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Tatiana Rocio Padilla  
From Spitting Rhymes to Inspiring  
Minds: The Role of Hip Hop  
Therapy in Treatment Engagement  
amongst Latinx and Black Youth

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to explore the implications of utilizing an innovative cultural framework to engage at-risk youth in clinical group work. This researcher collaborated with Beats, Rhymes and Life, an Oakland based organization that has effectively engaged youth at-risk through Therapeutic Activity Groups (TAGs). Treatment effectiveness is evident in the continued requests from mental health providers in community mental health clinics to partner with BRL's TAG program, youth self-referrals, and youth requests to repeat the program. Based on this, the current study aims to understand what aspects of the TAGs promote treatment engagement- indicated by re-enrollment- for youth that are exposed to high levels of systemic and institutional racism, which can affect their ability to persevere in their communities.

Nine participants, "repeaters" – youth who re-enroll in the program- were interviewed around the San Francisco Bay Area regarding their perspective as to what made the program so appealing. Repeaters were asked to provide insight about three aspects of the program: (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.

Major findings of the study revealed the importance of hip hop in the lives of the participants, the utility of engaging youth through creative forms of expression, and the influence of group format in therapy.

**FROM SPITTING RHYMES TO INSPIRING MINDS:  
THE ROLE OF HIP HOP THERAPY IN TREATMENT ENGAGEMENT AMONGST  
LATINX AND BLACK YOUTH**

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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2016

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*Quiero dedicar esta tesis a mi familia, especialmente a mi abuelita, por todos sus sacrificios y apoyo.*

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Need for Youth Centered Interventions**

There is a necessity in the field of Social Work to find innovative and culturally responsive ways to engage Latinx and Black youth in treatment due to the significant underutilization of mental health services in these youth communities. Latinx and Black youth growing up in systemically oppressed communities that are made up of predominantly of low-income families are often termed “marginalized” or “high-risk,” which Daykin (2015) defines as youth who present complex health and social needs due to systemic oppression. They are considered marginalized since needs of the community to escape the oppression are often ignored by those in power in society. Latinx and black youth often lack the necessary resources due to systemic and institutional racism to persevere in their communities. However, the terms “youth at risk”, which seems to imply that the youth are close to some sort of failure, and “marginalized youth”, which creates a distinct isolation, further perpetuate racism. Since language holds immense power in constructing frameworks with which we use to construct reality, the first problem lies in the language used to identify such youth. Trailblazing youth-centered organizations have shifted the label to call Latinx and Black youth that undergo such challenges, “youth at-promise” (BRL, 2016). “Youth at-Promise” embodies a sense of empowerment, hope, power, and resilience. Therefore, for the purpose of consistency, “youth at-promise” will be used throughout the paper to describe Latinx and Black youth that often lack the necessary resources due to systemic and institutional racism to persevere in their communities.

As Kazdin and Blase (2011) explain, Latinx and Black populations are less likely to seek treatment after a mental health diagnosis in comparison to white populations, which has led to a wide ethnic disparity in treatment engagement. Latinx and Black populations seem to disengage for numerous reasons including issues related to access, stigma, and cost. As there are specialized techniques for engaging youth in comparison to adults, Huey and Jones (2013) elaborate on Kazdin and Blase's finding and point to the necessity for specific treatment engagement for Latinx and Black youth. Engaging such subpopulation is necessary so Latinx and Black youth can be receptive to receiving treatment for mental health concerns.

Some argue that having culturally similar clinicians can help bridge some of the gap in treatment engagement (Kazdin & Blase, 2011). However, in comparison to the growing population of youth at-risk experiencing psychological and structural challenges as well as growing awareness about the complexity of marginalization, there are not enough clinicians to tailor to this kind of demand. Therefore, nontraditional, culturally responsive interventions are necessary to promote treatment engagement.

Huey and Jones (2013) found that culturally responsive treatments are more effective than not treating or standard clinical services. However, there is a lack of research relating culturally sensitive interventions to treatment efficacy. The current study aims to examine the Hip Hop Therapy provided by Beats, Rhymes and Life as an innovative, effective and appealing culturally responsive intervention that excels at treatment engagement. Given the lack of empirical support for these types of interventions, the current study aims to begin to provide evidence to support the continued use of HHT as a treatment standard.

## **History of Hip Hop**

While many understand hip hop as a musical art form, hip hop has transcended this popular misconception and encompasses the rich dynamic experience of the black community. During the 1960's, an expressway train was built from New York City to the Bronx. Due to the construction, many White middle class families moved out of the Bronx and into New York City and made the Bronx the home of Latinx and Black communities. Dalton Higgins (2011) speaks to the birthplace of Hip Hop stating that the culture was born in the South Bronx when unemployment for Latinx and Black youth were at a 60-80% (p.16). Latinxs and blacks came together to create hip hop as a means to express discontent, issues of race and racism, social justice, but much more importantly, a way to develop and foster a community within one another. The combination of the stressors for African Americans 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).

Hip hop can be best summarized through the various elements that comprise the culture. KRS-One, a Hip Hop rapper and producer that has immersed himself in the culture since DJ Kool Herc's block party in 1973, describes the customs and norms of those that follow the hip hop lifestyle in his song "9 Elements". KRS-One describes them as: rap, dj'ing, graffiti arts, break dancing, beat boxing, street fashion, street language, street knowledge, and street entrepreneur realism. He explains how those that belong to the hip hop culture share similar expressive outlets, style, methods of communication, and lifestyle, and the Universal Zulu Nation argues that "knowledge of self" is an additional core element that epitomizes Hip Hop. As KRS-One mentions in the song "9 Elements", "Rap we do, hip hop we live". KRS-One



explains how hip hop cannot be oversimplified into a musical genre because in multi-faceted cultural experience.

Hip hop has gained major international following due to its powerful ability to capture similar experiences of systemic racism and oppression. The creative outlets of hip hop, such as rap, seemed to be a social weapon for voicing the concerns of the community (Hadley & Yancy, 2012). Talib Kweli, a rapper known for honoring the social justice roots of hip hop, recalls, “The best MCs in the world have always... needed to have something conscious, something dealing with the community, something uplifting, something positive. Even if the majority of the content was negative, you had to have that.” Talib Kweli describes how hip hop voiced frustrations, everyday hardships, and the reality of limited opportunities. Hip hop seems to be a unifying outlet amongst marginalized communities, linking and normalizing experiences.

Since the 1970s, hip hop has resonated deeply with communities, so practitioners have begun to incorporate it with treatment modalities. Specifically, youth continue to be influenced and informed by hip hop- especially rap music- (Kobin & Tyson, 2005), and many youth consider hip hop as the core of their identity (Barrager, 2006). Rap Therapy, which focuses on the use of rap writing to engage in disclosure, and Hip Hop Therapy (HHT), which focuses on the culture of hip hop to engage youth in therapy, have emerged to engage youth at-risk. Rap therapy and Hip Hop Therapy incorporate a familiar tool that is already a part of youths’ everyday life. HHT offers a culturally responsive intervention that promotes treatment engagement (Alvarez, 2006; Elligan, 2005). HHT, using the familiarity of urban youth culture, may assist in treatment engagement through a safe, comfortable, and familiar medium.

## **Beats, Rhymes and Life Inc.**

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 (referred to as “marginalized” youth of color) in the surrounding communities within Oakland, CA and the wider Bay Area. 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 Latinx and Black 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 Latinx and Black 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 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 module 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 an 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, 2003; 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.

Treatment effectiveness is evident in the continued requests from mental health providers in community mental health clinics to partner with BRL's TAG program, youth self-referrals, and youth requests to repeat the program. In fact, these "repeaters"- those who have completed a TAG group and participate in a TAG as a "new" participant at a later date - represent the

effectiveness of the program and BRL's ability to engage urban, multi-stressed youth who disengage from traditional therapy. As the literature suggests, these repeaters likely return to the 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 study will examine treatment engagement generally and explore the role of these three areas in treatment engagement.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Latinx and Black Youth and their Relationship to Hip Hop**

Youth at-promise have a clear relationship with hip hop music. Travis Jr. and Bowman's (2011) explored the continued influence hip hop has on its listeners. They examined 128 high school and college student's attitudes toward hip hop culture, risky health behaviors, identity, and the criminal justice system through a questionnaire and examine 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 aide in helping individuals feel more connected to their community and in their relationship with hip hop, youth even felt inspired to contribute positively to their communities. Ultimately, hip hop seemed to shape its listeners choices, values, and even, lifestyle, and deeply influences individuals that participate in the culture.

Hip hop not only influences the mindset of youth, but can also be an attainable escape for their circumstances. Baszile (2009) argues that through hip hop, youth at-promise 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, as outlined in the element of "street entrepreneurship". For example, youth may aspire to be rappers and also have strategies for how to make rapping a viable career. Similar to the Bronx when modern hip hop began, many marginalized neighborhoods tend to be low-income, crime ridden, and lacking governmental resources. 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 youth at-promise 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 Latinx and Black youth 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., and Travis and Bowman 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 Latinx and Black youth that would otherwise disengaged in traditional therapy.

### **What is Rap Therapy?**

Latinx and Black 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, Latinx and Black youth may not have the desire to verbalize their emotions or experiences due to institutional



mistrust, shame, difficulty expressing vulnerability, or even fear. Therefore, Latinx and Black 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 also, 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. *Gangster 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 aide 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 Latinx and Black youth 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-risk. Daykin et al. (2012) conducted a systematic review of various music therapy modalities focused on service for youth at-risk 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 that 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 Latinx and Black adolescents. Participants consisted of 21 African American males, ages 13 to 15 that 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 (deCarlo and 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, break dancing, 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-oppressional 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 that 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”(p 21). 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 aides at enhancing the therapeutic alliance-or strengthen the client-therapist relationship- and also, 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 perceive 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, a sense of kinship was established amongst the group, 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. Latinx and Black male adolescents, and males in general, tend to 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, being immersed in the 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 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 the 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, supportive, and facilitate the disclosure. MacBride & 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 Latinx and Black youth as difficult to engage, HHT has proven that youth will engage if the treatment modality aligns with their interest. In addition, HHT therapy aides 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; and, MacBride & Page, 2012). Tyson (2003) 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 Latinx and Black youth culture, assists in treatment engagement through a safe, comfortable, and familiar medium. This study hopes to contribute to the gap in literature by examining specific aspects of treatment engagement in HHT. Specifically, this researcher will collaborate with Beats, Rhymes and Life to analyze the effectiveness of their TAGs program through the voice of the "repeaters" – youth who re-enroll in the program. As stated, urban youth typically disengage from therapy. Therefore, repeaters in the TAGs groups represent the effectiveness of the program and BRL's ability to appeal to youth at-promise so much so that youth self-refer.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative, exploratory study investigated treatment engagement at Beats, Rhymes and Life's (BRL) Therapeutic Activity Group's (TAGs) through the experience of returning participants, or "returners". The purposes of the study were 1) to understand what about TAG's is so compelling for youth at-promise that participants self-refer to repeat the program and 2) to raise awareness of culturally sensitive interventions that are effective and appeal to youth at-promise. In order to understand what makes TAGs compelling to youth, this researcher interviewed youth that have reenrolled in TAGs more than once. Phenomenological qualitative methods were necessary in order to capture the voice of the youth, who are experts of their experience. Since Hip Hop Therapy is a cutting edge non-traditional form of therapy, there is little research that identifies HHT as a best practice.

#### **Participants**

The only criteria for participation in the research was that individuals had to be considered "returners", meaning they reenrolled in the TAGs program and completed a TAG more than once as a participant. Participants could have completed TAGs at any official BRL TAGs locations ranging from Northern to Central California and catering to both middle school and high school aged students.

All participants completed at least two TAGs. Four participants were in the midst of completing their second TAG, while the others were former returners. Eight males and one female between the ages of 13 and 22 participated in the study, with an average age of 18.5 years old. Notable in the range of ages, participants were recruited from both the middle school TAGs programs and the high school TAGs programs. Participants were asked to identify their race.

With the exception of one participant that did not answer, participants predominantly defined as some form of multiracial: Hispanic and Portuguese; African American and Puerto Rican; Black and Italian; Hispanic, Polynesian, and Mixed; and Black and White. Additionally, two participants identified as African American, one as Black; and one as White. Participants either resided in the wider Bay Area, CA or in the Sacramento area. The TAGs programs participants completed TAGs in Oakland, CA, San Francisco, CA, Sacramento, CA, or a combination of the mentioned locations. Although the locations are different, all TAGs were official sponsored by BRL and were/are run by BRL staff and affiliates.

## **Materials**

This researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide and lyrical analysis plan to understand participant's own ideas about what makes BRL compelling. Initial open ended questions were followed up with questions that targeted the following three areas as potential reasons for treatment engagement: (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 one's own level of disclosure, and (3) the group nature of the intervention. The interview consisted of open-ended questions and included probing, follow-up questions (Appendix G). The questions aimed at allowing students to express their narrative and genuine experience of the TAGs.

Participants were then asked to share a rap lyric. The criterion for the rap lyric were that they 1) had to be lyrics written during one of their TAGs and 2) had to be rap lyrics they felt best represented their experience during the TAGs. At the end of the interview, participants were asked if they wanted to add anything to their responses.

## **Procedure**

Participants were recruited through word of mouth, phone calls, emails (Appendix H), and flyers (Appendix I) with support from TAGs leaders, who have continued relationships with returners. Once participants showed interest, participants were briefed either by email or telephone about the nature of the study and their involvement. Participants were also reminded to bring rap lyrics they wanted to share. For those who were minors, parental consent was secured prior to the interview.

After informed consent and assent were secured, private interviews occurred in a room at BRL Headquarters or a BRL affiliated sites in San Francisco, Oakland, and Sacramento. This researcher and the research director at BRL conducted interviews using the semi-structured interview guide. Participants were first asked demographic questions. Then, all participants were asked semi-structured questions. However, not all participants were asked probing questions due to time restrictions. Subsequently, participants were asked to share their rap lyrics. Participants either shared written rap lyrics or were able to recall rap lyrics. As the participants verbally shared the rap lyrics, this researcher wrote down the lyrics. Most participants made the researcher promise not to release their rap lyrics in fear that other artists could use the lyrics. The participants shared rap lyrics that were a full line or an entire song. The lyrics were broken down line by line with the researcher, where the researcher asked for meaning of the lyrics and context for the writing.

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher. This researcher also took notes throughout the interview. Interviews lasted between thirty minutes and an hour, depending on the depth of the responses. Throughout the interview, this researcher would share

the interview notes and/or would consistently check-in to ensure the youth's voice was captured. Since youth tend to use different jargon, this researcher often asked for clarification in order to ensure accurate depiction.

In addition to the interviews, participants were asked to bring in and share rap lyrics they wrote during the TAGs. Then, participants were asked to analyze their raps so that participants could have the opportunity to break down, explain, clarify, and provide context for their rap lyrics. The raps have the power to showcase the therapeutic process during the TAGs in a way that the interview can access. Since the raps should have been written while in the TAGs, the lyrics exemplify the participants comfort disclosing, level of engagement, possible challenges, and overall therapeutic process.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to ensure trustworthiness and rigor, this researcher engaged in a variety of strategies both during the data collection and once the data was processed and analyzed. During the interviews, this researcher engaged in member-checking, peer debriefing, and created a detailed audit trail. This researcher consistently member checked with the participants in order to verify or clarify interpretation. For example, the researcher would ask, "Can you explain [that] further?" or "Did I get this correctly?" Since the study was executed as part of a group of research studies, collaborative, peer debriefs were possible with fellow social worker trainees and BRL staff when developing interview questions and with fellow researchers when interpreting findings. An audit trail was also created in order to ensure that all data and interactions were summarized and recorded.

Once the data was collected, a codebook was created. The interviews were organized between content and themes. Data analysis consisted of extracting themes within the three

domains: (1) the focus on hip hop (2) ability to choose their levels of disclosure and (3) the group setting. If a theme appeared more than once amongst participants, then it was noted and used to make generalizations about the domain in which it fell under. Once completed, the codes were reexamined to test this researcher's positionality.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

Innovative therapeutic interventions are necessary for appealing to and engaging at-promise youth, especially at-promise youth of color. BRL has effectively engaged youth of color through their TAGs programs, as evident in their self-enrolling returning students. The central questions of this study explored treatment engagement through the experience of returners and aimed at understanding what drove returners to self-refer and re-enroll to the program. Since the returners represent the notion that BRL effectively engages youth in treatment, the objective was to explore the effectiveness through the returner's perspective. Nine returners, who were current or past returners of the middle school or high school TAGs program, provided their insight. Direct questions were asked to returners about their desire to re-enroll, while other open-ended questions aimed at understanding various elements, specific to the TAGs program, which could have led to a more appealing program for Latinx and Black youth. Due to time constraints with some participants, not all participants were asked all of the questions in the interview guide. When a participant was not granted the opportunity to respond, the number of participants that were asked will be indicated. In addition, participants shared original rap lyrics written during the TAGs and explained the significance of each line. The lyrics provided a window into the experience of participants while in the TAGs compared to their reflection after completing the TAGs.

This chapter begins with a review of the key findings and continues with an analysis of rap lyrics shared by participants. The key findings include (1) Participant Perspective on Engagement, (2) The Role of Hip hop with Engagement, (3) Paced Disclosure, and (4) The Role



of the Group as a Tool for Engagement. Illustrative quotes are included with each section to adequately reflect participant perspectives.

### **Participant Perspective on Engagement**

Participants were asked directly about what compelled them to complete the TAGs program more than once, and shared their insight on why they returned to multiple times for the therapeutic program. Several themes emerged. First, participants pointed to the relationships established in the TAGs, naming the “community” and the “friendships” created as the primary motive. Second, TAGs were experienced as a reflective space. One participant shared their experience with the reflective space:

There was a lot of disaster in my life but what was good about the TAG was that I could come here and reflect, because I can't really tell someone what I'm going through, face to face, or back then I couldn't ...

For this participant, both the reflective quality of the space as well as the method of disclosure, which will be discussed further below, drove the participant to re-enroll. Third, a theme of TAGs containing an environment that expressed unconditional positive regard for participants emerged. One commented,

It's really positive, it's really a smooth, comfortable environment that you can bring anyone to, and they won't single you out, 'cause you can't rap better, or because you're better than them. They just want to see you, evolve. [Participants] come here and we forget about all that in the two hours that we do this. It's really therapeutic, especially when you had a bad day.

The participant identifies the positive environment within the TAGs as a therapeutic space.

Fourth, participants identified the feeling of success from challenges both during and after the TAGs as a reason for re-enrollment. One shared:

It's the success and achievement that everybody got being in the TAGs and just the overall happiness of the whole thing... When it comes to the success more like bringing... taking the bad that people have and making it good... Changing people just for all the right reasons and throwing away all their wrongs.

The participant viewed the transformative nature of the program and seeing growth of group members as a reason for re-enrollment.

Participants were also directly asked about moments the TAGs felt therapeutic. Some participants shared general aspects of the TAGs that felt therapeutic. For example, a female participant shared “They gave me extra time.” Another participant shared,

So, I felt like the only support I did have was [an organization] or social workers or stuff. But even the social workers put me off. So [the TAGs] was kind of my link to getting my shit together, and the therapeutic aspect about it would have to be that I could still come here and get those feelings out, even when I was going through that stuff.... This was a good thing for me because I could come here, split my flow, record it, listen to it back and be like, “man!” at least...it made me feel like I had a purpose.

Three participants shared similar stories about feeling emotionally supported and held through the group and TAGs.

Other participants shared specific memories they felt were therapeutic, which highlighted comfort discussing difficult topics. One participant recalled being able to self-disclose personal trauma:

We were doing a lesson called trials and tribulations, and the question was, ‘your biggest trial’ and mine was something that happened to me when I was really younger... and normally I don't speak out on that, I felt really uncomfortable talking about it. It helped because everyone was supportive and you know, everyone listened to what I had to say and then they gave me really positive feedback on it, and it kind of helped me get over the fear of talking about that situation.

The TAG provided the participant with enough safety and comfort to disclose trauma for the first time. The participant also shared feelings of relief after disclosing the trauma.

Another participant shared a specific memory around personal difficulty accepting loss and how a staff member provided support during their termination session:

It's especially hard for people who don't know how to deal with loss because that means the group is over, we are not coming back next week, it's done for right now. And the first time that happened, I didn't know how to deal...loss is heavy, especially around here. The person who was running the TAG back then, he stopped everything and he came and played basketball with me and he like talked me through everything. He told me a whole bunch of things, saying about the future and how ‘you can't be afraid to step into greatness, you know, it's going to be hard sometimes, you know, you got to grow’.

So yeah, learn how to cope. Learn some coping mechanisms.

The participant felt the method of termination was therapeutic for the TAGs leader’s individual support and its lesson in coping with loss.

## **The Role of Hip Hop on Treatment Engagement**

Next, respondents were asked questions pertaining to their relationship with the hip hop culture. Since TAGs is a hip hop therapy program, questions were asked to understand the role of hip hop in aiding with treatment engagement.

All respondents stated that hip hop was either “therapeutic” or a “huge part of their life”. Many described hip hop itself as therapeutic. “It's life. Hip hop is everything. It's all encompassing. It helps heal. It's therapeutic... Hip hop has saved so many people from going to a clinical appointment. Like, therapy group, because it's like, ‘oh, I can just write about this.’” Another shared, “Hip hop is my life.... So, only thing I could do to keep me from stressing was to write notebooks like these, just full of rap... hip hop is strong in my life, hip hop is what keeps me going.”

Several members also discussed the role of race in terms of how Hip Hop influences treatment engagement. One participant noted, “As a ‘young black man,’ hip hop was, is, basically one of the things that you can really retreat to.... hip hop being something I can relate to, I think, as...therapeutic”. Participants discussed how hip hop, particularly for black males, is relatable and that could be used as therapy.

However, a relationship with Hip Hop did not appear to be a required starting point for those who re-enrolled. Some participants admitted that hip hop was not always something they had a strong connection to, and in fact, some were unfamiliar until joining the TAGs and now, have found an enjoyment with various types of hip hop subgenres.

For these individuals, BRL was able to alter their relationship to hip hop:

Before BRL, hip hop was kind of like, just a different music style, I listened to it here and there and it was never like, I could never see myself making that type of music, but now that I've done BRL for the past year and a half... it grew on me a lot.... every time something happens to me or I'm feeling down, I write music. Every time that I'm happy I write music so it's like my backbone now.

The participant describes how the focus on hip hop had a strong influence on the participant. For the participant, hip hop went from being unfamiliar to a tool used as a coping mechanism.

Seven participants also provided their insight when asked if they believed youth identify with the hip hop culture. Most participants also mentioned that they feel youth identify with the hip hop culture. One participant considered hip hop “infectious” and another even mentioned,

Hip hop is kind of the in-thing, it's kind of the structure of what they wear, how they talk, what they say, and I feel like it plays almost a follow the leader role, like what hip hop says, you do, so you know, if one of your favorite artists said, this is what I wear now, I'm probably going to go out and wear that because it's the in thing to do, so I feel like while it's um, we have something to follow and something to mold us.

The participant described how the hip hop culture has the power to influence and shape the identity of youth.

Although some participants mentioned how not all youth may identify with hip hop directly, most youth are exposed to it. Some considered the widespread accessibility of media, both wanted and unwanted, as a driving factor forcing the awareness of hip hop even if youth don't necessarily identify with the culture.

Interviewees were then asked if the use of hip hop made the therapeutic process easier, if at all. All eight who were asked this question explained how the focus on hip hop made the therapeutic process easier for them. The themes are best illustrated by what one participant detailed:

I can relate to these dudes, they know my culture... being a young black dude from Oakland, I didn't really have culture..., you know therapy is just a negative word to us. It's like therapy, I don't need no therapy, but then when it's like hip hop, it's like, okay. Then they explain that hip hop is therapy, and it's like oh shit, we've been using therapy the whole time. That made it great, and it broke down some walls. They broke down a lot of walls very quickly.

The participant then explained the stigmatized view of therapy amongst his culture.

I was like, oh man, therapy. I'm not going to accept no therapy. You're about to just sit here and analyze me and break down my mind for your enjoyment. No, haha... opinions going on and it's a lot of insecurities around it. That's why you don't see; I read an article actually, talking about how African American people have the least mental help but we need it a lot, like more, but we don't get it. We choose not to go, and we need it more. We need a lot. So, I think it's more of our traditional upbringing in America that doesn't allow young African American people to get therapy or even view it as something good, because we are taught to be by our self.

The participant shared openly about the stigma of being in therapy. The participant went on to share that the driving force of entering the BRL TAGs was because of the aspect of hip hop.

Overall, participants come for the hip hop, but stay for the healing.

## **Paced Disclosure**

Since TAGs guide participant's self-disclosure through writing activities, modules, and sharing in a larger group, questions about the paced disclosure were asked. Participants were asked about their experience opening up to other group members by sharing their raps/writing. All eight participants who answered the question expressed difficulty sharing at first and stated it became easier. One participant shared,

At first it was really nerve-wracking and I was a little bit shy, but I think I've always been more of an open person, so I just try my best to um, keep my nerves just down, and I know if I speak up it will help other people, so I think that's what really helps other people, letting your guard down, and being open.

Similarly, other participants shared the discomfort of self-disclosing, but shared a common comfort once getting to know their group. All participants agreed that sharing the beginning was more difficult than it was as the group progressed.

When asked if they were able to self-disclose something personal about their history to the group, all participants responded affirmatively. When asked what attributed to the comfort of self-disclosing personal history during TAGs, themes of shared histories and establishing group norms emerged. A respondent recalled,

I had gotten arrested and I had just gotten off of an ankle monitor, I think, two days before BRL started or the day before BRL started...I was super embarrassed by it... we were doing an icebreaker activity called ice map, and a lot of other kids in the group had gone through legal trouble, and they were opening up about it, and kind of reassured me that I wasn't alone in it and I'm not the only one in the group through it, so I was able to share my story, and I got some positive feedback on it.

Participants were able to self-disclose a personal history that was somewhat emotionally uncomfortable due to the shared history they observed from other members in the group. One participant stated, “If one person is going to share, why can’t everyone.” Participants also shared that the group norm of sharing emerged and that the group encouragement assisted in the sharing.

Another theme that emerged with regard to paced disclosure is the role of lyricism. Lyrics are written every TAGs session, and TAGs modules guide student’s writing through prompts, often encouraging students to think deeply about their true selves. Ideally participants share their lyrics to the group at the end. Two participants attributed their self-disclosure to the ability to disclose through writing lyrics. Seven participants stated that sharing felt good, inspiring, or exciting. One participant mentioned,

It felt good because you get constructive criticism and they tell you how to improve.

They would continue to tell you to be yourself and the fact that you can be yourself and still keep pushing with no one trying to change you was the feeling of acceptance.

The participant felt that he could disclose his true self as his comfort allowed and that the group would meet him where he was at. In addition, the participant mentioned welcoming constructive critic due to feeling a level of comfort in the group.

Overall, the paced disclosure through writing lyrics was a positive process for all participants. The writing became both an enjoyable process for all participants and a means for creative expression. Since the process was enjoyable, participants were engaged and willing to partake in reflective exercises, thus being prone to self-disclosing.



## **The Role of the Group as a Tool for Engagement**

Participants identified the group setting as an important aspect of their experience and subsequent re-engagement. When explored further, participants reported feeling understood by the group, since other members had experienced similar oppression/challenges.. One of the respondents elaborated,

I feel like it was helpful just knowing I'm not the only one who grew up in a bad neighborhood... so just being around everyone else, people saying 'Oh I've grown up in a neighborhood with gang violence' or 'drugs, this and that, robberies, shootings, what have you,' it felt nice, like, 'oh you guys understand'.

Building upon this, participants frequently reported that the group was like a "family."

Another aspect of the group process seemed helpful in increasing confidence by giving and receiving feedback. Participants noted appreciating the feedback when making rhymes, the ability to help others, and feeling more confident because of group members. One participant further explained, "I feel the confidence was mustered because we were around people that look like us and they were in the same age bracket as us, we were on the same journey..." The group provided feelings of commonality and commodity amongst the group members.

One respondent mentioned that the group participation facilitated in teaching him how to cope with things in a more positive way. He explained, "[the group] helped me learn how to, deal with things in my own way, like if a person is hating on me, I ain't gonna sock them, I ain't gonna hurt them, but I'm gonna try to outshine them." The group impacted the participant's perception on how to deal with difficult situations from physically hurting someone to focusing on personal achievement.

Eight participants were asked what they enjoyed most about the group setting. The respondents mentioned the positive outlook everyone in the room carried, recording music, the feeling of inclusion, and how fun the group was/is. A participant explained the group dynamics as:

I use 5 words: honesty, acceptance, creativity, loyalty, and strength. Honesty, meaning you could be yourself and explain what's going on, not only in your mind, but in your heart. Acceptance, meaning no matter what you say it's gonna get clapped and accepted. You know? Praised. Creativity, you could do whatever you want either way you're still going to get accepted and an honest opinion. Loyalty, you keep coming back and you do what you say like you keep your word. And strength, is all of that and just the will of 'I'm gonna do this shit again' and I'm just gonna impact something, someone.

The participant identifies the entire group process as enjoyable. The positive group experience also fostered prosocial behaviors through instilling a sense of personal responsibility rather than personal gain.

Seven participants were also asked what they least enjoyed. Despite given the opportunity to provide feedback, participants overwhelmingly responded with positive feedback. For example, a participant said, "How fast it can be". Only two participants provided feedback. One mentioned the writing prompts were not always engaging and the other mentioned practicing for the showcase.

Questions about the group dynamics were also asked. Participants were asked to illustrate a moment they felt best described their experience in the group and how it affected them. All nine participants shared intimate stories about positive group experiences. A participant shared a

story about how the TAGs leaders discussed violence that affected the community of the group members.

Back in high school, this dude, he got shot. He got shot, and he got killed, and that was heavy on everybody, he was a big face on campus, so during the TAG session, the subject of loss came up, and everybody was talking about who they lost, how did you feel, how did you recover if you recovered. And then it was just like very emotional, everybody was pouring out, people started crying and people started tearing up, and it was like, it was uncomfortable, but knowing your teammate was feeling that way, we had to stick together and help and be supportive and help and I feel like that was the strongest day, and we all had to work hard on that one, because it was rough especially because people that don't like to express emotions, they were just sitting there crying, and that was big. Like, normally you just have stern face, and now you just – man, it was heart breaking, but it was strengthening at the same time.

The participant mentioned how the discussion although emotionally difficult, was necessary to discuss for the emotional healing of the group. By creating space for the communal trauma the participants had experienced, participants were able to process the loss of their peer, the impact of the trauma on the community, and also, other personal loss which otherwise could have remained repressed.

Overall, the group experience was positive for all participants by fostering support, feelings of community, normalization of experiences, and encouragement. All participants mentioned aspects of the group that aided in their self-disclosure. Through the trust and support, participants allowed themselves to be vulnerable.

## Sharing Original Rap Lyrics

Participants were asked to share rap lyrics they wrote while in the TAGs. Eight participants shared anywhere from a line to an entire song, while one participant could not recall lyrics to share.

One participant memorized the lyrics they wanted to share. The lyrics were, “BRL helped me see and helped me understand, but most of all helped me be a better man.” The participant explained the significance as, “When I said ‘BRL helped me see’, it helped me look beyond myself and helped me look at the people around me to be less careless and more thoughtful.” The participant describes transitioning his mindset to being more considerate about others.

Another participant recited, “I always start to wonder why love is so strong, but when it disappears the hate suddenly” and explains,

I was really talking about how I come from an environment, such as home, where I feel loved, and then you go into the real world, and people talk about you, they don't like you.

They want to bash you for no reason.

The participant explains the difficulty of the culture of his community and feeling criticized and judged by people he does not know. This participant had also shared the difficulty of opening up to unfamiliar people. However, the participant was able to express his feelings of confusion through the lyrics.

One participant shared, “ain't too any in my corner, on one hand I could count, most of them dead or they're just getting cut off” and explains the lyrics as,

I started off with a lot of people that really cared about me and wanted my best interest, but it's a lot of people that get cut off because, you know, jealousy, hatred, things like

that... I had a lot of family members die, I had a lot of friends die, stuff like that, and some that got cut off, because they don't share the same level, or see the same things that I see, as my future, they don't, they don't see the same thing, the same level of wanting to be that high, because I set very high standard for myself and I know I am going to achieve them, I'm confident, I didn't use to be as confident, but now I'm very confident in my future, um,, BRL helped me a lot with my confidence.

The lyrics, although concise, unpacked the participant's relationship with the experience of death, lack of positive peer support in his community, and his continued perseverance despite these challenges. The participant also brought to light the strong impact BRL had on his positive view of self and resilience.

Another example included a participant that was able to self-disclose a traumatic experience through the lyrics:

I had just turned four and my sister was six, and we never understood and it never made sense... the year before we were having a good time, you were always there, and then slowly through that you just kind of faded and faded and faded

The participant went on to explain:

Four is the year that my dad left us and that was always the hardest thing to deal with for me... especially at four it's kind of a hard thing to deal with that dad left, and it's still, even now, it kind of makes sense, but I've never completely understood it.

The participant was able to self-disclose the trauma and the pain that ensued because of it.

Through the lyrics, the participant explores her inner-psyche in relation to the trauma.

The lyricism allowed participants to self-disclose to the extent they felt comfortable. As notable in the examples above, all participants wrote lyrics, which had profound complexity

hidden in the seemingly simplicity of the lines. By giving the power to the participants of self-disclosing, all participants were able to self-disclose personal narratives.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to explore the implications of utilizing an innovative cultural framework to engage at-risk youth in clinical group work. BRL TAGs seems to effectively engage at-risk youth in treatment, so this study focused on gaining insight from the youth as to what made the program so appealing. The research question explored was: What aspects of the TAGs promote treatment engagement- indicated by re-enrollment- for youth that are exposed to high levels of systemic and institutional racism which can affect their ability to persevere in their communities?

The results of this study suggest that the youth at-risk engage in BRL's TAGs due to the focus on hip hop, paced disclosure through writing and sharing personal rap lyrics, and the development of community formed within the group and the treatment site. Given the heavy influence hip hop has on Latinx and Black youth, rapping in the context of TAGs becomes both a form of creative expression and a coping strategy for them. Moreover, the community formed by the leaders and the group members effectively creates a space where encouragement, support, positivity, confidence and trust are fostered. Since findings are consistent with the reviewed literature, the discussion will expand on the literature by elaborating on specific aspects of the TAGs lead to successful treatment engagement.

#### **Understanding the Population in Context**

Clinicians and therapeutic interventions should consider important macro facets of client's lives in order to have a grounded understanding of factors affecting their emotional and mental wellbeing, thus impacting their treatment engagement. For example, youth at-risk may be exposed to communal hardships or higher levels of oppression. TAGs incorporates

innovative activities and topics, which grants leaders the flexibility necessary to alter lessons to make them personal. A participant discussed how there was a shooting by his school, which affected him and his community. The TAGs used the incident to discuss loss and provide space to discuss violence in the community. The participant mentioned the value of the space to acknowledge the violence and reflect on the event and other oppressions, especially since he otherwise would not have reflected or processed the event. In addition, other participants mentioned how the TAGs incorporated trendy, hit songs as a means to engage them in critical thought about the dialogue. The participants were not judged for their choice in music or lifestyle, but were encouraged to engage in critical thought about the power of language in the content of the songs. The new finding that TAGs included that the space for clients to be themselves and the understanding of who they were in the context of their environment seemed to be crucial in determining level of engagement.

Although it seems miniscule, participants reflected on the ability to be their true self and discuss topics they felt were important. Meeting clients where they are and authenticity are the core of social work practice, and as interviews showed, acceptance seemed to be a theme which all participants mentioned as instrumental in their therapeutic process. Adolescence is a pivotal time for adolescents learn and understand their individuality and voice. This study found that leaders and the structure of the TAGS were able to provide participants with the necessary space to be themselves, yet challenge them and aide in their growth.

There is also a need to recognize that not all individuals will fit into a standardized model of therapy. An unexpected finding supported the literature which found that traditional talk therapy is unappealing for Latinx and Black youth. As the literature suggests, Latinx and Black youth tend to disengage from traditional therapy (Allen, 2005; deCarlo & Hockman 2003; Gann,



2010; MacBride & Page, 2012). Some participants spontaneously mentioned understanding that therapy is beneficial for emotional one's wellbeing, yet felt that traditional therapy made them feel like "science projects". It seems that the participants felt dehumanized by the idea of being analyzed. It was obvious that traditional therapy was not something participants were interested in, whereas the TAGs was something they initiated or were open to due to the focus on the cultural influence of hip hop. In addition, all participants mentioned aspects of the TAGs, such as the lyric writing, which made participation enjoyable. Participants mentioned the structure of the TAGs, from the activities to the participation expected from both the staff and group members, contributed to their desire to attend and engage. Some participants mentioned obfuscating the line between enjoyment and therapy, as if therapy was something traditionally unappealing. Therefore, therapeutic interventions for Latinx and Black youth, who traditionally have modes of expression that stray away from talking, should integrate other forms of creative expression that incorporate an interest, such as hip hop or lyricism.

In addition, all participants alluded to the importance of establishing a community. Participants mentioned aspects of their identity-- single-parent households, being from foster families, coming from oppressed communities, or even directly mentioning not having support from positive adults or other peers-- which could have contributed to their desire to establish a familial environment. Most participants naturally mentioned their leaders as pivotal to their TAGs process, whether it be through the leader engagement or being a relatable adult. Therefore, it seems that youth not only appreciate structure and consistency, but also appreciate integrated facilitation.

## **Hip Hop as Culture**

Hip Hop is undoubtedly a culture with its own customs, arts, and rituals. All participants shared their deep connection to not only the music, but to the lifestyle Hip Hop entails, even when they didn't have a pre-existing relationship with Hip Hop. As the literature suggests, many of the participants considered hip hop the core of their identity and an enjoyable outlet (Daykin et al., 2012; MacBride & Page, 2012). Similar to Travis Jr. and Bowman's (2011) study, this study also found the profound impact hip hop has on its listeners. Participants described hip hop as "all encompassing" and as a way of life, signifying the role and value in their day to day. Participants agreed, despite some adolescents who may not necessarily participate in the hip hop culture, that hip hop music is unavoidable due to the accessibility of music and media. One important finding that is not directly addressed in the literature, but was discussed by participants was that they initially engaged in the TAGs for incorporating their culture, hip hop. Since many youth had negative views on therapy, the familiarity of hip hop helped spark their interest and engage in the program.

## **Hip Hop as a Tool for Engagement**

Hip hop can be a tool used to not only engage those that identify with the hip hop culture, but also those that are interested in aspects of the hip hop culture. There was one participant who did not initially listen to hip hop was interested in the TAGs for the ability to be self-reflective through writing. Although the participant initially joined just for the writing, he learned to appreciate hip hop and mentioned that it later became a large part of his identity due to Hip Hop's capacity to hold a wide range of individuals in the culture. In addition, clients that were immersed in the hip hop culture mentioned how the familiarity of hip hop seemed less intrusive than traditional therapy since it was familiar to them and a part of their identity. Similar to

Barrager (2007), this study found that participants considered hip hop as the core of their identity and were drawn to the TAGs for its focus on hip hop.

Hip hop can be used as a creative therapeutic outlet to cultivate various forms of artistic expression, thus increasing likelihood of client-treatment synchronicity. Hip hop is such a vast culture encompassing many different artistic forms of expression, and participants mentioned writing raps, singing, “making beats”, and writing poetry throughout the interview. BRL and TAGs seemed to allow participants the versatility to take pleasure in various aspects of the culture and figure out what was most enjoyable to them. Instead of limiting participants, space was made for inventiveness. Most participants mentioned that they appreciated how the TAGs encouraged creativity.

Continued engagement with youth can be a challenge. However, the TAGs exemplified HHT’s utility with both client receptivity and client retention. All participants mentioned how the TAGs was enjoyable and often looked forward to attending sessions. Similar to Daykin (2012), this study found that youth were often disappointed when the therapies ended. Participants mentioned how they were not only engaged, but also challenged. Participants enjoyed hip hop therapy and also, found hip hop therapy transformative. Similar to Alvarez (2006), all participants reported the utility of hip hop therapy and aided in improving self-esteem and self-empowerment. Participants even mentioned increased self-confidence and levels of compassion towards others. HHT appealed to youth, so much so that participants self-referred, often times more than twice.

### **Lyrical Analysis as a Therapeutic Intervention**

The study supported that idea that youth use can use rap as a comfortable starting point in order to aide in self-disclosure (Elligan, 2005; Olsen-McBride and Page, 2012), especially since

many were engaging with rapping and writing lyrics for personal enjoyment. However, the TAGs helped participants shift their writing and learn how to make it a reflective tool and a coping strategy.

This study also supported that writing about personal challenges was healing for participants. Participants stated that the very act of writing down their narratives was therapeutic in itself, and this study documented personal narratives through rap lyrics. As many of the case studies reflect, students disclosed personal aspects of their life through their lyrics. Under the guise of simplicity, the students in fact revealed the great complexities of their lived experiences. Similar to the literature, trauma that could not verbally expressed in traditional therapy was unveiled through writing individual rap lyrics that utilized rhymes, symbolism, and other writing tropes (Elligan, 2005; Suetani and Batterham, 2015). Participants mentioned feeling more comfortable writing about their personal history first, and then performing it to the group. Writing seemed to give participants the power to carefully choose the portrayal of their experience, while still maintaining control behind the complexity of their lyrics. The writing allowed participants to be reflective about their experiences and critically engage with their narrative. For many of the participants, sharing their personal narratives was new and uncomfortable. Participants mentioned feeling uncomfortable due to exposing pieces of themselves that they may not have otherwise shared. This study found that writing rap lyrics was not only enjoyable, but also became a skill in which participants felt comfortable to utilize as communication and a coping activity.

The thoughtfulness and intentionality of the lyrical process and analysis helped empower participants and fostered a positive outlook on their future. An unexpected finding supported Baszile (2009), who explains how youth can negotiate their conditions by creating a viable

market for themselves through hip hop. A majority of the youth mentioned hip hop as a desirable career, either to become rappers, singers, or beat makers. Participants seemed to have hopeful futures in relation to their possible careers due to feeling empowered by the TAGs. Participants often mentioned the positivity they received around their skills, which reinforced their desire to continue improving. Evident in the participants desire to continue using their skill set, HHT had the power to promote sense of purpose and resilience.

### **Using Group Therapy as a Tool for Engagement**

Group therapy can have the power to promote self-confidence and prosocial skills. This study supported literature in finding that the group seemed to have a profound impact on the desire to both engage and self-disclose personal history. All of the participants mentioned that they found comfort and encouragement in hearing the stories of their peers. Circumstances that felt unique and singular became communal and therefore, seemed to eliminate feelings of isolation in the oppression. All participants included that hearing other participants share their stories created a sense of shared experience and feelings of being understood. It seemed that the group sharing normalized the complexity of feelings around the difficulty the participants experienced. The self-disclosure seemed to promote self-awareness as well as understanding and compassion of other member's circumstances. The joining of circumstances and the compassion that formed for other group members seemed to help establish unity, trust, and rapport within the group. Through the trust and rapport, there was group cohesion.

The experience of the participants is intertwined with how the group cohesion is experienced by its members. All of the members in the TAGs obfuscated the line between the participants and the facilitators. Therefore, there was more synchronicity within the group. Participants alluded to the importance of leaders integrating themselves with the participants and

modeling the process with them. This study also suggests that authenticity from leaders and the clinicians is important, especially in terms of their relationship to hip hop and in “believing in them”. Participants detailed the importance of encouragement, constructive criticism, and support from their group members. A new finding suggested that participants arguably prefer the group setting instead of individual therapy. Participants stated that individual therapy would not have been as enjoyable or appealing.

Group therapy also has the ability to foster a more positive therapeutic setting. The expectation that all group members share their raps at the end of each module seems to strategically influence participants. Participants, through hearing what others share, are then encouraged and motivated to share aspects of themselves and challenge themselves in their own writing.

In this vein, group therapy can also foster a supportive community. A new finding was how important the notion of “community” was important to participants. Some participants even considered the group members “family”. This study exemplifies how the TAGs are effective for creating a supportive environment. Participants are not only encouraged, supported, and positively challenged by leaders, but also by fellow participants. BRL and TAGS imbed verbal supportiveness throughout the curriculum. Participants mentioned finding comfort in the positivity and welcoming attitude of the leaders and group members. Specifically, all participants mentioned that the positivity and sincerity expected of all group members contributed to their treatment engagement and also, encouraged them to reciprocate the positive attitude. Although this new finding may be miniscule, participants mentioned the lack of positivity in their communities and homes. Participants, who came from foster care families or working class families, may not have a stable mentor present to feel welcome or encourage them.

## **Implications for Social Work**

There is an urgency to find treatment modalities that appeal to youth, especially Latinx and Black youth. As research indicated, Latinx and Black populations that need mental health treatment are unlikely to seek it. This study refutes the research and reflects on the necessity to implement culturally sensitive, innovative, non-traditional modalities that are youth-centered. Research has also claimed youth of color are difficult to engage. BRL's TAGs are a prime example of how engagement of Latinx and Black youth can be achieved. The returners were eager to share their experiences and contribute to HHT research. Instead of asking and trying to figure out why clients are difficult to engage, the analysis should be turned around to ask how clinicians can improve at fostering client engagement.

My hope is that social workers recognize the utility of continuing to honor hip hop's roots in social justice through implementing it as a cultural framework when suitable. By honoring hip hop as a culture and as art form, social workers are in turn, honoring part of Latinx and Black history. Findings support the strong impact that hip hop has on Latinx and Black youth, many considering hip hop deeply imbedded in their identity.

This research suggests that clinicians should engage in critical dialogue about all aspects of hip hop since youth have the means to be exposed to all messages – both positive and negative – of hip hop. Social workers have the power to incorporate all aspects of hip hop, including gangsta rap, which is more often than not played in the media. This study has proven that adolescents can engage in such conversations and form a critical lens about the music and its influence on their personhood. In addition, by being open to all forms of hip hop and subgenres of rap, clients can enter authentically and as their true self.

Adolescence can be a difficult time for adolescents due to forming their individuality. Findings suggested that Latinx and Black youth actively participated in the TAGs for being able to be authentic and creative without judgment. This study exemplifies the importance for social workers working with adolescents in particular, to meet clients where they are. This study also exemplifies the necessity for social workers to develop and facilitate self-determination within clients.

Social workers also have a duty to try to incorporate systemic and institutional racism that impacts youth of color into therapy. It is essential for clinicians to acknowledge systems of oppression and communal traumas that affect our clients. This research found that participants were receptive to processing communal trauma, that otherwise would have been ignored, when clinicians created the space. In doing so, clinicians can support clients in forming a critical consciousness, thus taking the focus solely off individuals and introducing systems of oppression.

This study highlights the importance of utilizing a cultural framework that incorporates interest of clients. Findings supported that youth found HHT both engaging and transformative, particularly due to the lyrical analysis and rapping. Findings supported that youth were more susceptible to self-disclosing personal traumas and history through their writing. This study therefore, calls for further training in youth-centered modalities that incorporate artistic forms of expression other than talking, such as lyric writing.

### **Strengths of This Study**

The study was pivotal in detailing the influence of the HHT program developed at BRL on participants. Since there is an overall lack of research analyzing HHT or Rap therapy, the study aims to begin addressing that gap. Since the TAGs are program with nationwide



recognition for its ability to effectively engage at-risk youth of color, this study examines, arguably, one of the most successful and innovative therapeutic programs for adolescents of color.

In addition, this is the first study that directly asks for the perspective of the participants to inquire about what they feel makes the program engaging. When participating in the research study, participants would mention that their TAG leader was the main reason they showed up to speak with me. The importance of that statement during recruitment was evident of the impact BRL TAGs has had on the returners.

Another strength was the study gave this researcher an insider's perspective on the influence BRL has on its participants. One of the participants was very difficult to engage, often giving one word answers with little to no follow up. This participant was a new repeater and openly stated that trust was difficult to establish. Although this researcher could have chosen not to use the interviewer due to lack of substance, I believe this student was a prime example of how clients may be perceived as difficult to engage. However, the participant's classification as a repeater and desire to participate in the study is a reflection on the growth he/she is undergoing.

### **Limitations of This Study**

Procedurally, there were several challenges. First, the generalizability and transferability of this study is limited due to the sample size, although the initial goal was a self-study. Second, finding participants willing to be interviewed was difficult. Since the returners were minors during their participation in the TAGs, most of the contact information provided was either that of their parents or the contact information included phone numbers that were no longer in service. It was challenging finding qualified participants, since some of the individuals who engaged in the program repeatedly did so several years ago. The experience of recruiting, though

challenging, gave this researcher insight to the influence BRL continues to have on returners and the many challenges that can affect recruitment with Latinx and Black youth. One youth was unable to attend two scheduled interviews due to outside conflicts. However, he later stated he made great effort to attend the third scheduled interview out of respect to his previous BRL experience. This participant exemplified the continued complexity of trying to engage adolescents. The lack of time, the long work hours, and lack of transportation can all be factors affecting populations of color who reside in systemically oppressed communities seeking treatment. Due to the challenges with recruitment, there was a small sample size.

Third, gender inclusivity was also a procedural difficulty. Along with the small sample size, there were disproportionately more males that participated. Although this could reflect the reality of the TAGs or may reflect a bias in the treatment modality, more female identified participants would help us understand how TAGs facilitate treatment engagement from a variety of social locations.

Another possible limitation could have been the mode in which interviews were conducted. I believe that my identity as a Latina who grew up in impoverished San Francisco neighborhoods influenced the participant's response- either positively or negatively. I also wonder how the fact that two researchers conducted the interviews, how the difference in style could have affected the answers provided by the participants. In addition, limitations around the interviews were the time constraints either due to participants showing up late or losing participant engagement.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

As stated, there is an overall lack of empirical research documenting the effectiveness of HHT in general. Therefore, studies analyzing the influence, effectiveness, and engagement of

HHT amongst clients to include men and women across age groups, social lines, and racial backgrounds can address this gap. Since people across the world identify with the hip hop culture, cross-cultural analyses are also possible.

Reflecting on this study, more research evaluating various aspects of BRL TAGs can strengthen the validity for this treatment modality. Further research may be conducted by replicating this study and broadening the sample size to include more men and women in various age groups. Even further research can include analyzing the perception of engagement for those that were initially mandated to attend in comparison with those that self-referred. These results can further expand on the perception of effectiveness of HHT amongst adolescents. Another study can also research clients that participated in both psychodynamic therapy and in HHT. These results can further help us understand specific aspects of diverse treatment modalities that youth felt were effective.

Findings supported the role of the leaders as important in participant experience and engagement. Therefore, more thorough research analyzing the TAGs leaders, leadership styles, and techniques can broaden the knowledge of what participants perceive a positive therapeutic alliance.

## **Conclusion**

This study offers insight into the effectiveness of HHT through qualitative interviews with participants that utilized HHT. The participants shared their insight on what made the program so engaging and appealing, thus initiating re-enrollment and breaking the stigma that youth of color are difficult to engage. Clients were increasingly engaged as a result of client-centered activities, the group experience, and also, the intentional focus on hip hop were equally

important to all participants. The strength of this study lies in its ability to expand current knowledge about engaging youth at-promise.

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APPENDIX A – SMITH IRB APPROVAL LETTER



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

February 19, 2016

Tatiana Padilla

Dear Tatiana,

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Kersten'.

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.  
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Mamta Dadlani, Research Advisor



APPENDIX B – BRL PERMISSION LETTER



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 Tatiana Padilla and Dr. Mamta Dadiani 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Jackson", written over a horizontal line.

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

APPENDIX C – BRL CONSENT PACKET



BEATS RHYMES AND LIFE, INC.  
450 Santa Clara Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94610  
www.brl-inc.org  
Main Office (510) 469-3445  
Fax (510) 479-3195

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

**BRL Staff Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_



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

Main Office (510) 469-3445  
 Fax (510) 479-3195

**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**

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cellphone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact/Leave Message**

Yes  No

Yes  No

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: \_\_\_\_\_

**BRL Staff Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D – INFORMED CONSENT



2015-2016

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

**Smith College School for Social Work Northampton, MA**

.....  
**Title of Study:** From Spitting Rhymes to Inspiring Minds: What Makes Youth Want to Reenroll at Beats, Rhymes and Life?

**Investigator(s):** Tatiana Padilla, Smith College School For Social Work  
.....

**Introduction**

- You are being asked to be in a research study that aims at understanding Beats, Rhymes and Life’s (BRL) ability to engage youth in their Therapeutic Activity Groups (TAGs).
- You were selected as a possible participant because you have enrolled in a TAG more than once.
- We 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 understand what makes TAGs effective and why youth reenroll in the program.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master’s in social work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

**Description of the Study Procedures**

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: (1) Meet at BRL headquarters in a private room for the interview, (2) Agree to be audio taped, and (3) Be interviewed for an hour about your experience in TAGs and about a rhyme. I will also ask you to share your rap lyrics that you felt best represents your experience in the TAGs.
- I will ask questions about the group experience, self-disclosure, and about the effectiveness of TAG. I am just wondering how the TAGs experience was for you.
- I will also ask that you share a rap lyrics from a TAG that you feel best describe your experience. If you don’t want to select one, a TAG leader will choose one for you.

**Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study**

- The study has the following risks. First, we will be discussing your experience in the TAGs and personal issues can come up. Therefore, discomfort can arise. If discomfort arises or difficult feelings are evoked, contact a BRL mentor for support. If a BRL mentor is not available, I can help you find a mentor to support you.

### **Benefits of Being in the Study**

- The benefits of participation are having an opportunity to talk about issues important to you and contributing to the gap in research focusing on the effectiveness of hip hop therapy.
- The benefits to social work/society are developing culturally sensitive interventions that appeal to populations that typically disengage. Research could help strengthen hip-hop therapy and could in turn, benefit clients who typically disengage from conventional, traditional therapy.

### **Confidentiality**

- Your participation will be kept confidential. Your Tag leader may know if you are participating, but will not know the content of your interview. If they suggest a rhyme of yours for us to discuss, they will know you participated. The TAG leaders have also assured to protect your confidentiality and will not discuss or share anything about your participation. You will be given an ID and a fake name (a pseudonym). Any identifying information will not be used in dissemination of findings.
- In addition, the records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. They will be saved on a hard drive and the hard drive will be kept in a locked cabinet. The files will be permanently deleted once they comply with federal regulations (explained below).
- 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. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

### **Payments/gift**

- You will not receive any financial payment for your participation.

### **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* (up to the date noted below) without affecting your relationship with the researchers 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 up to the point noted below. 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 30, 2016. After that date, your information will be part of the thesis, dissertation or final report.

### **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, Tatiana Padilla by email or by telephone. 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. I agree to be audio taped for this interview:**

Name of Participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. I agree to be interviewed, but I do not want the interview to be taped:**

Name of Participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E – PARENTAL CONSENT



2015-2016

**Parental-Guardian Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
Smith College School for Social Work Northampton, MA**

.....  
**Title of Study:** From Spitting Rhymes to Inspiring Minds: What Makes Youth Want to Reenroll at Beats, Rhymes and Life?

**Investigator(s):** Tatiana Padilla, Smith College School For Social Work  
.....

**Introduction**

- Your child/child you are guardian for (referred to as ‘your child’ in this form) is being asked to be in a research study that aims at understanding Beats, Rhymes and Life’s (BRL) ability to engage youth in their Therapeutic Activity Groups (TAGs).
- S/he was selected as a possible participant because your child has completed a TAGs more than once.
- I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before allowing your child to participate in this study.

**Purpose of Study**

- The purpose of the study is to understand your child’s experience in the TAGs and what made them want to reenroll.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master’s in social work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

**What does it mean to Participate in the Study?**

- If you decide to allow your child to participate in this study, s/he will be asked to do the following things: (1) Meet at BRL headquarters in a private room for the interview; (2) Agree to be audio taped, and (3) Be interviewed for an hour about their experience in TAGs. I will ask questions about the group experience, self-disclosure, and about the effectiveness of TAGs as a therapeutic intervention. Your child will also share rap lyrics they have written. The lyrics will be to aide your child in sharing what they feel best represents their experience in the TAGs. After the interview, your child will have completed participation in the study.

**Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study**

- The study has the following risks. First, we will be discussing your child’s experience in the TAGs and personal issues can come up. Therefore, discomfort can arise. If discomfort arises or difficult feelings are evoked, I strongly encourage your child to contact their BRL mentor

for support. If a BRL mentor is not available, I can help your child find a mentor to support them.

### **Benefits of Being in the Study**

- The benefits of participation are gaining insight, having an opportunity to talk about issues important to your child, and contributing to the gap in research focusing on the effectiveness of hip hop therapy.
- The benefits to social work/society are: the need for culturally sensitive interventions that appeal to populations that typically disengage. Research could help strengthen hip-hop therapy and could in turn, benefit clients who typically disengage from conventional, traditional therapy.

### **Confidentiality**

- Your child's participation will be kept confidential. If a TAGs leader chooses your child's rap lyrics, the TAGs leader will also sign a confidentiality agreement to guarantee your child's privacy. Your child will be given an ID and a fake name (pseudonym). Any identifying information will not be used in dissemination of findings.
- In addition, the records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. They will be saved on a hard drive and the hard drive will be kept in a locked cabinet. The files will be permanently deleted once they comply with federal regulations (explained below).
- 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.

### **Payments**

- You/your child will not receive any financial payment for participation.

### **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 30, 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 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, Tatiana Padilla by email or by telephone . If you would like a summary of the study results, a copy 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.

.....

Name of Parent/Guardian (print): \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

.....

**1. I agree to let my child be audio taped for this interview:**

Name of Parent/Guardian (print): \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. I agree to let my child be interviewed, but I do not want the interview to be taped:**

Name of Parent/Guardian (print): \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX F – INFORMED ASSENT



2015 – 2016

SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL WORK

CHILD (14-17) Assent to Participate in a Research Study

Smith College • Northampton, MA

.....

**Title of Study:** From Spitting Rhymes to Inspiring Minds: What Makes Youth Want to Reenroll at Beats, Rhymes and Life?

**Investigator(s):** Tatiana Padilla, Smith College School For Social Work

.....

**Introduction**

- You are being asked to be in a research study that aims at understanding Beats, Rhymes and Life’s (BRL) ability to engage youth in their Therapeutic Activity Groups (TAGs).
- You were selected as a possible participant because you have enrolled in a TAG more than once.
- 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 **figure out what makes students want to reenroll in the TAGs program.**
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master’s in social work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

**What Does it Mean to Participate?**

- If you agree to be in this study, we will meet at a private room at BRL headquarters. I will ask questions about your experience in the TAGs you were enrolled in. I will also ask you to share and talk about your rap lyrics. You can choose which rap lyrics to bring or to have the rap lyrics chosen by your TAGs leader. The interview will be about an hour long and you will be recorded. After the interview is finished, you will be done.

**Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study**

- The study has the following risks. First, you are asked to share about yourself and your opinions. If you feel uncomfortable at any time or if difficult feelings come up, you should contact your BRL mentor. If you do not have a mentor available, I can help you find one.

### **Benefits of Being in the Study**

- The benefits of participation are sharing about something important to you. You will also be contributing to needed research about hip-hop therapy.
- The benefits to social work/society are: the benefits of understanding ways to make therapy enjoyable for youth, such as with hip hop therapy.

### **Confidentiality**

- This study is anonymous. I will not be collecting or keeping any information about your identity.
- Your participation will be kept confidential. Only I will know what you said. If a TAG leader chooses your rap lyrics, they will also have to promise to keep your involvement private. The TAG leader will have to sign an agreement promising not to tell anyone you participated or what rap lyrics they chose. I will not include any information in any report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you. You will be given an ID and a fake name (a pseudonym). Identifying information will not be used at any point of my study or writing about my study.
- In addition, the records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. They will be saved on a hard drive and the hard drive will be kept in a locked cabinet. The files will be permanently deleted once they comply with federal regulations (explained below).
- 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. . We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

### **Payments**

- You will not receive any financial payment for your participation.

### **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 30, 2016. After that date, your information will be part of the thesis, dissertation or final report.

### **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, Tatiana Padilla by email or by telephone. 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

.....

**1. I agree to be audio taped for this interview:**

Name of Participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. I agree to be interviewed, but I do not want the interview to be taped:**

Name of Participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX G – INTERVIEW GUIDE

### **Demographic Questions:**

How do you identify Racially?

How would you describe your gender?

How old are you?

How old were you during the TAGs?

Where did you reside while in TAGs?

How many TAGs have you completed?

What year(s) did you complete them?

### **General Questions:**

#### **A. General, Why do they engage?**

1. You have been selected for this interview because you've participated in the TAGs more than once. What about the TAG made you want to come back and do it again?
2. What did you enjoy most about the TAGs? Can you tell me about a time that you felt like the TAG was therapeutic for you? What was the most therapeutic for you?
3. What advice would you give someone who is not sure if they want to participate in the TAGs? (probe: For example, if the person does not want to share about themselves or do not think they need therapeutic support?)
4. Tell me the top two things about TAGs that make them engaging.

#### **B. What about HH helps with engagement?**

1. What role does hip-hop play in your life?  
Follow-up: What about the hip-hop culture do you identify with the most?
2. Do you think a lot of youth identify with the hip-hop culture? If so, what role do you feel like it plays in their lives?
3. What about the focus on hip-hop made the therapeutic process easier for you, if at all?
4. If the TAG didn't incorporate elements of hip-hop, how would it have affected your choice to participate?

#### **C. Paced disclosure?**

1. Can you tell me about what it was like for you to open up to the other group members?
2. Can you tell me how you felt about sharing your personal story in the beginning of the TAG? In the middle of the TAG? By the end of the TAG?
3. Were you able to share something very personal about your history in the TAG?  
Follow-up: Can you give me an example?
4. How did it feel to write your own raps and then share them with the group?  
Follow-up: How did that feeling change over the course of the TAG?
5. What was it like to share some of your most personal raps?

#### **D. Group experience?**

1. What role, if any, did being part of a group play in your experience of the TAG?  
If not answered: What role, if any, do you think being part of a group played in your ability to engage in the TAG?

2. What did you like best about being part of the group? What did you like the least about being part of the group?
3. Can you tell me about a time that illustrates what your experience was in terms of being part of the Group and how it affected you?
4. How do you think your experience would have been different you were offered this program individually as opposed to in a group format?

**E. Discussion of Lyrics**

1. Thank you for bringing in some of your lyrics.
2. Can you break down your rhyme here for me?

## APPENDIX H – RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Tag MCs,

Have you completed a Therapeutic Activity Group (TAG) more than once?

Are you proud of a rap you created during the TAG?

My name is Tatiana Padilla and I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work completing a research project for my Masters' Thesis. For my study, I am looking for people who have enrolled in a Therapeutic Activity Group (TAG) **more than once**. I am interested in YOUR opinion about how you felt about the TAG and what made it work for you. I want to know what made you want to reenroll and participate in a TAG again.

If you decide to participate in the study, I will ask you some questions during an interview and will ask you to share a rhyme that you feel explains something about why the TAG is important to you. The interview will only be an hour long. Everything you tell me will be confidential. No one aside from the researcher will know what you choose to share. Your name and any identifying information will be protected through a fake name (a pseudonym).

Your voice is necessary for helping hip-hop therapy receive more attention. Help give voice to hip-hop therapy through your experience in the TAGs.

If you are interested in participating or learning more, please contact me, Tatiana Padilla.

I hope we have the chance to talk!

Sincerely,

Tatiana

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

APPENDIX I – RECRUITMENT FLYER



**HAVE YOU ENROLLED IN A TAG *MORE THAN ONCE?***

**PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY AND HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD**

I am interviewing participants who have enrolled in a Therapeutic Activity Group (TAG) more than once. I want YOUR opinion about how you felt about the TAG. I want to know *what* made you want to reenroll. Share your experience with me in an interview. Your voice is necessary for helping hip-hop therapy receive more attention! Your opinions matter.

Contact Tatiana Padilla at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] if you would like to be interviewed

**What does it mean to participate?**

**You can share your rap**

**That the interview will only take an hour**

**That everything is confidential! Only the researcher will know what you share**

THIS STUDY PROTOCOL HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE SMITH COLLEGE SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL WORK HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE (HSRC).