. Through the analysis of hip hop themes and rap song lyrics, the client can be engaged in deconstructing the negative themes while processing them and understanding the lyrics in relation to their worldview.

In an effort to provide a structure to HHT, Allen (2005) expanded Elligan's (2000) Rap Therapy phases to incorporate aspects of the hip hop culture. Similar to Rap Therapy, clinicians should explore if the client is suitable for HHT through an assessment by exploring the client's relationship to hip hop. The assessment stage should also explore the presenting problems and

establish goals for the HHT. Allen argued for the following structures to facilitate hip hop therapy groups: engaging in icebreaker activities, establishing hip hop group guidelines, gathering materials, establishing HHT learning objectives, setting goals, journal writing, engaging in discussions, utilizing interventions, and facilitating a closing round activity. *Icebreaker Activities* should be used to make participants feel more at ease and alleviate possible anxiety. The icebreaker should be fun and intentional. Allen provides the example of playing different hip hop songs and having participants guess the name of the song or appropriate rapper. The stated example should help spark curiosity for different artists. Since HHT aims at supporting youth who typically disengage from therapy, some hip hop group *guidelines* aim at including the participants in the therapeutic process and for clients to discuss their expectations. Allen provides the example of the "Five Mics" rule, where participants have "Mics" taken away if they talk out of turn. The participants with the most "Mics" should also be rewarded. The stated rule provides a fun method of ensuring participants are respectful of each other and also, rewarded for their efforts. *Materials gathered* should be individualized based on the assessment stage and the interest of the clients. The practitioner should gather appropriate music, lyrics, and any devices needed for the session. The practitioner should also establish *HHT learning objectives* so that participants can understand the expectations. The learning objectives should also be based on the numerous presenting concerns of the clients. *Goals* should be established collaboratively so that the client can have an understanding of their purpose and something to strive for. *Journal writing* should be implemented for clients to further explore difficult emotions or disclose things they may not feel comfortable verbalizing. Practitioners can either provide clients with prompts or allow for self-expression. The practitioners should collect the journals and use the entries to guide the direction of the following session   *Discussions* should be used to

analyze hip hop culture broadly, discuss hip hop's history, and to analyze lyrical content of songs. If practitioners invite participants to bring music they enjoy, the practitioner can also have a better understanding of the client's worldview, values, and belief system. However, the discussions alone can also become a window for similar observations. *Interventions* are where the practitioner tries to engage the client in critical dialogue through deconstructing maladaptive behaviors and helping the client formulate new, positive ones. In addition, the practitioner should support, validate, and encourage the client as they undergo their therapeutic process. A *closing round activity* should also be facilitated so clients can summarize their experiences and reflect on the sessions. Overall, Allen helped to create a flexible structure for HHT and introduced the importance of studying the history and recognizing the culture of HHT with participants. Since hip hop was founded in the 1960's, many youth may not know the foundation of hip hop and how it emerged as a tool for creating voice and assisting in multi-oppresional resistance. Although HHT seems nontraditional in its structuring compared to traditional talk therapy, HHT should also reflect traditional therapeutic procedures, such as discussing the client's responsibilities, roles, confidentiality, agreements, and expectations of therapy (Allen, 2005).

Alvarez (2006), with his colleague Rob Jackson, began a HHT group in 2006 when he noticed the lack of appealing interventions for youth who present with complex health and social needs due to systemic oppression. Alvarez conducted hip hop therapy groups that used "rap as a catalyst for growth" with "opportunities for creative expression and positive peer interaction". He led a six-week rap therapy group for five adolescents and examined the outcomes. Sessions included brief check-ins, facilitated writing activities where students were able to write rhymes, sharing of the rhymes, and constructive feedback amongst the group. Sessions varied in topic and activities were modeled by facilitators. Alvarez found that

participants viewed rap as a form of communication and creative expression and were engaged with the opportunities to do this.

HHT aids at enhancing the therapeutic alliance – or strengthens the client-therapist relationship – and helps repair institutional mistrust through empathetic engagement. Some authors argue that the therapeutic alliance in HHT, rather than the theoretical framework itself is more impactful on the client (Kobin & Tyson, 2006), which is true across the board with therapeutic interventions (Horvath, Del Re, Fluckiger, & Symonds, 2011). A strong therapeutic alliance improves the experience for the client, assists in the client's desire to engage in therapy, and improves the likelihood of positive outcomes (Horvath et al.). Gann (2010) found that the group facilitator was pivotal in helping youth engage, creating a safe space, and allowing for youth to be their true selves. If the therapist also identifies with the hip hop culture, clients may perceptive them as more relatable, thus enhancing the therapeutic alliance (Allen, 2005) and in turn, assisting in the client's willingness to partake in the therapy.

Treatment outcomes associated with HHT. HHT therapy has been found to have measurable impacts on clients. Similar to the deCarlo and Hockan study (2003), participants in the program and study conducted by Alvarez (2006) expressed that the HHT was enjoyable and were often excited to attend sessions. This was reflected in the attendance rate of all participants, none of which missed a sessions with the exception of one absence due to illness. In comparison, participants shared that traditional forms of therapy were unappealing. In addition to the success in treatment engagement, the group established a sense of kinship which likely contributed to their attendance. Youth were able to support and encourage each other through feedback facilitated in the group. Overall, participants stated that writing lyrics helped increase self-esteem and self-confidence.

HHT has also been able to foster a group environment that promotes communal healing and positive self-perception. Gann (2010) conducted a mixed methods study analyzing 13 participants through surveys and observations as they underwent Hip Hop activity group therapy at the organization Beats, Rhymes and Life (BRL). The activity groups were completely voluntary, and hip hop seemed to be the driving factor in the participant's consistent attendance. Gann (2010) stated that the most significant finding was that participants were found to have increased levels of positive self-perception and increased perceived social support. BRL seemed to create a sense of safety, especially for males, who were allowed to be vulnerable and discuss difficult emotions that would otherwise be discouraged in their community. At-promise male adolescents, and males in general, tend be pressured to maintain an emotionless front so that they can be depicted as strong. In addition, the group setting helped facilitate a shared sense of identity, a sense of belonging, and helped spark a sense of purpose. The group members were able to form positive relationships, as evident in their communication, non-verbal affection (hugging), and willingness to engage.

Although there is limited research that demonstrates the relationship between HHT and positive outcomes, the studies that have been completed suggest that since hip hop is the culture of youth, the strategic use of hip hop can be transformative in itself. Allen (2005), Gonzalez and Hayes (2009), and Suetani and Batterham (2015) use case examples of clients who were treated with HHT to illustrate this point. Across these studies, we see that all clients were initially reluctant to engage in treatment. After a few sessions, however, clients were able to disclose difficult traumas by using rap lyrics as a pathway. The clients, already immersed in hip hop culture and listening to rap on a daily basis, felt the comfort in the familiarity of the therapeutic intervention. For example, Suetani and Batterham (2015) describe how their teen client was able

to use rap as a familiar tool which she already used to express herself. The free association of lyric writing allowed for the teen to express hidden emotions. This allowed the teen to disclose her childhood trauma for the first time. Suetani and Batterham explain that HHT assisted in improving the client's mood, improved behavior at school, and also, encouraged self-improvement through employment. Collectively, these authors argued that HHT seemed to be most effective intervention for their clients due to the strong cultural impact. In addition, Allen (2005) argued that the constant positive reinforcement embedded in the group process of HHT helped the client feel comfortable and supported, facilitating the disclosure. MacBride and Page (2012) found that "guarded, difficult to engage, at-risk adolescents" were engaged, honest, and were able to explore their emotions through lyrical writing and analysis. By utilizing the familiarity of their culture, clients were able to engage. Instead of labeling at-promise youth as difficult to engage, HHT has proven that these youth will engage if the treatment modality aligns with their interest. In addition, HHT therapy aids in therapeutic change through channeling a familiar interest of the youth. Hip hop became a familiar tool in which youth were able to disguise themselves initially and eventually, use to self-disclose (Allen, 2005; Daykin et al., 2012; Gann, 2010; MacBride & Page, 2012). Tyson (2004) found that hip hop therapy allows for clients to use lyrics as a safe medium for discussing challenges or oppressions

HHT appears to support treatment engagement in a way that other interventions for these youth have failed.

In conclusion, these forms of therapy- Rap Therapy and HHT- incorporate a familiar tool that is already a part of youths' everyday life. HHT, using the familiarity of at-promise youth culture, assists in treatment engagement through a safe, comfortable, and familiar medium.

Beat, Rhymes and Life

Beats Rhymes and Life (BRL), a HHT provider, was co-founded in 2004 by Tomas

Alvarez III, a social worker, and Rob Jackson, a teaching artist. They developed this program in

response to the necessity for mental health services that engage and appeal to youth with

multiple stressors in the surrounding communities within Oakland, CA and the wider Bay

Area. These youth are often referred to as "high-risk," which Daykin (2015) defines as youth

who present complex health and social needs due to systemic oppression. Many of Oakland's

youth were and continue to be exposed to extremely high levels of poverty and multigenerational

violence, yet many in the community view it as commonplace. BRL's programs aim to engage

Black and Latino youth to address the intergenerational trauma that results from chronic poverty,

exposure to institutional and community violence, and underfunded education systems. BRL

uses the familiarity of hip hop to initially engage Black and Latino youth across programs and,

then, uses hip hop as a cultural framework to allow for creative expression and exploration of

inner emotions.

BRL offers various programs and interventions across levels, from individual to

community and, ultimately, systemic. Programs include a HHT program called "Therapeutic

Activity Groups" (TAGs); an "Academy" peer mentorship and career pipeline program; training

programs for practicing mental health providers; and various community nights including

performances. TAGs are the main clinical service that BRL provides, and TAGs are co-

facilitated by a mental health clinician, Hip Hop artist, and peer mentor. This peer mentor is a

member of the BRL Academy, which trains young adults between the ages of 18-26 who have

graduated from TAGs to practice in delivery of mental health treatment. TAGs have the capacity

to foster a positive environment through their curriculum by implementing constant leader

encouragement and peer encouragement – as exemplified by the Academy and modeling of its

members in leadership positions – likely helping participants feel comfortable and supported, facilitating the disclosure (Allen, 2005). In this way, BRL puts youth in the seat as experts of their own emotional lives and refrains from assuming that mental health providers know "best."

BRL's most influential and active clinical services are the TAGs. TAGs operate on three "tiers." Tier 1 is outreach, prevention, and assessment for for youth ages 12-18. These are designed to be delivered in a short period of time to larger groups of youth. Outreach activities include hip hop workshops, music studio lab sessions, Academy performances, and so on. These services are for youth not otherwise enrolled in support and mental health services. Thus, as prevention services, Tier 1 activities may be used to screen and refer youth to Tier 2 and Tier 3 services.

Tiers 2 and Tier 3 are BRL's HHT program, TAGs. This model has been reproduced in cities outside of the Bay Area. Both Tier 2 and Tier 3 TAGs meet as bi-weekly groups for generally 16 weeks with a maximum of ten students per group. Tier 2 TAGs focus on early intervention and assessment and are directed at the community, serving youth in locations such as schools, public libraries, park and recreation facilities, and youth centers. They provide programming to youth ages 12-18 who are not otherwise enrolled in mental health services. Conversely, Tier 3 TAGs are for youth already enrolled in mental health services. They focus on treatment, are held at mental health provider locations like foster care facilities and other treatment centers, and serve youth ages 12-24.

BRL and its TAGs aim to empower youth to "become healthy, contributing members of their communities" (BRL, 2016). TAGs do this through Allen's (2005) HHT lens with both 1) the practice of honoring hip hop to encourage participants to think critically about hip hop culture and lyrics and 2) Allen's structures (engaging in icebreaker activities, establishing hip

hop group guidelines, gathering materials, establishing HHT learning objectives, setting goals, journal writing, engaging in discussions, utilizing interventions, and facilitating a closing round activity).

The way this looks in the TAGs is a series of four modules that make up the program curriculum. The first is focused on an orientation to the group that seeks to foster youth resilience, social connections, and concrete supports. In relation to Allen's (2005) structures, this module is made up of icebreaker activities, establishing guidelines, and gathering materials. For example, one activity called "Whatcha Packing" encourages youth to examine their Resilience Tools, tools they have to bounce back from challenging experiences. This modules also begins with an introduction to the basics of hip hop music artistry. Next is the module on hip hop history, present, and future. This involves discussion about the political, historical, commercialized, and racial dimensions of hip hop; reactions to hip hop in dominant society; and what that means for the participants' identities by association with hip hop. This module aims at developing interest in service to community/society (stewardship) and ability to form and sustain caring/committed relationships. This module has the propensity to help youth identify cultural factors that led to hip hop's current conception and understand hip hop's roots in resilience.

In addition to honoring hip hop, TAGs lift up the voice of youth participants as they develop their talents as music artists. The following module supports youth getting deeper into musical artistry while also developing social connections, engage understanding of adolescent development, and develop concrete supports. Activities explores component of what might influence a youth's identity including their sense of private and public self. With the support of the BRL team, youth engage with the regular use of freestyle and composition in structured,

supportive activities aimed at developing a strong group bond. This provides a safe environment for self-reflection and enables artistic development, lending to authentic expression of self within hip hop culture and providing hope and ambition for young people; these factors are important in developing resiliency and self-esteem (Alvarez, 2011). Finally, the last module educates youth on socioeconomic influences that mold them and those in their environment; encourages them to explore current events that impact them on a individual, community, and worldly level; and ends with termination. This all encourages youth to build social connections and develop resilience by naming clients' individual strengths and, like other modules, aims toward the promotion of social connections that hip hop therapy can uniquely provide through a culturally congruent framework. As previously discussed, HHT has the ability to unify the group and create a connection amongst the members (Gann, 2010; MacBride & Page, 2012). Each TAG produces a final group album and performs selected songs from that album at our end of the term youth showcase…." (Beats, Rhymes and Life, 2016).

In all, BRL seeks to develop and enhance "critical thinking skills, prosocial expression, conflict resolution, and positive peer relationships" (Beats, Rhymes and Life, 2016) in each module by examining the relationship between music, politics, and identity with participants and encouraging them to incorporate it into their understanding of themselves. Research suggests that young people are strongly influenced by hip hop music and see it as strength because it provides them with a culture and a narrative that speaks to their personal experiences (Tyson, 2004; Gonzalez, 2009). HHT can reframe the social misconception about hip hop music and culture, instead teaching youth to use hip hop positively to process their feelings and experiences.

As the literature suggests, youth likely engage with and retain skills from BRL TAGs due to (1) the focus on hip hop – a culturally relevant form of expression that has ties to historical

narratives of oppression and liberation; (2) the ability to choose their levels of disclosure; and (3) the fact that this intervention is offered in a group setting. This demonstrates that TAGs potentially may foster skill-building and changes in perception in at-promise youth.

Psychological Resilience

Psychological resilience is generally regarded as the ability to bounce back from adversity, or difficult experiences. This process of getting through an event and coming out on the other side of it is widely used and defined in the literature. This section explores different characteristics of resilience and influences that generate resilience. It aims to align with the concepts and orientation otherwise set forth in this research: HHT, strengths-based, and person-in-environment. This section reviews the following: definitions of resilience and potentially traumatic events, traits of people who bounce back, indicators of resilience, and the ecological model of resilience (Ungar, 2008).

One question in defining resilience lies in the level of adversity faced. Masten and Powell (2003) view resilience as the phenomena by which individuals adapt in the face of significant adversity or risk. Masten (2001) adds that it is a person's experience of positive outcomes despite serious threats to adaptation or development. In this, the individual maintains a level of functioning before and after the event, with little change in functioning during the threatening event. Challenges to healthy development, or adversity, include highly disruptive events like the death of a close person or threat to one's life (Bonnano et al., 2007). This can also include extreme and everyday stress events that build up, like persistent community violence or experience of racism, creating chronic stress that can be detrimental to one's ability to go through life.

Most everyone experiences highly difficult situations, or trauma, at some point in their life. Research indicates that "roughly 50%–60% of the U.S. population is exposed to traumatic stress but only 5%–10% develop PTSD" (Ozer et al., 2003, as cited in Bonanno, 2004). When challenging or life-threatening event happens, it is called a potentially traumatic events (PTE). Bonnano (2004) and Shalev discuss how exposure to PTEs often results in some trauma symptoms like difficulty sleeping or intrusive memories of the event, though most people successfully navigate PTEs with little or no disruption in their normal ability to function (as cited in Bonnano, 2007). This recovery from the event is resilience. While some people develop trauma after PTEs, more resilient people do not. How people become resilient and what resilience entails to get past PTEs follows.

Positivity. An important aspect of resilience is the individual's ability to create generative experiences and positive emotions following a threatening event (Bonnano et al., 2007; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) demonstrate this with a series of three studies that found resilient individuals use positive emotion to effectively find meaning in negative circumstances, regulate emotion, and lessen aroused cardiovascular activity. In Study 1, researchers asked 35 undergraduate students enrolled in a college course to mentally prepare a speech on a to-be-determined topic. After preparation, participants were told to look into the video camera and speak clearly because the videotaped speech would be shown to peers for evaluation in another study – speeches were not actually shown to anyone else. Participants tooks a total of five psychological and cardiovascular tests, resulting in the following findings: positive emotion helped a fast heartbeat that had occurred after an negative emotional arousal slow down quicker, and in this vein, resilient people are characterized by high

positive emotionality and by the capacity to rebound from negative circumstances despite threats to the individual.

Study 2 similarly used a class of 57 undergraduate students enrolled in a college course who told to prepare for a speech. Yet in this group, participants were given a different set of instructions; one set it up as a *challenge*, the other as a *threat.* Then participants also took a set of five psychological and cardiovascular tests. Findings indicated that positive emotions and viewing something as a challenge rather than a threat contributes to psychological resilience. This is especially important because it provides evidence that people who are less resilient can be influenced to be more resilient by intervention, like an intervention that promotes positive appraisal styles. Study 3 used 192 undergraduate students enrolled in a college course who were asked to write short essays about the most important problem they were currently facing and, then, completed an emotion scale indicating emotion-related responses to the problem they faced. Using a real life challenge to explore resilience, results indicated that more resilient people did better in finding positive meaning when up against negative experiences.

Tugade and Fredrickson's (2004) three studies speak to the impact of using positive emotions and finding positive meaning in stressful encounters. In this, they show how more resilient people are able to use positivity and finding positive meaning to slow down emotional and cardiovascular arousal. Another study showed that in addition to positive emotion, laughter have been found to be indicators for resilience (Bonnano, 2008). These findings show that many people implicitly use positivity when coping with seriously threatening events.

While positivity supports resilience, these factors should not be confused with over-optimism: a part of resilience is that not only does the individual experience positive outcomes despite adversity, but that the individual recognizes the stressful situation's effects (Masten,

2001). The research indicates that positivity, finding positive meaning, and recognizing the effects of particularly stressful events indicate resilience. It also demonstrates the impact of the skill of emotional regulation as resilience tool.

      Hardiness. The protective factors of positivity and positive reframing are tied to another trait of resilience: hardiness. Kobasa discussed how part of hardiness is positivity and the ability to make positive meaning in life (as cited in Figueroa & Zocolla, 2015). Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn later added that this translates to the main components of hardiness: a commitment to finding meaningful life purpose, belief in one's own ability to effect surroundings and events, and belief that one can grow from experiences, be they positive or negative (as cited in Bonnano 2008). Literature links hardiness to resilience as demonstrated in Figueroa and Zoccola's (2015) study that sampled 277 lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults. The one-time online questionnaire assessed stigma consciousness, perceived discrimination from family and friends, and self-reported health. Results found psychological hardiness was directly associated with better self-reported mental and physical health; additionally, the more hardy people were, the more they were able to lessen the negative health effects associated with with awareness of the stigma they faced. This is similar to other research by Florian, Mikulincer, & Taubman that asserts that hardy people view potentially stressful situations as less so that others and are more confident and able to use coping skills, including social support, than less resilient persons (as cited in Bonnano, 2008). Hardiness, the traits of commitment, control, and challenge, are yet another individual track to outcomes of resilience.

      Internal locus of control. "Control" itself is a major indicator of resilience. Werner (1989) completed a thirty two year long longitudinal study that followed 698 children, in Kauai, Hawaii. Starting at birth, the study monitored numerous stressors on the children, such as family

and poverty, and found one-third of participants faced the most structural and systemic problems. These were the at-promise youth, and reactions within this cohort differed with regard to stress. Two-thirds of this group developed serious learning or behavior challenges by the age of ten and experienced other negative risk-associated outcomes later in life. The other third faced fewer challenges due to what Werner describes as "a remarkable degree of resilience in the face of life's adversities." Results indicated that both environmental factors (such as a stronger bond supportive caregiver, parent, teacher, or other mentor-like figure bond) and psychological factors impacted how the children responded to the environment. Sociability, intelligence, and communication skills impacted resiliency, as did an internal locus of control. This group believed that they affected their achievements, not their environments.

Self-esteem. Another indicator of resilience is simply self-esteem. Rutter (as cited in Werner, 1989) explored this at length and states, "Resilience… seems to involve several related elements. Firstly, a sense of self-esteem and self confidence; secondly, a belief in one's own self efficacy and ability to deal with change and adaptation; and thirdly, a repertoire of social problem solving approaches". A cross-sectional study on with 150 maltreated homeless youth demonstrated this mediating impact of self-esteem on resilience (Dang, 2014). Participants completed surveys revealing "youth with higher levels of social connectedness and self-esteem reported lower levels of psychological distress. When all predictor variables were controlled in the analysis, self-esteem remained significant for predicting better mental health."

This is similar to research that finds self-enhancement has been linked to resilience and improved self-esteem. Self-enhancers enhance ego by viewing situations as positive that could be viewed as negative. Bonanno, Rennicke, Dekel, & Rosen completed a study of survivors of the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center towers found that self-enhancers were

better adjusted and more socially active than others, as well as experienced lower stress (as cited in Bonnano, 2008). Like other elements of positive thinking, self-enhancement as a way to improve self-esteem and self-esteem in general seem to positively impact resilience.

       Person-in-environment. Much of the literature on psychological resilience focuses on a Western psychology perspective rooted in theory that centers individual as the agent in resilience, one who navigates toward their needs through personality structures. Yet the individual cannot be extracted from their environment. Werner's (1989) previously mentioned longitudinal study with children in Hawaii found that mentor-like and other adult figures positively impacted development of resilience. Ungar's (2008) ecological perspective definition of resilience supports this notion that supports outside the person impact resilience. Ungar's three-part definition of the ecological model of resilience:

> First, resilience is a capacity of individuals to navigate their way to resources that
>
> sustain well being; second, resilience is the capacity of the individual's physical
>
> and social ecologies to provide these resources; and third, resilience is the
>
> capacity of individuals and their families and communities to negotiate culturally
>
> meaningful ways for resources to be shared (2008).

By decentering individual characteristic-focused theories, Ungar's ecological model of resilience adds important aspects to the concept of one's ability to bounce back from adversity: that resources be available for persons to do so and this be done on the individual's own terms (Ungar, 2012). Vygotsky's (as cited in Ungar, 2012) scaffolding theory informs this person-in-environment perspective. It maintains that children's social environments inform skill-building and knowledge base. Brofenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory builds on this, determining that one's goodness of fit between self, family, and community predict positive

growth. In sum, as Garmezy found, the systems outside of oneself provide opportunities for positive adaptation/resilience (as cited in Rutter, 1987; Ungar, 2012).

One 10-year study by Bierman et al. notably supports the ecological theory of resilience by aiming to improve children's socioemotional functioning in four at-promise neighborhoods with various levels of intervention and support (as cited in Ungar, 2012). This study engaged 891 children from four at-promise neighborhoods with numerous interventions, including: parent parent behavior management training, child social cognitive skills training, reading support, home visiting, mentoring, and changes to classroom curriculum. It found that programming successfully prevented children's and adolescents' externalization of psychiatric disorders and antisocial behavior for students at highest risk. The combination of multiple targeted interventions in different individual, microsystems, and mesosystems of the youths' lives (parenting practices, quality of school climate, cognitive skills, etc.) informed this. This study exhibits that not solely motivation, but social and relational interventions improve individual resilience.

Multiple factors inform psychological resilience. Positivity, hardiness, and other indicators of resilience illustrate resilience as an ordinary function and one that happens on an individual-pathway level. Strengths-based perspectives informed by a social ecological interpretation of resilience maintain that the person is part of an environment and that culturally congruent and accessible interventions must be available. A social ecological interpretation of resilience gives heed to the need for not only direct individual support to build resilience on various levels – including school, vocational, and familial - but for public policy and community mental health programming as interventions to support healthier, more resilient persons.

Literature suggests that most people are already resilient. By providing culturally meaningful methods of resource-sharing, people can become more resilient; this demonstrates that TAGs have the capacity to promote resilience in youth participants.

Goals of Current Study

Intervention for at-promise youth serves to effect long-term positive change in themselves, their communities, and the culture at large. The ecological model of resilience and HHT demonstrate that youth should be offered programs that bolster their resilience in a culturally congruent fashion. As hip hop is "victory over the streets," resilience is inherent to hip hop. This research aims to analyze the relationship between TAG and participant resiliency. In this, we ask if TAGs, as a culturally congruent intervention, serve as an effective external, or social ecological, resilience-building indicator.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This study seeks to understand if and how BRL TAGs promote resilience in youth involved in the programming. Resilient people use personality characteristics and coping tools, as well as resources available to them, to get through challenging life events. This research study will find out how and if hip hop and narrative therapy as culturally relevant mental health treatment resources promote resilience in at-promise youth. This study adds to the growing, yet limited literature on culturally congruent programming for hip hop culture youth, a large group of people in need of mental health programming that speaks to their life experience and interests. The current study is a mixed method study that is comprised of analyzing a short pre-interview survey and a semi-structured interview. This study design facilitates and enhances understanding youth experience in TAG's by providing greater validity and limiting *researcher bias* that may arise from the interview portion of the study.

Sample

Of the seven participants interviewed, three identified as female (43%) and four identified as male (57%). Participants ranged in age between 12 and 20 years old, with a mean age of 16.4 years old and a standard deviation of 2.6 years. When asked how youth identify racially, three participants identified as mixed (one specifying Black and white and one specifying Cherokee and Black), two identified as Black, one identified as Mexican American, and one identified as white. All participants had done at least one TAG, but were in various levels of completion. One participant was currently in her first TAG, and had only been enrolled for one month, although she had been informally involved in the TAG run prior to her enrollment. Another youth had completed their first TAG at the time of this study. Five

participants had been in more than one TAG, ranging from two participants who had done two, one participants who had done three, one participant who had done five, and one participant who did not specify the number of TAGs in which they had been. All youth were in second or third tier TAGs currently or sometime in the past.

Materials

Pre-interview questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of X items that assessed XYZ with items rated on a 7-point likert scale with 1 (Very Untrue), 4 (Neutral), and 7 (Very True). Two subscales were identified within this survey, and these had strong internal reliability (see Table 1). The first subscale identified Internal/Psychological factors and had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.69. The second subscale identified External/Social Support factors and Cronbach's alpha was acceptable at 0.52.

Procedure

Informed consent or securing parental consent and participant assent (see Appendices A.1 – A.4) were secured with support from BRL staff and community partners, who provided travel support for youth who wanted to participate. Meetings occurred with participants in a private room at BRL headquarters in Oakland, CA and satellite BRL provider sites in Sacramento, CA and San Francisco, CA. After discussing consent, participants first completed the pre-interview questionnaire. Next, they engaged in an audio recorded, semi-structured interview with the researcher that lasted between 26 and 45 minutes. After the interview, participants were thanked for their time and provided a list of providers whom they may access if participants sought emotional support following participation in the study. All interviews took place with the primary researcher of this study, though one was completed by the researcher's advisor, Mamta Dadlani, Ph.D.

Both the pre-interview questionnaire and interview explored themes based on questions identified by the primary researcher (see Appendix B and Appendix C). These themes were broad in scope regarding resilience with regard to personality qualities of resilience (hardiness, self-enhancing, positivity) well as external social factors (social support). The design of this study leaves room for the researcher to explore themes not otherwise identified as factors related to resilience in at-promise youth, but that result from data.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe participants' current sense of resilience using the pre-interview survey. Next, the narrative reports were analyzed through deductive and inductive coding strategies. We sought to explore and determine variables pertinent to the goals of this study with consideration of the usefulness for the field of social work. The primary researcher in this study was the person who analyzed this data. Each interview was transcribed and evaluated individually. Themes arose from both content in the interviews and answers to the questionnaire evaluations.

Discussion and Limitations

This study is not generalizable and the number of youth does not meet saturation point for a qualitative study of this size. The study does give insight into hip hop therapy programming as a culturally congruent and appropriate method of practice. It adds to the wealth of literature regarding resilience and HHT. Limitations in this study center on the factor of youth involvement in this study. Youth with resources of time, transportation, and guardian consent were able to participate in this study.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The purpose of this study is to explore if TAG participants' resilience was positively impacted by participation in TAGs. It also seeks to demonstrate empirical evidence of BRL's effectiveness as a culturally congruent provider of mental health services. This section is a pilot of the final categories of an ongoing study based on these same questions.

This chapter documents findings from seven short pre-interview questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with TAG youth participants. Pre-interview questions were made up of likert-item questions, yielding quantitative data, and responses to questions from the semi-structured interview were qualitative in nature. During the interview, all participants were given a social ecological and individual definition of resilience as it pertained to this study. The findings divide resilience factors into two primary, though not mutually exclusive, categories: individual/psychological and external/social indicators of resilience. Various themes emerged within these two factors, which are elaborated upon in the following sections.

Findings demonstrate that all youth were positively impacted in some individual/psychological and external/social resilience indicators by participation in TAGs. Most youth reported enjoying writing rhymes in TAGs and said it was helpful. This is the same for feeling that they could share with someone in their TAG. Participants discussed improved perception of their future, self-esteem, and prosociality (less isolative). There were patterns that emerged regarding the overall culture of BRL and TAGs as an honest and nonjudgmental community, as well as one that instilled positive thinking in youth.

Quantitative Data

The questionnaire asked youth to rate nine likert scale style questions from one to seven, with 1 as "Very Untrue," 4 as "Neutral," and 7 as "Very True." These questions were then organized into two main themes of indicators of resilience: individual/psychological and external/social indicators of resilience. One outlier question was organized simply as "writing rhymes." The writing rhymes item did not fit into quantitative concepts, but is utilized in conjunction with a qualitative analysis finding. Instead of being constructed as helping to know oneself better, writing rhymes is explored as a culturally congruent practice and pointed to engagement as opposed to an internal experience of knowing oneself better.

The questions for each of the main themes, as well as the outlier question, follow in Table 1. Total scores for each factor could range from 4 to 28, with higher scores indicating great levels of resilience. With regard to individual/psychological indicators of resilience, youth scores ranged from 17 – 27 points with a mean of 24 points (SD=3.3). It is important to note that most scores fell between 24 and 27 points, and that there was one youth who scored much lower at 17 points. With regard to external/social indicators of resilience, youth scores ranged from 19 – 28 points with a mean of 22.6 points (SD=3.2).

Individual/Psychological Indicators of Resilience

Two main themes emerged from the interviews and questionnaire as individual/psychological resilience indicators: (1) confidence and self-esteem and (2) internal locus of control. Within these themes, specific factors and indicators provide a framework to explore resilience. These are protective factors, which are experienced within the self, such as personality traits, ways of thinking, and ways of regulating emotions. Youth had varied

responses in the questionnaire. These findings predict that most youth (six) in this study have fairly high levels of individual/psychological resilience indicators.

Confidence and self-esteem. Confidence and self-esteem were measured by what youth reported about this theme overall, as well several sub-themes: sharing with others and knowledge of self. All youth reported gaining confidence in some regard from participating in TAGs. For Jayden he said he is "more self-assured that he can work through [challenges]" after participating in a couple TAGs. Nicole stated she is "more outspoken" and Tyler, with the highest individual resilience quantitative score, said he is "more confident" from having engaged with BRL. Kyle, who scored lowest on the individual resilience score, said, "Before BRL, I didn't really know that I could be creative or artistic and now I kind of want to pursue a future in music." He is more confident in himself because he has gained a new skill, and similar to his individual resilience score, Kyle did not report other indications of improved self-esteem during the interview.

Improved self-esteem contrasts reports of lower self-esteem and isolation before participation in TAGs. Jayden and Elijah said that they were nervous or feared judgment before starting their TAG. Elijah continues to experience this while Jayden does not report this anymore. Three youth reported isolating before starting in the TAG. Two of these youth, both females, describe isolating less because of TAG participation. Findings are unclear if the male who reported isolating does so less or if his TAG had an impact on isolating less. Tyler, Vero, and Brittany described feeling more shy or insecure before starting TAGs; each of them report that they are less fearful of sharing in groups now.

Sharing with others. Sharing with others implies that one believes they feel they are worth being heard. This is another piece of self-esteem that youth identified. While many youth

said that they like to share in the TAG, three youth explicitly said that they are more "open" with others after engaging in their TAG. Kyle says that he was isolating even from his family when he joined the TAG. He illustrates how BRL helped him become more open when asked about how the TAG has affected him:

> I'm definitely more open. …I wouldn't have been able to do this interview last year. I was super isolated. And once I started BRL, I was super nervous, and after about a month or two, you know, I wasn't shy anymore. Once you start to sing and start performing around people, you can't really be super shy and super timid because you're not going to get anywhere. So you're going to have to be willing to open up. And I think that was one of the big things that BRL was so successful for me, because I was willing to open up and I really wanted to…. I think that's one of the reasons that it helped me the most was it because it helped me open up.

In addition to becoming more open to sharing with others, youth reported enjoying rapping and rhyming or otherwise engaging in the group process because of the impact they can have on others. This, too, implies self-worth when someone can have an impact on others. Three youth, incidentally all the oldest, described enjoying a sort of mentorship role by supporting others in the group. One youth looked forward to the showcase. In addition, Vero enjoyed sharing her music often with her family and Elijah rhymed about supporting others with his good basketball and football skills if they need help. These findings do not clearly indicate if the youths' TAGs caused an increase in desire to share themselves, though based on other confidence and self-esteem related items, there is a strong relationship between these variables.

Internal locus of control. The concept of internal locus of control is integral to resilience because it relates to one's ability to frame situations that could be potentially traumatic. The findings revealed two main themes within it which participants spoke a lot about: (1) emotional regulation and (2) positivity and perception.

Emotional regulation. All youth reported their TAG had an impact on their ability to influence their emotional regulation. One way this was evident was by way of lessons youth learned in their TAG. Five youth described learning lessons that impacted their ability to manage emotions. Tyler shared he used to cope by bottling his emotions. He stated that now he takes "a step back" and does "a lot of breathing" when he gets mad at teachers. With this, he considers repercussions and the impact on his upcoming graduation. He said he learned the ability to do all this from his TAGs. "BRL taught me how to manage my emotions" and "let go of my emotions." Brittany similarly considers repercussions to stay out of trouble and adds withdrawing and isolating as a way to do this. She said her TAG "helped me learn how to isolate myself from the problem if it's too much for me," reframing isolation as a positive, self-protective decision. Kyle reportedly learned to take the steps of taking a breather, relaxing, and doing something to change your disposition in a situation to cope with challenges situations from his TAG. Similarly, Elijah said, "I learned how to calm myself down and don't worry about what other people say," from his TAG.

Another way youth described improved emotional regulation was through the use of rhyming and writing. Three youth experienced this. "When I write, I let go," says Tyler. When he experiences something tragic he copes by putting "my tears in the song, I make the song cry." He says he does this other strong emotions like stress, a grudge, or sadness. This illustrates what other youth expressed, an ability to regulate emotions through rhyming and

writing. Vero said that writing rhymes, which she learned from TAGs, help her with emotional regulation by focusing on one topic. Kyle stated that he likes to write about what is going on or what is bothering him because this affects how he moves through challenges. He usually turned toward "yelling to people," when not shutting down, which makes him madder; writing "when I get it out there in verses… it alleviates that feeling." This shows that TAGs were helpful by improving some participants' emotional regulation, and youth demonstrated various ways of regulating emotions and giving voice to their experience.

     Positivity and perception. Youth discussed themes of positivity and perception in the ways they get through difficult situations. Both of these themes indicate a way of thinking that is guiding by the person's internal locus of control. Positivity and perception is a way of looking at things that can be learned and focusing on how people have control over the way they see things. Six youth said they use positive thinking and hopefulness as a way to get through challenges. Elijah, for example, said that he tries to be hopeful and prays something hard will get better when it is happening (prayer and religious orientation is also an indicator of resilience). Nicole uses positive self-talk, and Vero thinks of "happy things to get through challenges." While youth reported coming to BRL with this way of thinking, two youth reported a change in positive perception attributed to participation in TAGs. Tyler said, "Life is how you view it.… BRL made me more positive.… Life is hard, but there is no way you can't overcome it." Tyler's loved one recently passed away. Although this could be a potentially traumatic event (PTE), Tyler described his view on the loss of this loved one in a positive lens, stating "it was his time" to pass. There is a strong possibility that participation in the TAG helped Tyler with this PTE, so that the loss did not become traumatic.

Perception of one's future appeared as a theme in interviews as a theme related to positivity and perception. Future-orientated thinking points to one's positive perception that they care about themselves to think about the future. It implies that youth have chosen to think about their futures, relating to internal locus of control. All but one youth discussed hopes for their futures. They spoke broadly about desires for their futures, like Elijah who said, "What I want from myself is to grow up and be a young, gifted, smart man…." Nicole said that she "always wanted more for myself." When asked about her definition of resilience, she described it as a refusal "to let go of faith" in "something better, more. That there's nothing more for me out there." Nicole and Elijah believe they can impact on their futures through their thoughts and actions. These findings indicate that these six youth have hopes for their futures; however, they do not directly indicate if TAG participation was an influencing factor. Given that it came up in the context of an interview about their experience with BRL, this warrants further examination.

Three youth explicitly expressed a change in their perception of the future due to participating in a TAG. Jayden said, "Before BRL, I felt like my future was just gonna go down. Now I feel like my future is bright. It's what I make it." He and two other youth (three in total) shared a desire to follow-through with a future in music; based on other data about these youth, it would seem that participation in TAGs directly influenced this. This data provides information that TAGs can influence participants' perceptions of their future.

Hardiness encompasses aspects of future-oriented thinking with other individual/psychological resilience indicators, like confidence and self-esteem. Hardiness if the commitment to finding meaningful life purpose, belief in one's ability to affect their own surroundings and events, and a belief that one can grow from experiences. Four youth spoke to all these components, with *one or more elements* of hardiness having been affected by

participation in TAGs. No participants described all components of hardiness having been affected by participation in TAGs. Worth noting, these participants were four of the five oldest in this study. Jayden, whose outlook on the future changed for the positive because of participation in his TAG, shared that "as a young Black man," he wants to get through challenges. He also believes "I can do anything I put my mind to." This demonstrates, in part, a commitment to life purpose because, in the least, he wants to succeed as a young Black man. Black men in his community and the nation face numerous systemic barriers, and he implied a belief that he can grow from this challenge and that he believes that he can affect his surroundings because he can do anything he puts his mind to. Similarly, Nicole described how her TAG facilitates growing from difficult experiences:

> [Y]ou're having fun when you're rapping, you're having fun when you're performing, you're having fun when you're writing, you're having fun. You're not going to the mic and cry [sic]. You can't cry in rap. You're having fun and you're talking about difficult things. You're digging deep and you're speaking out what you've been through, but you're having fun. You're not sitting here crying like in an office talking about what you've been through, like 'I just want to be stronger.' And you are being stronger because when you are rapping, you're literally speaking as clearly as possible what you've been through: difficult, hurtful experiences, and it just makes you stronger.

In summary, all youth reported individual factors related to resilience were impacted by participation in TAGs. All youth spoke to the impact TAGs had on their confidence and self-esteem, as well as improved emotional regulation in some regard. Three participants showed changes in openness, enjoying a mentorship role in the TAG, and improved perception of their

future because of their TAG. Elements such as thinking about the future and hardiness, both

indicators of potential for resilience, have strong relationships to TAG participation. Results also

indicate that all youth have indicators of resilience in common with one another. Further,

quantitative results indicate that most youth scored fairly high on individual resilience items

which match results found from qualitative results: that all youth have a mix of

individual/psychological indicators of resilience.

External/Social Factors of Resilience

In addition to individual/psychological factors, this study questioned how and if TAGs

built resilience by providing a resource through a culturally congruent intervention. These

findings explore the use of TAGs as an effective external/social resilience-building

indicator. This fits into Ungar's (2002) social ecological model of resilience that (1) resources

are available to build resilience and (2) resources are shared in a culturally meaningful way. In

the case of TAGs, these two factors are linked as one. This section explores how TAGs, an

available resource, are culturally congruent and what they offer that build resilience.

Findings from the External/Social Items on the pre-interview questionnaire complement

these concepts. The External/Social Items explored if youth felt that mentors, friends, and other

community members were available as supports outside the person. For example, the question "I

have people who I know will be there for me when I need them" implies that communities are

organized so that youth have identified people who will support them when needed. With this,

the external or social environment must be such that people are available to support youth in

building individual/psychological resilience indicators. Two youth scored higher on

External/Social Items than Individual/Psychological Items; one of these youth scored lowest on

the Individual/Psychological Items. One youth, who described the impact of her family on her

life and functioning more than other participants, scored three points higher on the External/Social Items. In all, the majority (5) of participants scored between 19-23 points, one scored 25, and on scored 28. These findings indicate that participants have moderate to high levels of external/social support, or resilience factors. This section explores the TAGs' mediating impact on these levels of support.

Hip hop. An important component of TAGs is the use of hip hop as a change agent. Other research on HHT demonstrates that HHT is a culturally meaningful way for resources to be shared in the context of communities of at-promise youth. TAGs are executed with the needs of these specific youth participants in mind because it is a culturally congruent practice. This is demonstrated by how three youth described already liking writing rhymes before they came to BRL, and indicates that utilizing making hip hop music impacted youth engagement in this program. For example, the participant who has been in the program for one month said that they usually lose interest in group therapy. Since they enjoyed making music and poetry before starting their TAG, they did not lose interest in this group for that reason. They add that with one month of participation in the group, it has made a "huge impact."

This engagement happens because TAGs meet the needs of youth by providing intervention through a lens that youth already engage with: hip hop. One youth, Kyle, said that he was a "music fanatic" before coming to BRL and that "it's nice to be with other people that are as passionate about music as I am."   All youth reported enjoying writing rhymes in TAGs and pointed to it being helpful in some regard. Tyler said that his love for music started in early high school and that "BRL kind of rekindled the fire" for passion of writing lyrics. He adds that

writing is a way to express yourself and that it helps him. "It makes me feel like I have the weight off every time and it lifts me up."

Interventions and lessons. One intervention is the group aspect of TAGs. All youth endorsed that they liked the group element for reasons of learning from and sharing with others. Elijah, who identifies as having a hard time getting along with other people and isolating, said that his group helps him "get along with other people." Brittany, who also isolated before joining her TAG, endorsed improved communication and a having a support network from being in her TAG.

Three participants, including Brittany, attributed personal growth to specific lessons in the TAGs. Brittany described a PTE in her interview that she shared about in a TAG. She said that her TAG is a "big reason" she could discuss the traumatic loss without shutting down or breaking down. "I don't want to say [my TAG and its members] embraced me, but that's exactly what they did…. They gave me something to do instead of sitting at home and wallowing in my sadness…. They nursed me back to sanity a little bit." Brittany's TAG facilitated her resilience process through her major loss by providing social support and connection to peers and adults.

Culture of BRL and TAGs. All youth simply described in one way or another that "people are there for you," as illustrated by Brittany's statement that her TAG nursed her back to health. This is the encouraging community element that came through as a culture of BRL and TAGs. All participants identified being able to share with someone in their TAG: a teacher, participants, Academy member, or artist. Another element of the culture of BRL and TAGs is that many youth described an ability to use their voice. This is tied to the previous element of hip hop as an external/social factor, in that it gives voice to youth through the use of hip hop artistry and the culture of hip hop (and TAGs) that "accepts the stories of youth," as Brittany

said. Six youth described how TAGs allow youth to share their story honestly and without judgment. Elijah illustrated this when he said that in the group he gets to write how he feels. He continues that hip hop is "telling how you feel and what's going on in your life,… the ability to speak truth,… and get my point across." All youth on varying levels felt similarly, that their TAG allowed them to speak truth the way hip hop does.

In total, the culture of TAGs as an honest and nonjudgmental community, as well as the use of groups and hip hop, resonated positively with youth. These have potential to be indicators of resilience. Additionally, all youth reported (1) enjoying writing rhymes in TAGs and said it was helpful to them and (2) felt that they could share with someone in their TAG. These findings also indicate that TAGs are a culturally congruent practice.

On Reported PTEs

Youth reported various events that could be viewed as traumatic or potentially traumatic events. Some were considered in exploring indicators of resilience as mediated by TAG participation. For some, it was beyond the scope of this research to determine if events were traumatic or potentially traumatic. Furthermore, it could be retraumatizing to explore these events. Some traumatic or potentially traumatic events were inconclusive in their impact and were, thus, not given significant bearing in findings.

Summary

Major findings from seven interviews with seven participants on individual/psychological and external/social resilience indicators and the influence of TAG participation have been presented in this chapter which include confidence and self-esteem (including sharing with others) and internal locus of control (including emotional regulation, and positivity and perception) as individual/psychological factors of resilience and hip hop, TAG interventions and

lessons, and culture of BRL and TAGs as external/social factors. The following chapter contains

interpretations of those findings and offers strengths and limitations of this study. That next

chapter also looks forward by exploring implications for the field of social work, BRL, and

future research.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This chapter discusses findings in the context of the reviewed literature, implications for social work and BRL, strengths and limitations of this research, and recommendations for future research. This study explored if TAG participants' resilience was positively impacted by participation in TAGs. Resilience was conceptualized through individual/psychological and external/social factors that contain indicators of resilience, and findings suggest that participants' resilience was positively impacted by participation in TAGs. Although the scope of this research cannot confirm if youth are more resilient because they participated in TAGs, this study finds that various indicators of resilience (individual/psychological and external/social factors) were positively associated with TAGs. While individual/psychological and external/social factors were explored separately in the findings section, these factors are not mutually exclusive and this idea is expanded upon in this chapter.

Another purpose of this study was to establish empirical evidence of BRL's effectiveness as a culturally congruent provider of mental health services. Findings confirm that TAGs are a culturally congruent practice and, therefore, have the potential to impact resilience in youth. This provides support for previous research that HHT is proven to be effective in providing youth at-promise with culturally congruent therapy (Allen, 2005; Daykin et al., 2012; Gann, 2010; Gonzalez & Hayes, 2009; MacBride & Page, 2012; Suetani & Batterham, 2015).

This study is part of a larger program evaluation for Beats, Rhymes and Life, and this study in particular serves as a pilot of a larger project exploring TAGs as a resilience-builder. Since this phase of research included a small sample of seven (n = 7) participants, the

results are initial impressions, and this study will continue after this thesis is completed. Recommendations for future research are also provided.

Quantitative Findings

Quantitative findings determined levels of resilience based on self-report items in the Pre-Interview Questionnaire. The findings divide resilience factors into two primary categories: individual/psychological and external/social indicators of resilience. Total scores for each factor could range from 4 to 28. First, the Individual/Psychological Item indicated that youth had fairly high levels of individual/psychological resilience indicators with scores ranging from 17 – 27 points with a mean of 24 points (SD=3.3). Most scores fell between 24 and 27 points, and = there was one youth who scored much lower at 17 points. Secondly, the External/Social Item indicated that participants have, on average, moderate to high levels of external support as resilience factors. Youth scores ranged from 19 – 28 points with a mean of 22.6 points (SD=3.2). These findings served to strengthen evidence on levels of resilience indicated by reports of factors of resilience in interviews. Quantitative findings in this formate simply highlight an association between resilience and TAG membership. Future quantitative work could identify if TAG participation is associated with changes in resilience if surveys are administered before and after TAG engagement.

Qualitative findings

On their terms. It was not surprising that all youth reported enjoying writing rhymes in TAGs and said it was helpful to them. This is in line with Travis Jr. and Bowman's (2011) research that found that hip hop deeply influences individuals who participate in the culture in lifestyle, values, and choices. Findings also reflect existing research that at-promise youth typically disengage from traditional therapy (Allen, 2005; deCarlo & Hockman 2003; Gann,

2010; MacBride & Page, 2012) and that utilizing making hip hop music impacted youth engagement and retention in this program because of youth participants' existing relationship with hip hop (Gann, 2010). These findings reflect research by Garmezy, Bierman er al., and others in resilience that providing resources on the individual's own terms is highly effectual in influencing one's ability to bounce back from adversity (as cited in Rutter, 1987; as cited in Ungar, 2012; Ungar, 2010; Ungar 2010). These findings add to the canon of HHT research that HHT, a culturally congruent practice, is uniquely able to promote resilience in the lives of at-promise youth.

Culture of TAGs and BRL. Findings indicated youth attributed a change in positive perception to participation in TAGs, liked the group element, and saw BRL is a nonjudgmental environment. The encouraging group culture of TAGs support research that HHT has the ability to unify the group and create a connection amongst the members (Gann, 2010; MacBride & Page, 2012) and that intervention that promotes positive appraisal styles can improve resilience (Tugade & Frederickson, 2004). Elligan's (2000) Rap Therapy orientation utilizes a similar structure with its last stage of treatment, action and maintenance, which utilizes positive reinforcement. Findings indicate that this orientation may, too, promote resilience. In sum, the positive, nonjudgmental environment of TAGs and the impact of sharing with others promotes resilience.

Positivity. Themes of a change toward positive perception in findings were evident. This factor of resilience mirrors quantitative evidence that youth had high levels of individual/psychological resilience factors. By increasing positivity, these findings supports research which showed that individuals' abilities to create generative experiences and positive emotions following a threatening event influence resilience (Bonnano et al., 2007; Tugade &

Fredrickson, 2004). This has implications that HHT may promote resilience by encouraging positive perception. This does not mean that Rap and Hip Hop Therapy should be limited to conscious or positive rap; as research shows, therapy should be open to any type of rap and the therapist should use their clinical judgment to engage the adolescent in critical dialogue (deCarlo & Hockman, 2003).

Emotional regulation. Findings that all youth reported their TAG had an impact on their ability to influence their emotional regulation is also strongly indicative of TAGs as a factor of resilience as demonstrated by Tugade and Fredrickson's 2004 study. Youths' reports that emotional regulation improved by use of rhyming and writing is validated in Rap Therapy literature that demonstrates the important role that Rap Therapy plays in creating and analyzing rap lyrics as a means for emotional and psychological exploration (Elligan, 2000; Carlo & Hockman, 2003). Rap Therapy, and TAGs in particular, uniquely allow for improved emotional regulation, a factor of resilience.

Emotional wxpression. Findings indicate TAG participants are more "open" with others after engaging in their TAG, indicating a change in emotional expression. With this, we see that TAGs allow youth to share honestly and without judgment, and that all youth enjoy writing rhymes. This supports research that free association of lyric writing allowed for expression of hidden emotions in a teen therapy client who used rap as a way to express herself (Suetani & Batterham, 2015), as well as research showing HHT participants were allowed to be vulnerable and discuss difficult emotions that would otherwise be discouraged in their community (Gann, 2010). According to findings, this allows for social connectedness. It supports literature that "youth with higher levels of social connectedness and self-esteem reported lower levels of psychological distress," and link to higher levels of resilience (Dang, 2014). Thus, social

connectedness and nonjudgment when writing rhymes encourages emotional expression, promoting resilience.

Social support. Perhaps most important in the scope of this research were findings that nearly all youth described people in TAGs are "there for you." Youth liked the group element for reasons of learning from and sharing with others, and some enjoyed taking on a mentorship role. All participants identified being able to share with someone in their TAG (a teacher, participants, Academy member, or artist). These factors likely influenced findings that nearly half of youth participants are more open to sharing in groups now. These findings match evidence in HHT literature that shows by utilizing the familiarity of their culture and the group process, clients were able to engage, feel supported, and develop kinship (Allen, 2005). TAGs as a social and relational intervention improve individual resilience.

Social ecological theory of resilience mirrors this, showing that social and relational interventions improve individual resilience (Ungar, 2012). Literature in resilience by Bierman et al. shows that combination of multiple targeted interventions in different levels of youths' lives, like school, skillbuilding, and support, best build resilience (as cited in Ungar, 2012). Evidence that TAGs provided social support to program participants adds to the literature that HHT has the potential to provide effective social support and build resilience when best paired with other interventions.

Future Research

Findings indicate that youth have hopes for their futures and the current study aimed to understand if TAG participation was an influencing factor. Given that it came up in the context of an interview about their experience with BRL, this warrants further examination. Although the current research highlighted culturally congruent practice, overall culture of TAGs and BRL,

positivity, facilitating emotional regulation, facilitating emotional expression, and providing social supports as important components of how BRL TAGs likely promote resilience, the current study is an incomplete picture. According to the literature (Ungar, 2008), the capacity of individual to navigate to resources is an important skill; however, this did not emerge as a central theme. It ispossible that the questions developed did not accurately assess this feature of resilience or it may be that this ability to seek resources it is a developing skill in youth at this level of participation. This area requires further study. Interestingly, writing and expression through music as a way to understand oneself better did not fit into quantitative or qualitative concepts of what is defined as resilience. Yet across the board, youth indicated liking writing rhymes. This area may also be also be an area of future study as it could impact resilience-building or provide other information about knowledge of self as it relates to HHT.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Theory

Social work practice. These findings demonstrate the importance of meeting clients where they are and utilizing interventions that are culturally responsive. This work demonstrates the importance of developing and providing resources to improve hip-hop therapy interventions with increased knowledge of how it impacts resiliency. HHT is not widely used and its research is limited. The information from this study provides social workers and other mental health practitioners with insight into the effectiveness of providing at-promise youth with culturally congruent practice.

Social work theory. In a society that systematically problematizes youth who present with complex health and social needs due to systemic oppression, this person-in-environment informed research demonstrates that with culturally-congruent programming, youth engage in mental health treatment and demonstrate gaining resilience. These findings adds to the literature

in HHT and resilience, demonstrating that HHT can be highly effective in bolstering resilience factors for those who engage in HHT and furthering understanding of resilience as it relates to hip-hop therapy. This research points to the importance of community in building stronger individuals and it affirms a culturally congruent practice that just makes sense.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

        Strengths. This study was comprised of a diverse sample size in terms of race, ethnicity, age, and gender. Additionally, this operated on the premise that resources must be available for people to grow individual/psychological resilience factors/indicators. This is a strength of the study with the potential to benefit future programs and the community at large because it places the onus of resilience-building not on the individual, but on communities, governments, and social work practice to provide resources. Furthermore, this study is supporting the development of a long-term research project at BRL and served as a pilot project, which helped identify conceptual and procedural challenges in collecting data in the treatment environments where TAGs are delivered.

        Limitations. The small sample size in this research limits generalizability to all youth who enroll in BRL TAGs. Further, self-selection of participants is a methodological bias in the study design. Additionally, bias lies in that youth with resources of time, transportation, and guardian consent were able to participate in this study.

        This research excluded some factors of identity due to oversight and limitations in the scope of this research. Further exploration of how social identifiers affect youth could have major implications for such research. For example, the research did not questions about sexual orientation. Youth who are LGBTQ have higher rates of stress than their non-LGBTQ counterparts. Comparing gender experience would probably also be impactful. Questions about

perceived stress with regards to other intersecting identities, like race and gender, could strengthen this research.

The concept of resilience is also a big undertaking. It is challenging to determine how resilient someone is because resilience is a process. Resilience must be tested before and after a traumatic event or chronic stressful experience to best provide evidence of one's resilience. With this, it hard to isolate TAG as an influence in one's life. Finally, as addressed in the Introduction of this research, the writer's identity limits breadth of understanding of hip hop culture and nuances in cultural experience of participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study in serves as a pilot of a larger project exploring TAGs as a resilience-builder. Going forward with further analysis, research may seek more participants to increase generalizability. It may explore self-enhancement as indicator of resilience, as both hip hop culture and youth in this study reflect elements of self-enhancement. It may also explore the impact of Narrative Therapy as an intervention to explore its impact on meaning-making and externalizing, or making sense of what is not caused by you, as it relates to resilience. Youth spoke to elements of better knowing themselves after being in a TAG, so this is a starting point.

Conclusion

This research gives clues to levels of resilience by testing for indicators of resilience that youth have. For some youth, it does provide a process of resilience through which youth faced PTEs. It also explores the impact that TAGs have on youth in regards to these indicators to test if they have supported youth in building resilience.

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Appendix A.1

Child (6-13) Assent Form

SMITH COLLEGE

2015-2016 Child (6-13) Assent to Participate in a Research Study
The Rhythm of Resilience: A Hip Hop Therapy Study

Dear MC,

My name is Stephanie Clowdus and I am an adult student. I am doing a study to learn about your experience in your Beats Rhymes and Life (BRL) Therapeutic Activity Group (TAG).

I am asking you to help because I don't know very much about how people get through hard times in life and if TAGs help.

If you agree to be in my study, I will ask you questions about how you get through rough times that happen. I will also ask you questions about what you have learned in your TAG.

What I learn in this research may help other people understand how hip hop therapy helps.

It is possible you will feel scared, sad, or mad sharing feelings or thoughts about getting through hard times with a new person.
The questions I will ask are only about what you think or feel. There are no right or wrong answers because this is not a test.

You can ask questions about this study at any time.
You may ask to skip a question, or stop at any time.
You may ask to end the study at any time, and no one will be mad at you.

If you sign this paper, it means you have read/have been told about my study and you want to be in it. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you don't sign the paper, or if you change your mind later. Thank you!

Name of Participant (print): _____

Child's Signature   _____   Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature   _____   Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____   Date _____

If you have any questions or wish to withdraw assent, please contact me:
Stephanie Clowdus
MSW Candidate, 2016
Smith College School for Social Work

███████████

sclowdus@smith.edu

Child (14-17) Assent to Participate Form

SMITH COLLEGE

2015-2016 Child (14-17) Assent to Participate in a Research Study
The Rhythm of Resilience: A Hip Hop Therapy Study

Dear MC,

Introduction
- My name is Stephanie Clowdus and I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA.
- You are being asked to be in a research study of how TAG participants get through difficult situations in life.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you are a current or former (in the last two years) member of a TAG.
- I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study
- The purpose of the study is to learn about your experience in your Beats Rhymes and Life (BRL) Therapeutic Activity Group (TAG). I am asking you to help because I don't know very much about how people get through hard times in life and if TAGs help.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master's in social work degree.
- The data collected from my study will be used for my master's thesis, presentations, and possible publication.

Description of the Study Procedures
- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to meet with me for one time for a total of 70 minutes at most. In it, I will mostly ask questions about how you experience difficult situations.
- You will first fill out a very short survey that should take about 10 minutes, then I will interview you on your experience in your TAG for 45 minutes to an hour.
- This will happen at the BRL headquarters or the place where you do your TAG.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study
- The study has the following risks. Since I will ask about how you have gotten through difficult life situations, it is possible you will feel uncomfortable telling me about yourself in the interview.
- This is unlikely, but if you feel nervous or upset with anything you shared with me, you will have the support of BRL if you are currently in a TAG and I will give you to access emotional support.

Benefits of Being in the Study
- This study will let you think about and share how your TAG has affected you.
- Your participation may also support the social work and therapy world. Hip hop therapy is not widely used. The information from this study can help people better understand how it works.
- This study may help BRL continue to get its name out and get financial support.

Confidentiality
- Your participation will be kept confidential. Only BRL staff and I will know about your decision to participate in the study. We will meet privately at BRL headquarters or the location of your TAG. Your name and information will not be used when sharing the study findings. All electronically stored data, including audio recordings of interviews, will be password protected during the storage period. In addition, records of this study will be kept strictly confidential.
- All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. I will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Payments
- You may receive the following gift: an Amazon gift card worth $20. Two participants in the study will be randomly selected to win this prize. Should you win, this payment will occur with a one-time gift card to Amazon.com.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw
- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely at any point during the study. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email or phone by April 1, 2016. After that date, your information will be part of my thesis.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns
- You have the right to ask questions and report concerns. You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Stephanie Clowdus. My contact information is at the end of this document. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you

may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent
- *Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep.*

Name of Participant (print): _____

Child's Signature _____   Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature   _____   Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____   Date _____

Please select and sign one of the following:

☐ **I agree to be audio taped for this interview:**

Name of Participant (print): _____

Child's Signature _____   Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature   _____   Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____   Date _____

☐ **I agree to be interviewed, but I <u>do not</u> want the interview to be taped:**

Name of Participant (print): _____

Child's Signature _____   Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature   _____   Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____   Date _____

Thank you!

If you have any questions or wish to withdraw assent, please contact:
Stephanie Clowdus
MSW Candidate, 2016
Smith College School for Social Work

████████████

sclowdus@smith.edu

Consent to Participate Form

SMITH COLLEGE

2015-2016 Consent to Participate in a Research Study:
The Rhythm of Resilience: A Hip Hop Therapy Study

Dear MC,

Introduction
- My name is Stephanie Clowdus and I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA. You are being asked to be in a research study of how TAG participants get through difficult situations in life.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you are a current or former (in the last two years) member of a TAG.
- I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of the Study
- The purpose of the study is to learn about your experience in your Beats Rhymes and Life (BRL) Therapeutic Activity Group (TAG). I am asking you to help because I don't know very much about how people get through hard times in life and if TAGs help.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master's in social work degree.
- The data collected from my study will be used for my master's thesis, presentations, and possible publication.

Description of the Study Procedures
- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to meet with me for one time for a total of 70 minutes at most. In it, I will mostly ask questions about how you experience difficult situations.
- You will first fill out a very short survey that should take about 10 minutes, then I will interview you on your experience in your TAG for 45 minutes to an hour.
- This will happen at the BRL headquarters or the place where you do your TAG.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study
- The study has the following risks. Since I will ask about how you have gotten through difficult life situations, it is possible you will feel uncomfortable telling me about yourself in the interview.
- This is unlikely, but if you feel nervous or upset with anything you shared with me, you will have the support of BRL if you are currently in a TAG and I will give you to access emotional support (a referral list to community resources for free or low-cost therapy). You will receive this list of community resources before your interview.

Benefits of Being in the Study
- This study will let you think about and share how your TAG has affected you.
- Your participation may also support the social work and therapy world. Hip hop therapy is not widely used. The information from this study can help people better understand how it works.
- This study may help BRL continue to get its name out and get financial support.

Confidentiality
- Your participation will be kept confidential. Only BRL staff and I will know about your decision to participate in the study. We will meet privately at BRL headquarters or the location of your TAG. Your name and information will not be used when sharing the study findings. All electronically stored data, including audio recordings of interviews, will be password protected during the storage period. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. In addition, records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. I will not include any information in any report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you.
- All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. I will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Payments
- You may receive the following gift: an Amazon gift card worth $20. Two participants in the study will be randomly selected to win this prize. Should you win, this payment will occur with a one-time gift card to Amazon.com.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw
- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely at any point during the study. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email or phone by April 1, 2016. After that date, your information will be part of my thesis.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns
- You have the right to ask questions and report concerns. You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Stephanie Clowdus. My contact information is at the end of this document. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you

may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent
- *Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep. You will also be given a list of referrals and guidance on how to access them if you feel you need to talk to someone about emotional issues related to your participation in this study.*

Name of Participant (print): _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Please select and sign one of the following:

☐ **I agree to be audio taped for this interview:**

Name of Participant (print): _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

☐ **I agree to be interviewed, but I <u>do not</u> want the interview to be taped:**

Name of Participant (print): _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Thank you!

If you have any questions or wish to withdraw consent, please contact:
Stephanie Clowdus
MSW Candidate, 2016
Smith College School for Social Work
███████████
sclowdus@smith.edu

Parental-Guardian Consent Form

SMITH COLLEGE

2015-2016 Parental-Guardian Consent to Participate in a Research Study:
The Rhythm of Resilience: A Hip Hop Therapy Study

Dear Parent or Legal Guardian,

Introduction
- My name is Stephanie Clowdus and I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA.
- Your child/child you are guardian for (referred to as 'your child' in this form) is being asked to be in a research study of how TAG participants get through difficult situations in life.
- Your child was selected as a possible participant because he or she is a current or former (in the last two years) member of a TAG.
- I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before allowing your child to be in this study.

Purpose of Study
- The purpose of the study is to learn about your experience in your child's experience in his or her Beats Rhymes and Life (BRL) Therapeutic Activity Group (TAG). I am asking your child to help because I don't know very much about how people get through hard times in life and if TAGs help.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master's in social work degree.
- The data collected from my study will be used for my master's thesis, presentations, and possible publication.

Description of the Study Procedures
- If you decide to allow your child to be in this study, your child will be asked to meet with me one time for a total of 70 minutes at most. In it, I will mostly ask questions about how your child experiences difficult situations.
- Your child will first fill out a very short survey that should take about 10 minutes, then I will interview your child on his or her experience in child's TAG for 45 minutes to an hour.
- This will happen at the BRL headquarters or the place where your child do his or her TAG.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- The study has the following risks. Since I will ask about how your child has gotten through difficult life situations, it is possible your child will feel uncomfortable telling me about himself or herself in the interview.
- This is unlikely, but if your child feels nervous or upset with anything he or she shared with me, your child will have the support of BRL if you are currently in a TAG and I will give you to access emotional support (a referral list to community resources for free or low-cost therapy). Your child will receive this list of community resources before your child's interview.

Benefits of Being in the Study
- This study will let your child think about and share how his or her TAG has affected your child.
- Your child's participation may also support the social work and therapy world. Hip hop therapy is not widely used. The information from this study can help people better understand how it works.
- This study may help BRL continue to get its name out and get financial support.

Confidentiality
- Your child's participation will be kept confidential. Only BRL staff and I will know about your child's decision to participate in the study. Your child and I will meet privately at BRL headquarters or the location of his or her TAG. Your child's name and information will not be used when sharing the study findings. All electronically stored data, including audio recordings of interviews, will be password protected during the storage period. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. In addition, records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. I will not include any information in any report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you.
- All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. I will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify your child.

Payments
- Your child may receive the following gift: an Amazon gift card worth $20. Two participants in the study will be randomly selected to win this prize. Should your child win, this payment will occur with a one-time gift card to Amazon.com.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw
- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you and your child. You are welcome to observe the interview if you wish. Your child may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College. Your/your child's decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you/your child are otherwise entitled. You/your child have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely at any point up to a specified date (see date below) during the study. If you/your child

choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of the decision to withdraw by email or phone by April 1, 2016. After that date, the information your child provided will be part of the thesis, dissertation or final report.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns
- You have the right to ask questions and report concerns. You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Stephanie Clowdus. My contact information is at the end of this document. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your child's rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your child's participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent
- ***Your signature below indicates that you have decided to allow your child to participate as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep. You will also be given a list of referrals and guidance on how to access them if you feel your child needs to talk to someone about feelings that come up during participation in this study.***

Name of Parent/Guardian (print): _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature_____   Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____   Date _____

Please select and sign one of the following:

☐ **I agree to allow my child to be audio taped for this interview:**

Name of Parent/Guardian (print): _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature_____   Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____   Date _____

☐ **I agree to be interviewed, but I <u>do not</u> want my child's interview to be taped:**

Name of Parent/Guardian (print): _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature_____   Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____   Date _____

Thank you!

If you have any questions or wish to withdraw consent, please contact:
Stephanie Clowdus
MSW Candidate, 2016
Smith College School for Social Work
▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

sclowdus@smith.edu

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Individual/Psychological Indicators of Resilience
I feel like my ideas, feelings, and thoughts matter.
I feel hopeful about my future.
I can get through difficult times.
I feel stronger after I deal with a difficult situation.
External/Social Indicators of Resilience
I feel like there are adults (like counselors, teachers, therapists, mentors) in my life who I can ask for help and/or support, when I need it.
I have people who I know will be there for me when I need them.
I usually keep to myself when I'm having hard feelings. (reverse score item)
I feel comfortable asking friends and family for help and encouragement.
Writing Rhymes Item
Writing rhymes and/or telling my story helps me understand myself better.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Introduction:

  I'm going to ask you lots of questions. Some questions might speak to certain experiences different people have. Not everything I ask about will be true for you. If it isn't, that's ok! I encourage your openness and honesty in answering the following questions. Some subjects could come up that you may feel uncomfortable sharing. Please only share as much as you are comfortable. **You can also skip any question.** I will do my best to check in with you as we go along.

Questions:

1. Which TAG were you in?

   1. Could please share with me two parts you liked most about it?

2. How do you personally define resilience? We can define it together if you don't know.

   1. **(Researcher will offer basic concepts after receiving input.)**

   2. With that definition, what does resilience mean to you in your daily life?

3. What is it like when you experience something challenging?

   1. For example, are you calm, do you get easily frustrated, do you withdraw?

4. What thoughts or feelings help you get through difficult situations?

5.   TAGs sometimes help people learn new skills that make getting through tough situations easier. Has being in a TAG affected what it's like for you when you experience a challenge? How so?

   1. Can you tell me about a time when you experienced something challenging and you reacted to it based on something you learned in the TAGS?

6.   Similarly, TAGs can support people by making connections that help them handle difficult situations. Has that been your experience? If so, how?

7.   Writing rhymes is all about telling stories. How has telling your story impacted how you move through challenging situations? What parts of telling your story make handling new challenges easier? Harder?

   1. Can you share with me a one to two skills or lessons from the TAGS that have helped with this?

8.   Sometimes people feel that their TAG helps them grow from difficult experiences and sometimes they don't. What do you think about that?

1. Do you feel that the TAG is helping you learn how to grow from difficult experiences? How so?

9. New experiences, like the TAG, can change how we feel about ourselves and our futures. Has your TAG changed your feelings about your future? If so, how?

Appendix D

Smith IRB Approval Letter

SMITH COLLEGE

School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950   F (413) 585-7994

February 23, 2016

Stephanie Clowdus

Dear Stephanie,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.

Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Mamta Dadlani, Research Advisor

BRL Approval for Secondary Data

BEATS RHYMES AND LIFE, INC.
450 Santa Clara Avenue
Oakland, CA 94610
www.brl-inc.org | @hiphoptherapy

T (510) 469-3445
F (510) 479-3195

January 15, 2016

Dear Members of the Smith School for Social Work HSR Committee,

This letter is to certify that Stephanie Clowdus and Dr. Mamta Dadlani have been given permission to access, analyze, and disseminate data collected by Beats, Rhymes, and Life, Inc for secondary analysis. They will have access to data collected for all program years including the 2015-2016 programs. This data includes survey responses and open-ended, write-in questions. Dissemination includes sharing the findings of this research at Smith School for Social Work events and in partnership with BRL at conferences and in publication.

Please let me know if I can provide you with any additional information.

Best regards,

Rob Jackson
Founder & Executive Director
Beats Rhymes and Life, Inc.

Appendix F

BRL Consent Packet

BEATS RHYMES AND LIFE

CONTACTING YOUTH

Situations may arise in which it is necessary for Beats Rhymes and Life Staff to contact youth participants via phone or email. Beats Rhymes and Life staff may contact youth with issues pertaining to the group, a group activity, the organization, evaluation measures, and ongoing research at BRL. Please provide the youth participants contact information below and specify whether or not it is acceptable to contact youth and/or leave a message.

Contact Information	**Contact/Leave Message**

Phone: _____ ☐Yes ☐No

Cellphone: _____ ☐Yes ☐No

Email: _____ ☐Yes ☐No

I hereby consent to my child's participation in the Beats Rhymes and Life (BRL) Youth Development/ Therapeutic Activity Program. I give my child permission to participate in all Beats Rhymes and Life related activities and projects.

I hereby release Beats Rhymes and Life (including any BRL affiliates) from all liability arising out of or in connection with the above-described program including all activities and projects.

By signing below I recognize that I have read and understood the all of the conditions above and agree to them in their entirety.

Name of youth participant: _____
Signature of youth participant: _____ Date: _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____
Signature of parent/guardian: _____ Date: _____

YOUTH RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CONSENT FORM

I hereby consent to my child's participation in the Beats Rhymes and Life (BRL) Youth Development/ Therapeutic Activity Program self-evaluation and program evaluation. I understand that my youth will be asked to complete surveys and respond to questions in which they will be asked to evaluate their attitudes, opinions, views, and thoughts about themselves, their community, and their experience in BRL.

I understand that the evaluations my youth participates in will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be made public. I understand that confidential data collected from the evaluations may be used at the discretion of the organization for education and training purposes, presentations at professional conferences, publication in professional or academic journals, grants and fundraising, and any other related needs.

I understand that I have the right to revoke my consent at any time with no consequences for me, my youth, or our participation in the program. If I have concerns about youth self-evaluation and how it will be used, I can contact Rob Jackson at (510) 469 – 3445.

I hereby release Beats Rhymes and Life (including any BRL affiliates) from all liability arising out of or in connection with the above-described activity.

By signing below I recognize that I have read and understood the condition above and agree to them in their entirety.

Name of youth participant: _____

Signature of youth participant: _____ Date: _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____ Date: _____

Appendix G

Recruitment Email

To: BRL Staff, MC's
From: Stephanie Clowdus, Smith College School for Social Work
Re: (Maaaad) TAGs Resilience Study Seeks Participants: Win an Amazon Gift Card!

Hello there,

Seeking TAG youth participant MC's for a one-time interview! My name is Stephanie Clowdus and I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA. I am studying resilience. I'm curious how TAGs use hip hop to teach young people skills and build connections that help them get through difficult experiences in life. This is known as resilience: the ability to bounce back from challenging life events. The data collected from my study will be used for my master's thesis, presentations, and possible publication.

Study participants will be asked to meet with me for a one-time interview for a total of 70 minutes at most. There are two parts: a very short survey (about 10 minutes), then an interview 45 minutes to an hour. This will happen at the BRL headquarters or the place where you do your TAG. This unique opportunity will likely bring BRL recognition and possible financial support. Participants will not receive any financial payment for participation. **MC's under 18 require parental permission. Two randomly selected participants will win Amazon.com gift cards.**

If you, your child, or student is interested in joining this study, please call or email me.
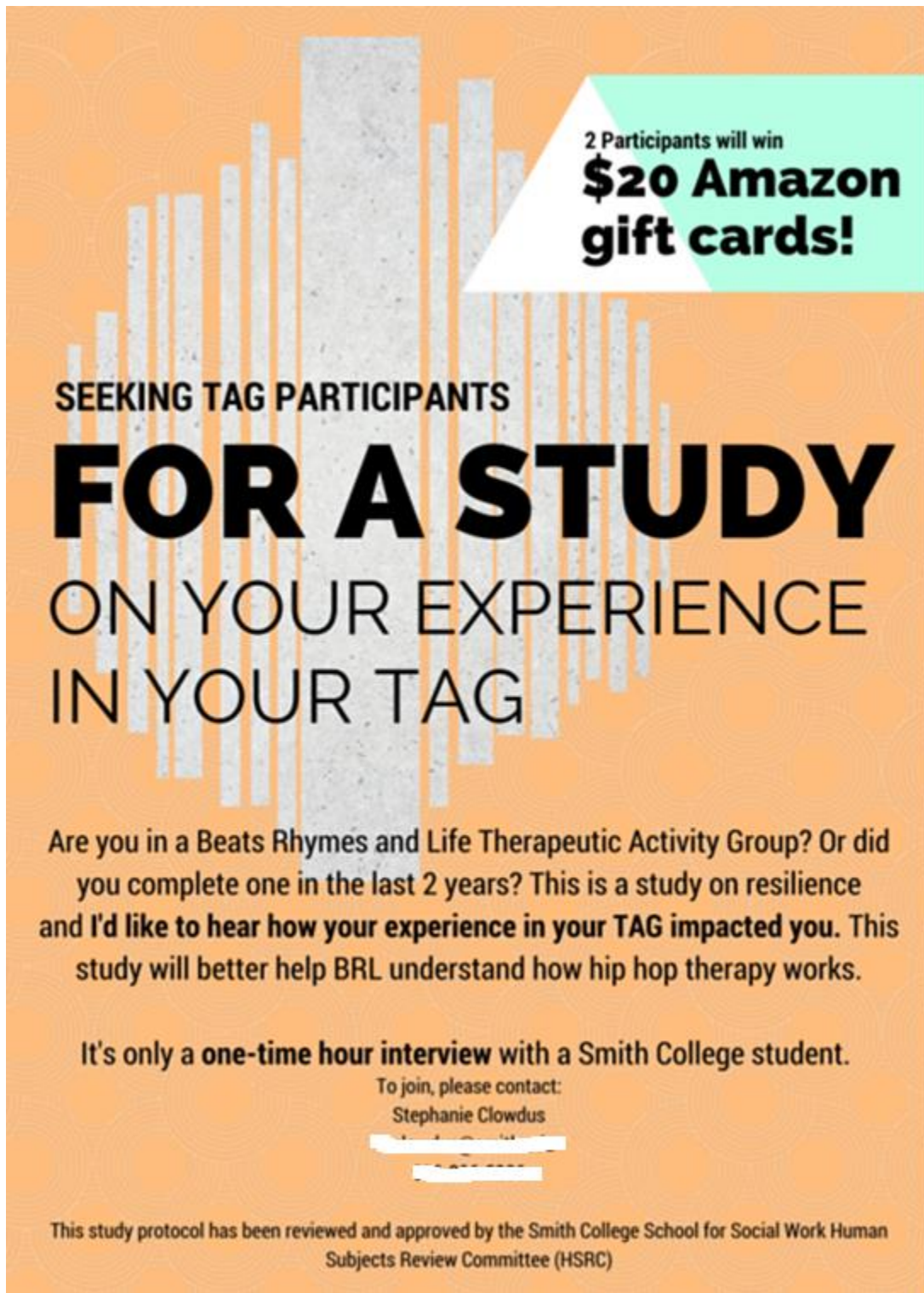
Thank you in advance for your support,

Stephanie Clowdus
MSW Candidate, 2016
Smith College School for Social Work
xxx.xxx.xxxx
xxxxxxxxxxxxx

(This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC).)