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Beats, Rhymes, Life & resilience : hip hop therapy with youth of color : a project based upon an investigation at Beats, Rhymes and Life Inc

Emily S.L. Schwartz
Smith College

Emily Schwartz
Beats, Rhymes, Life, and
Resilience: Hip Hop Therapy
with Youth of Color

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to understand if participation in Therapeutic Activity Groups (TAGS) at Beats Rhymes & Life helps young people to develop greater resilience. In this paper, resilience is defined in two parts: the ability for participants to engage their inner strengths and characteristics to overcome adversity and the capacity to identify and utilize community and interpersonal resources. This study consists of a quantitative analysis to create a revision of the program's existing pre/post treatment survey and examine resilience as reported by ten youth participants.

The findings revealed that participation in TAGs had a statistically significant impact on participant's ability to recognize and utilize their community and interpersonal resources. This suggests that the BRL program is successful at helping youth feel part of a community, which helps them feel less isolated and therefore more able to seek support when needed. The findings also revealed that participation in TAGs might impact participant capacity to use inner strengths to overcome adversity. However, further investigation is needed, possibly due to small sample size. Overall, this study highlights the importance of assessing and revising measurement tools used in community mental health and highlights the importance of youth development programs supporting youth in engaging with their communities in order to develop resilience.

BEATS, RHYMES, LIFE, & RESILIENCE:

HIP HOP THERAPY WITH YOUTH OF COLOR

A project based upon an investigation at
Beats, Rhymes, and Life Inc., submitted in
partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Emily Schwartz

Smith College School for Social Work
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The purpose of this study explores the effectiveness of Hip Hop therapy for fostering resilience in young people, especially those from economically and racially disadvantaged backgrounds. The study was conducted by examining a pre/post test survey that was administered to participants of the Beats, Rhymes, and Life (BRL) program. Facilitators of the Therapeutic Activity Groups (TAGs) administered pre-tests at the beginning of the 16-week session and the post-tests at the end of the session. Ten of the participants submitted sufficient data to be used in the analysis by returning both pre and post test surveys as well as providing clearly thoughtful responses. Participants were also asked to complete write-in responses in order to provide qualitative information about their experience and the value they gleaned from the program.

Young people of color are underserved in the mental health field. Young people of color face social and political discrimination from judicial systems and police brutality, adding to the already tumultuous developmental stage of adolescence. Furthermore, many young people of color do not seek out traditional talk therapy due to social and cultural norms around mental health. There is a prevailing concept of masculinity that promotes the idea of being "hard," which often includes ignoring one's emotional needs. This social influence impacts the willingness and interest of young people, especially young men to seek mental health serves for fear of being seen as weak. Therefore, the mental health field fails to meet the needs of youth of color. In community spaces however, many young people naturally use writing lyrics as a coping strategy and form of expression and many even fantasize about becoming professional Hip Hop artists. Hip Hop Therapy provides a potential bridge between the existing interests of many

young people and therapeutic interventions that can provide culturally responsive services to this underserved population.

Many youth development programs seek to encourage identity development through performing arts, poetry, community development, and civic engagement since individual and group identity development is an important aspect of adolescence. A strong sense of individual identity helps young people to differentiate themselves from their peers, while a clear ethnic and racial identity identifies a community of people who may provide support and empathy through having similar lived experiences and values. Strong identity development also enables young people to develop greater resilience and allows them to have confidence in their ability to respond to difficult situations. For the purposes of this study, resilience was defined to include a multidimensional understanding that encompassed two aspects: the participant's capacity to recognize their internal strengths, skills, and attributes in order to overcome adversity and the participant's ability to identify and utilize community and interpersonal resources to respond to challenges.

There is existing research that documents the benefit of youth development programs that use poetry, theater, Hip Hop, and civic engagement to help young people to explore their experiences as well as to give voice to the way they want their narrative told and represented. These studies also report participant responses to the interventions. However, very little data is available on the effectiveness of Hip Hop therapy programs. The studies that do exist are primarily case studies, qualitative studies, and studies focused on educational outcomes; however, there is a notable scarcity of quantitative measurement (Alvarez, 2006; Futch, 2011; Schwartz and Suyemoto, 2012). Other literature focuses on the negative aspects of Hip Hop culture and often places a large focus on examples when Hip Hop centers are themes of

misogyny, masculinity, and violence. However, it is important to fully contextualize the history of Hip Hop music and culture including its community roots and the positive influences it has over young listeners as well as the commercialization of the industry. Recognizing the strengths within Hip Hop and its inspiration and motivational impact on adolescence not only helps mental health professionals to engage with youth populations but also introduces a culturally responsive therapy intervention.

It is important for Social Work providers to understand the effectiveness of Hip Hop Therapy due to the potential to engage in a therapeutic intervention that utilizes an important aspect of youth culture and feels natural and inviting to young people, and therefore, is more likely to have a positive and lasting effect on participants. Hip Hop Therapy provides an authentic and fun way for young people to recognize their internal resources as well as their community and interpersonal resources in order to thrive and to survive obstacles, challenges, and setbacks. Furthermore, understanding the impact of Hip Hop as well as a deeper understanding of its history can help to de-pathologize Hip Hop music and culture, thereby helping to dissolve prejudice against communities that are shaped by and engage with Hip Hop as a major source of communication and identity development.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This literature review comprises of six major sections. It begins by discussing the period of adolescence as an important age for identity development and provides a social context for the additional challenges young people of color face during this period of identity development due to discrimination and prejudice. The review continues to discuss the importance and effectiveness of youth development programs. The next section discusses the importance of Hip Hop Music and culture and provides a context for the importance of Hip Hop Therapy. This is followed by two sections that introduce the youth development program Beats, Rhymes, and Life (BRL): The first focuses on how the program utilizes Hip Hop Therapy as an important intervention for participants and the second discusses BRL and resilience development. The final section describes the goals of the study.

Adolescence: A Period of Transition and Growth Potential

Adolescence is a transitional period when youth begin to explore new dimensions of individual and group identity and to determine how they want to live in the world (Johnson, 2014). Young people face many challenges as they navigate social, cultural, and biological influences during adolescence, such as peer pressure, racism, and puberty. Johnson suggests youth are learning to separate their identities from those of their caretakers and define who they are as individuals in the world during this transitional period. Youth are also learning how to differentiate themselves from their peers as they recognize the similarities and differences with friend groups and classmates. In addition to developing a sense of agency and autonomy, youth

are identifying and further developing skills that allow for self-advocacy. For this reason, adolescence is a time full of choices and growth.

Youth of color face particular struggles as they navigate the added challenges of racism, oppression, stereotypes, and other forms of social and structural racism, such as police brutality and access to equal education. In addition to the struggles of adolescence, young people of color often fear for their safety due to racist stereotypes and discrimination from those with institutional power and often experience mistreatment due to racial biases (Sherwell, 2015). For example Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager was shot six times while his hands were raised in surrender by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri (Jolly, 2014). Brown was portrayed as aggressive and threatening in the media, and the officer described him as looking "like a demon" (Darren Wilson's Testimony, BBC, 2014). The courts did not indict the police officer, Darren Wilson. This resulted in wide spread outrage, protests, and demonstration in Ferguson as well as throughout the country as the general population tried to call out the racism and injustice of the situation (Jolly). History shows, through stories like this, that young people of color are often seen as threats to be feared no matter who they are, how they dress, or how they behave. These racist ideas likely seep into the self-image of young people as they navigate their own identity development in their daily lives (Altman, 2016).

The threats to safety that youth of color experience are rooted in white privilege and negative stereotypes about youth of color across all levels of institutions from local schools and police precincts to federal government (Altman, 2016).[1] First, youth of color face discrimination within the education system; public schools with high percentages of black and minority students

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[1] Although beyond the scope of this paper, white privilege refers to the manner through which white people enjoy privileges that that people of color do not experience due to how power is distributed in socio-political structures. For further discussion, see Crosely-Corcoran, 2014

often receive less funding than wealthier and often whiter schools, leading to subpar education that denies youth of color access to important developmental and intellectual support structures. When youth of color push back against these practices, their efforts often are met with resistance and reactions are often organized around preserving white privilege. For example, in December 2015, Black Lives Matter activists and student organizers including, Alwiyah Shariff and Sam Sinyangwe met with Hillary Clinton to lobby for funding to improve African American communities and to deinstitutionalize the mass incarceration of people of color. When Clinton balked at these demands, citing that she could not force congress to pass civil rights laws, white privilege appeared to be informing her response (Altman). Racist ideas are also entrenched in the justice system. In 2016, Supreme Court Justice Scalia was condemned for his comments made the year prior, which stated that black students were inferior intellectually and would therefore benefit from going to lesser caliber schools rather than admitting African American students into prestigious universities where, he asserted, they would not do well (Abdullah, 2015). Youth of color face challenges that are rooted in the governmental and policy structures in the US and are felt in the daily, individual lives of young people trying to define themselves in the world.

In addition to the structural issues that youth of color face on a daily basis, they are also navigating typical developmental issues of adolescence. While many argue that adolescence is a period of "storm and stress", adolescence is also a time that youth are able to recognize the strengths within themselves and the opportunities that those attributes support (Johnson, 2014). Young people have the intelligence, the strength, and the motivation to exercise their agency and demand the life that they deserve. As they strive to differentiate themselves and define their identity, young people realize that they have a valuable perspective to share with the world. It is of utmost importance, particularly for youth of color, to recognize their capacities in order to

respond to the resources that they lack structurally. To do so, young people must develop resilience in order to overcome challenges in their lives. Youth programs can help young people to recognize their resilience and inner strengths and harness them in order to have a sense of empowerment and a positive self-image.

The Importance and Effectiveness of Youth Programs

Youth programs can serve an unparalleled and irreplaceable function for young people of color. Youth programs enable youth to explore new skills and provide the opportunity for young people to tell their story and to experience a peer community. Many successful youth programs such as The Source (Futch, 2011), Celebrating the Strengths of Black Youth (CSBY; Okeye-Adeyanju et al., 2014), and Youth Force (Schwartz and Suyemoto, 2012) provide youth with creative opportunities to explore, understand, and share their own personal histories. In these programs, young people are encouraged to discover new perspectives about themselves, their values, and their capabilities and to connect to others who are doing the same. For example, the youth program "THE SOURCE", located in Sarasota, Florida, utilized the creative space of theatre and acting to engage youth in a group process of creating monologues and dialogues that explore identity (Futch, 2011). Participants created a sense of safety and unity with peers as they explored alternative narratives of their lives; participants delved into the characters in order to discover new concepts of themselves and their experiences. Perhaps, most importantly, youth program participants engaged in a safe environment that valued their voice. In fact, many youth programs help young people to express their thoughts, emotions and experiences using different forms of creative expression including poetry (Levy, 2012; Olsen-McBride & Page, 2012), Hip Hop and Rap (Alvarez, 2006; Gann, 2010; Tyson, 2003; Tyson & Porcher, 2012) and theater

(Futch, 2011). These methods of expression in youth programs support youth empowerment by providing a space to craft and tell their personal narrative to a community of their peers.

In addition to supporting the creation of one's story, youth development work aims to establish an environment that offers safety and mutuality. Although individuals are invested in the uniqueness of their personal story, recognizing that one is not alone in their experiences can be very powerful in reducing one's sense of isolation and encouraging the solicitation of help, support, and validation from community. In "THE SOURCE" program described above, safety and mutuality were instrumental in allowing for the exploration of alternative narratives and the emerging sense of self (Futch, 2011). The encouragement of self-expression, introspection, and finding comfort in shared experiences is a way of helping young people to understand and identify their emotions. Participating in a community that understands an individual's lived experience allows for deeper exploration of emotions because one does not feel alone or isolated and can then ask for and receive support.

The formation of a community is another key component to the success of any youth program; however, community development and engagement is instrumental for youth who are members of historically marginalized communities. Forming a safe, empathetic community provides support to an underserved population (Travis, 2013), builds self-esteem and confidence by helping youth to feel valued and heard (Alvarez, 2006; Futch, 2011; Gann, 2010) and promotes self-disclosure and the ability to seek help through the group experience (Olson-McBride & Page, 2012). Furthermore, participation in a safe and supportive group experience encourages and enables youth to tell their story the way they want to be understood. For example, Beats, Rhymes, & Life- a Hip Hop Therapy program in Oakland, CA- explores the history and values of Hip Hop in the creative process of writing lyrics in their work with youth

(http://brl-inc.org/). The elements of Hip Hop lyricism and history and the opportunity for artistic development is understood to encourage enthusiastic youth participation and engagement, and BRL participants appreciate an environment that encourages their interest in Hip Hop (Gann, 2010). Through lyrical development and gradually learning to perform their art, youth likely develop strong self-esteem. BRL encourages youth participants to explore new ways of viewing and experiencing themselves and provides a community where youth with similar lived experiences felt seen, valued, and supported (Alvarez, 2006). The experience of sharing their story with an attentive group of peers that are going through a similar process and with caring adults allows youth to feel heard and valued.

Youth programs that support the development of confidence, a sense of self, and connection to community may achieve these ends, in part, by supporting the exploration of other aspects of identity such as ethnic, racial, sexual, religious, and others. Youth groups can provide a space and community to help young people form subcultures such ethnic and racial groups in order to encourage cultural pride, to provide support and belonging, and to navigate the nuances of identity development for historically marginalized individuals. Research suggests that members of historically marginalized ethnic groups tend to orient to the dominant culture to define their sense of self ethnically (French, Kim, & Pillado, 2006). This suggests that youth of color may be better able to respond to adverse situations if they are a part of an ethnic community that fosters and appreciates their inner strengths and characteristics. French et al. (2006) argue that "having a strong ethnic identity may allow minority youth to overcome the effects of a hostile environment and may be linked to resilience and successful adaptation" (pg. 56). An ethnic community, therefore, gives youth a sense of membership and similarity where they can bond with others over shared lived experiences and similar perspectives. This provides

a kinship that is not experienced within the context of the dominant culture (whereas those with marginalized identities are often othered and isolated) and this kinship often enables them develop a stronger sense of individual identity and confidence (Okeye-Adeyanju et al., 2014). A sense of belonging is felt when people share key aspects of their experience such as social and moral values and worldview (French et al.). Therefore, young people's ethnic identity may play a central role in developing a sense of belonging to a particular group and may influence thinking, perceptions and behavior. A sense of ethnic membership and belonging can be extremely important during the transitional time of identity development because it provides grounding and stability

Recognizing and participating in the strengths, attributes, and expression of one's ethnic and/or racial subgroup, such as hip hop music and culture, and engaging in a culturally encouraging community is important for developing ethnic membership and cultural pride. This is illustrated by the youth program Celebrating the Strengths of Black Youth (CSBY), a prevention intervention group that used small group discussions and activities centered around the strengths of African American communities and families to introduce *racial socialization themes*; this program provided tools to develop cultural pride and protective factors against negative reactions toward and assumptions of African Americans from dominant society (Okeye-Adeyanju et al., 2014). Racial identity is impacted by how dominant society perceives and receives individuals of a particular racial group; therefore, healthy identity often relies upon validation from the people, systems, and structures surrounding youth (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003). The study on CSBY found that encouragement of ethnic identity formation and positive attitudes towards ethnic identity helped youth to develop a stronger self-esteem and confidence (Okeye-Adeyanju et al.). Cultural identity helps to provide a sense of belonging,

stability, and kinship, which build protective factors and are all aspects of resilience. Hip Hop culture and Hip Hop music provides another way to embrace the historical, cultural, and racial traditions of marginalized communities, to highlight the resilience of participating communities, and to bolster pride and confidence in marginalized identities. Many youth development programs help young people to identify and feel proud of their heritage, culture, and experiences and to bond with their peers who are also learning to appreciate themselves (Alvarez, 2006; Gann, 2010; Okeye-Adeyanju, 2014).

Finally, youth programs foster empowerment and resilience by encouraging civic engagement. For example, Youth Force is a youth focused community-organizing program based in Boston, Massachusetts that seeks to engage young people in civic engagement to increase a sense of identity and self worth (Schwartz and Suyemoto, 2012). Youth Force helped young people realize that they can have an impact in the world and can be agents of change with their community, their loved ones, and national politics. Young people that participated in youth force reported higher self-esteem due to their involvement in the program because they learned that they could make a difference in the world and their community. Qualitative data about experiences in Youth Force suggests that youth felt empowered to help themselves and others and they felt a greater responsibility for those around them. As youth participants received positive feedback from adults for their work and dedication, participants began to see themselves differently and value parts of themselves that they may not have recognized before. Youth Force helped young people of color to recognize their own agency and see themselves agents of change within their community. This realization increased their self-esteem and impacted their sense of identity, which is understood as an increase in resiliency. Similarly the *positive youth development framework* suggests that young people feel empowered when they realize that they

can have an impact on the world around them, their environment, and their communities (Travis

& Deepak, 2011). The 5 C's of positive youth development are competence, character,

caring/compassion, connection, and confidence, which are fostered in programs like Youth

Force. Young people who are able to not only value themselves but to also take action to help

their community demonstrate an inner strength for survival and an incredible ability to overcome

challenges.

 In summary, youth programs encourage the development of positive identity and foster

resilience. Programs help youth to understand their own life story from new perspectives and

provide them with the tools to tell their narrative with ownership. Through youth programming,

young people are able to work with their peers to develop community, to feel safe, and to feel

valued. This community allows young people of color in particular to explore their identities and

develop a racial and/or ethnic identity that can bolster their sense of self and enable them to

protect themselves from negative social stereotypes and ignorance. Finally youth groups can

support youth in developing a sense of agency to take action and initiate transformation in issues

important to them.

The Importance of Hip Hop Music and Culture

 Hip-Hop culture provides a sense of identity and belonging for disenfranchised groups in

the United States, specifically African American and Latino youth. Although its roots exist in

tribal practices, many argue that Hip Hop as a movement started in the South Bronx in the 1970s

by DJ Kool Herc and other neighborhood musicians such as Grandmaster Flash and Afrika

Banbaataa. Central to this art form was the remixing and breaking of beats, and this form of

engagement with music served as a source of joy and unity in the neighborhood. Retrospectively,

we understand this emergence of Hip Hop as a community-based movement and empowering response from communities that have historically been underserved by local policies. As it developed, Hip Hop became the means by which people who were silenced by the racism within dominant culture gave voice to their experiences and raised awareness about the conditions of their neighborhood while sharing more about their personal experiences (Hip Hop Wikipedia). As Powell (2011) asserts, "music is a communicative tool that has been found to strengthen group identification and cohesiveness" (pg. 460). Hip Hop music and the associated aspects of Hip Hop culture became the medium used to voice frustrations, bring awareness to injustices, and bring communities together through common experience. At the core of Hip Hop, are the 5 "elements" or key aspects: Rapping/MCing, Turn-Tabling/DJing, Break-Dancing/B-Boying, Graffiti Arts, and Knowledge of Self (Universal Zulu Nation, 2014). For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on the element of Rapping, also known as MCing.

The element of rapping in Hip Hop demonstrates how Hip-Hop is both an individual and a collective expression because the lyrics of Rap are pivotal to the rapper, the musical product, and to the community's identity. Although artists strive to craft a narrative in which they can share their observations and wishes for themselves and their community, many songs incorporate rhymes and beats from other Rap and Hip Hop songs. Rap is a collective expression of identity and experience that shares deeper meaning than the lyrics alone, including cultural perspectives, experiences, and history (Rose, 1994). Rose highlights that Hip Hop is not controversial simply due to the lyrics and themes but because Hip Hop serves to empower people of color, to raise awareness about experiences and history, and to create a demand for these messages to be presented to dominant society. "Confining the discussion of politics in Rap to lyrical analysis addresses only the most explicit dimension of the politics of contemporary black cultural

expression. Rap's cultural politics lies in its lyrical expression, its articulation of communal knowledge, and in the context for its public reception … in short it is not just what you say, it is where you can say it, how others react to it, and whether you have the power to command access to public space" (Rose, 1994, p.124). For young people of color who have engaged with the culture, Hip Hop fosters hope, provides a sense of cultural belonging, and bolsters pride for racial and cultural identities (Commissiong, 2013). This will be further discussed below in this review.

Despite the ways in which identification with Hip Hop culture is associated with positive aspects of development for youth of color, this same identification leads to particular challenges due to the misrepresentations and the resulting misconceptions about Hip Hop. Rap and Hip Hop are misunderstood and misrepresented in a large portion of American culture due to the prominence of negative themes such as violence and misogyny in mainstream Hip Hop music. Large-scale commercialization of Hip Hop has diminished the diversity of Hip Hop songs on the radio and propagates a simplistic and largely negative image of minority groups in America. The music that is promoted suggests that young people of color are violent, sexist, and dangerous and this image is one which corporate America feels comfortable promoting (Hurt, 2015). However, there are complex reasons behind the mass production of Hip Hop music with problematic lyrics and themes. Many argue that the promotion of "hip hop" music that focuses on themes of violence, for example, represents a colonization of hip hop and is a way by which corporate America is able to support social practices, such as the prison industrial complex, that lead to financial benefits for a few, privileged individuals (Hip Hop Wikipedia).

Due to the lack of variety in commercial Hip Hop music themes, young people are bombarded with narrow definitions of masculinity, femininity, survival, and power, as well as of

what it means to fight oppression. Therefore, negative ideas can become idealized and galvanized within urban youth culture and encoded into young people's sense of identity. This "hardness" differentiates young people of color from dominant white American culture and provides them with their own cultural code of conduct (Hurt, 2015). Powell (2011) explains, "In essence, what is frowned upon in dominant society becomes praiseworthy within the marginalized social group" (pg. 470). For example, saying the N-word, being incarcerated, engaging in misogyny, stealing, and joining gangs are sometimes idealized out of a rejection of the discrimination, negative assumptions, and judgments many people of color face when interacting with dominant American culture. Despite this influence, violence and misogyny are not the values with which many young and aspiring Hip Hop artists want to identify. However, there are pressures to conform to these topics in order to succeed in the music industry, whether young people personally identify with those themes or not.

The wide criticism of Hip Hop, as well as persistent misrepresentations of it by dominant culture, may inform part of the reason why young people continue to demand Hip Hop in high quantities. This is an example of Psychological Resistance Theory; when young people feel that their freedom of choice is being challenged, they become more motivated to make their own decisions regardless of majority opinion, and therefore will demand their right to listen to the criticized music. This suggests that the large scale criticism of Hip Hop music is understood and experienced as criticism for young people and their cultural preferences, values, and lived experience, and therefore they are motivated to demand respect for their cultural and ethnic identity by demanding more Rap and Hip Hop music (Elligan, 2001); the implications for this in terms of commercial Hip Hop are far reaching.

Despite the potential risks, as discussed above, of Hip Hop negatively influencing youth identity development, Hip-Hop ultimately provides positive influences on young people by providing a source of identity and an opportunity to share ideas and values with others through a common language. People often have a need to find a group that identifies and shares their experiences, and group identity can be helpful in nourishing this need. Once membership in these groups is established, research shows that young people are less likely to behave in violent ways (French et al., 2006). In fact, the identification with an ethnic identity through Hip Hop seems to serve as a protective factor as young people with strong ethnic identities are less likely to behave in stereotype affirming ways. Rap and Hip Hop music are powerful mediums to reach young people growing up in under resourced neighborhoods and schools. Young people relate to Hip Hop on a level that is beyond simply appreciating music artists for their talent; it also provides an important outlet for self and cultural expression.

Hip Hop also provides opportunities for youth to develop resilience as well as a sense of control and influence over their lives and surroundings. According to the youth individual and group empowerment framework, empowered youth are less likely to feel hopeless, victimized and threatened (Travis, 2011). Furthermore, individuals who believe in themselves in this manner are more likely to envision wide scale change and work together to create that change. Individuals who feel capable and confident in their abilities and skills are also more likely to have a healthy self-esteem, which is also associated with resilience. Hip Hop music and culture promote empowerment in many ways; for example, Hip Hop music often discusses and promotes belief in oneself and presenting oneself with confidence, which encourages listeners to embody these traits. Hip Hop music also functions as a model of resiliency because it discusses overcoming adversity and surviving incredible challenges (Travis, 2011). Finally, Hip Hop

provides a method for young people to develop these positive attributes, to develop connections to each other, and to develop their own identities, which helps create a community of empowered individuals that can continue to influence others.

Beats, Rhymes, & Life (BRL) and Hip Hop Therapy

Beats, Rhymes & Life (BRL) is a youth program that offers Hip Hop Therapy (HHT) as a culturally responsive mental health services to adolescents and young adults from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in the Bay Area of California. Young people, ages 12-18, participate in 16 week Therapeutic Activity Groups (TAGS) with a specific curriculum focused on understanding the history and commercialization of Hip Hop, supporting group cohesion, facilitating exploration of personal and community experiences and values, and enabling artistic development (http://brl-inc.org/). The regular use of freestyle and composition in structured, supportive activities helps youth to develop a strong bond and provides a safe environment for self-reflection. The TAGs culminate in a showcase where family and friends gather together to support the participants and witness the growth and empowerment youth demonstrate by performing their songs to their community. BRL uses ideas similar to the *positive youth development framework* (Travis & Deepak, 2011)*,* which suggests that young people feel empowered when they realize that they can have an impact on the world around them, their environment, and their communities. BRL TAGs foster each of the 5 C's of positive youth development: competence, character, caring/compassion, connection, and confidence.

BRL seeks to develop these characteristics by examining the relationship between music, politics, and identity with participants and encouraging them to incorporate it into their understanding of themselves. BRL's HHT includes a discussion about the political, historical,

and racial dimensions of Hip-Hop, reactions to Hip-Hop in dominant society, and what that means for the participants' identities by being associated with Hip Hop. Through this approach, BRL provides an opportunity for young people to access mental health that may not otherwise be available (Alvarez, 2011). First, mental health services are unavailable to many African American and Latino youth, especially young men, due to the cultural stigma associated with such services. The act of seeking mental health services is an act that is often seen as a character flaw or weakness, which can further discourage young people to seek out traditional therapeutic sources. Alvarez suggests that African American and Latino youth are taught to suppress their pain and feelings and deal with challenges on their own without letting other people know what is going on with them. This pressure often teaches young people of color that not only are they alone in their emotional and psychological struggles but also that seeking out mental health services is shameful. Second, when African American and Latino youth do seek mental health services, treatment is often disconnected from the daily realities and cultural strengths of these communities. As such, the treatment that youth do seek and receive leads to pathologizing them in a very culturally specific way. These two points explain, in part, why the research shows that in disadvantaged communities, PTSD and other mental health conditions are under diagnosed and undertreated. Hip Hop therapy offers a way to bridge this access gap.

In Hip Hop Therapy, elements of Hip Hop are incorporated into activities to provide a therapeutic intervention. This is often appealing to young people of color because Rap and the other elements of Hip-Hop are seen as a source of expression and cultural identity. While not all youth dream about becoming a Rap star, the possibility of creating a life that allows for the authentic expression of self within Hip Hop culture provides hope and ambition for young people, which is important in developing resiliency and self esteem (Alvarez, 2011). "At the

basis of Hip Hop Therapy is a contention that therapy is most effective and meaningful when the client's culture, interests and experiences are respected and valued" (Alvarez, 2006, p.17). BRL offers a culturally congruent format to receive mental health services for many young people who would not seek out traditional therapy for emotional support.

BRL honors the value that young people see in Hip Hop and encourages participants to think critically about Hip Hop culture and lyrics as well as to develop their own talents as burgeoning music artists. In this way, BRL allows youth who engaged with Rap and Hip Hop to be experts of their own emotional lives and refrains from assuming that mental health providers know "best." Research on BRL found that participants preferred Hip Hop Therapy to traditional forms of therapy, and all participants agreed that Hip Hop was a form of communication that increased self confidence and that they were inspired by their peers (Gann, 2010). Furthermore, this approach refrains from positioning academics as experts that can postulate about the importance and sociology of Hip Hop (Stephans and Wright, 2000). BRL's respect for participants and Hip Hop culture including the music and artists creates a genuine and egalitarian community from which deep therapeutic work can take place.

Hip Hop Therapy also can help social workers and scholars to understand what about Hip Hop culture influences young people, especially when dominant culture remains critical (Gonzalez, 2009; Stephans & Few, 2007; Tyson, 2003; Tyson & Porcher, 2012). A deeper understanding of Hip Hop, as well as its therapeutic applications, is essential to creating a culturally responsive and effective mental health intervention for young people of color. Research suggests that Rap and Hip Hop Therapy are particularly effective because they can serve as a bridge to help providers understand the values, attitudes, behavior, and culture of young people who are influenced by Hip Hop culture (Tyson, 2003). 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). Hip Hop Therapy can also reframe the social misconception about Hip Hop music and culture, instead teaching youth to use Hip Hop positively to process their feelings and experiences.

BRL and Resilience Development

Initial attempts to articulate and measure the effects of BRL's Hip Hop Therapy program identified six domains in which TAG participants develop strengths and skills: confidence, use of social support, cooperation, engagement with and trust in adults, mental health, and resiliency. The current study is specifically aimed at understanding the development of resilience. For the purposes this study resilience is defined in two parts: the capacity for an individual to realize their internal resources that enable them to respond to and recover from significant adversity and the capacity for an individual to identify and utilize interpersonal community resources in times of difficulty.

First, scholarship discusses resilience as an internal characteristic and frames it as the capacity for an individual to successfully respond to adverse and challenging situations (Anthony, 2009; Raphael, 2013) as well as to recover from traumatizing experiences without persistent emotional, psychological, and/or cognitive disturbances (Gerber, 2014). In this vein there are several characteristics that are correlated with this aspect of resiliency. Positive personal traits such as intelligence, positive temperament (Anthony, 2009), and feeling empowered (Travis, 2011) as well as high self esteem and confidence (Alvarez, 2006; Futch, 2011, Okeye-Adeyanju, 2014; Raphael, 2013) also foster resilience in youth. Travis (2011) notes

that empowerment and resilience share many of important components because empowered individuals are better able to demonstrate resilience during challenges. High self-esteem is another important aspect of resiliency because it enables individuals to demonstrate growth and clear thinking, which enables people to utilize protective factors better. Coping also is closely related to resiliency because an individual's capacity to manage a difficult situation demonstrates their resilience (Raphael, 2013). Therefore, qualities such as empowerment, confidence and high self-esteem help individuals to utilize their internal resources in order to respond to the regular challenges of daily life as well as mental health concerns such as trauma, anxiety, and depression, and structural racism.

Other research discusses the importance of environmental and community factors in the development of resilience for young people. When individuals have strong interpersonal relationships, community connections (Anthony, 2009, Gerber, 2014; Raphael, 2013), and a sense of cultural and social belonging (French, 2006), resilience increases. Identification with one's cultural identity can provide a sense of community and connection that can help build resilience when facing discrimination, prejudice and other adverse social environments (French et al. 2006). Young people facing societal challenges also benefit from communities where one feels heard (Travis, 2013) and valued (Gann, 2010). With this in mind, we understand that civic engagement also fosters resilience as it allows young people to experience themselves as agents of social change for their community (Schwartz et al, 2013). Resilience from environmental and community influences can be fostered through participation in both supportive groups and civic engagement; therefore, both the giving and receiving of support within networks helps people to overcome adversity.

Research shows that interpersonal relationships and community connection help young people to develop resilience (Gerber et al., 2014; Anthony et al., 2009; Raphael, 2013). For example, The Bridge Project is a summer project in a large western city that encourages stronger relationships with caring adults in school. This project explores whether the program helps students to develop resilience. The research showed that children who participated in the program were more able to overcome risks and perform better in schools. (Anthony, Alter, & Henson, 2009) "Increasingly, experts view resilience as the outcome of an interactive process involving risk and protection" (Anthony et al., 2009). This research suggests that resilience may increase if students are able to identify adults with whom they can have a relationship and utilize that connection. However, youth not only benefit from strong relationships with caring adults, but can also benefit from strong relationships with peers. Research clearly demonstrates that modeling from parents and community members greatly influences young people's capacity for resilience and recovery (Gerber et al., 2014; Raphael, 2013). Therefore, it may be important for young people to have positive role models from parents and/or community members in order to help them identify and the utilize interpersonal and community resources in times of need.

Key aspects of youth development programs, including the development of individual and group identity, a strong voice, a safe, supportive community, and agency are all directly related to the development of resilience. Additionally, reflection is an important aspect of healing and growth that has components in both the individual and environmental framework of resilience; groups that encourage self-disclosure in a variety of forms (Futch, 2011; Levy, 2012; Olson- McBride & Page, 2012) and exploration of one's personal narrative (Tyson, 2003; Tyson and Porcher, 2012) also help individuals to process their experiences and feel rooted in a supportive community.

Goals of the Current Study

Given that efforts to measure the effectiveness and outcomes of HHT are in their infancy and are primarily comprised of case studies and qualitative analyses (Alvarez, 2006; Elligan, 2001; Gann, 2010; Gonzalez, 2009; Johnson, 2014; Levy, 2012; Olsen- McBride et al., 2012; Raphael, 2013; Schwartz et al., 2012; Stephens et al, 2007; Travis, 2011; Travis, 2013; Tyson, 2003; Tyson et al., 2012), the current study aims to provide quantitative data about the effectiveness of the Hip Hop Therapy model developed and provided through BRL in increasing TAG participants' resilience. BRL's current outcome measure is a questionnaire provided to each participant at the beginning and at the end of each TAG in order to assess the impact of TAGS on mental health, community engagement, resilience, confidence, cooperation, and social support. First, this study seeks to examine the current outcome measure to assess its reliability and validity and provide recommendations for revision. Second, this study seeks to understand if engagement in TAGs impacts participants' resilience. Specifically, this study will explore changes in participants' capacity to recognize and use their internal resources and personal attributes in order to overcome challenging situations and obstacles as well as youths' capacity to identify and utilize the interpersonal and community resources they have in order to help overcome adversity.

Chapter III

Methodology

Participants

Fourteen participants completed a survey as part of their participation in Beats Rhymes and Life's (BRL) Therapeutic Activity Groups (TAGs). However, data from 4 participants was unusable. One participant failed to complete the post-test and one participant failed to complete a pre-test. One participant responded to the survey in a sporadic manner answering on either end of the likert scale, likely revealing a lack of intentionality, and finally another participant skipped more than half of the questions. For these reasons, 4 participants were removed from the analysis of the study, leading to a sample of 10 participants.

Although most participants were young adolescents, BRL manages to reach a wide range of age groups across multiple grade levels where participants are able to work and learn together. In the current study, participants ranged in age from 13 to 19 years old, with an average age of 15 years old. Participants predominantly identified as African American (n=6); other participants identified as Latino (n=2), and multi-racial (n=2). All of the participants that we were able to use in the study identified as male. This is not typical of TAGs however, and likely reveals some sampling biases. Most participants had not participated in a previous TAG and completed the surveys during a TAG conducted at one of various satellite sites in the Bay Area including those located in San Francisco and Oakland.

Measures

A pre/post-test survey was developed by BRL in the following manner to assess changes in several domains of interest as a result of TAG participation. This data was secondary data that BRL collected on their own. A member of BRL developed a question bank based on similar evaluations and past BRL evaluation efforts. Survey items were revised and BRL community members developed additional items. These members included: staff that lead and supervised TAGs, graduated TAG participants, and community research partners. All those involved then reviewed the items to clarify the 6 domains of interest, and the final 20 items were chosen through a consensual group agreement between the BRL staff, a research consultant, and a community partner. Statements were developed to be rated on a likert scale from 1-7 from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The identified domains of interest were: confidence, cooperation, use of social support, trust of adults in school/clinics, mental illness, and resiliency. *Confidence* aimed to understand whether participating in TAGS helps participants to feel more assured of their artistic abilities as well as their own personal value. *Social support* addressed whether participating in TAGS helps participants to identify and utilize social support networks when they need it. *Cooperation* aimed to understand whether participating in TAGS helps participants to value group work and community as they challenge themselves artistically, socially, and emotionally. *Engagement* with and *trust* in adults referred to whether participating in TAGs helps participants to feel like they can trust, depend on, and receive support from the adults in their lives such as counselors, teachers, therapists and mentors. *Mental illness* sought to determine whether participating in TAGS alleviated symptoms of depression, anxiety, or other mental health concerns. The initial

resilience items sought to determine whether participating in TAGS helped participants to feel hopeful about the future and trust their abilities to survive and learn from challenges in their life

When post-tests were administered, participants were also asked to write in a response to questions that asked for their subjective experience of how participation in the TAG affected their confidence, cooperative skills, use of social support, engagement/trust of adults such as in school/clinics, emotional difficulties (mental illness) and capacity to "bounce back" (resiliency). See Figure 1 for the original posttest survey.

Procedure

Participants were given the survey in paper form and asked to complete it during the first phase of the TAG intervention as well as at the end of the TAG intervention. The pre-test was administered after the orientation to TAGS and during or after the first treatment module, which allows for relationship building prior to the body of the intervention. The post-test was administered at the end of the TAG program either during their final session or during a one-on-one meeting with a TAG Leader. Group leaders discussed the survey goals with participants before administering the pre- and post-tests in order to support engagement and encourage complete answers. As such, participants were able to take some ownership in the process and were aware that their participation in the survey helped to support the longevity of the TAG programs. Already completed surveys were complied by BRL staff, de-identified, and provided to this writer for analysis.

Chapter IV

Results

The current study aimed to examine the concept of resilience in BRL's youth programs and to answer the following questions:

1) How well do the current survey items developed by BRL assess the domains of interest, and how might these items be revised?

2) Based on the revised measure, does participation in BRL TAGs increase participant resiliency defined by the ability to realize their inner strengths and characteristics in order to overcome adversity?

3) Based on the revised measure, does participation in BRL TAGs increase participant resiliency as defined by the ability to identify and utilize interpersonal and community resources?

Survey Evaluation and Revision

To explore the first research question, we examined the internal reliability of the consensually developed survey questions for each proposed domain. Initial analysis showed poor internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha for mental health symptoms and use of social support, low to moderate reliability for cooperation ($\alpha = 0.3$-0.7), moderate reliability for confidence ($\alpha = 0.4$-0.5) and engagement with adults ($\alpha = 0.5$-0.6), and strong reliability for resilience ($\alpha = 0.8$). Due to the small sample size, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions based on statistical analysis alone. As such, subsequent decisions regarding the measure were based on conceptual formulations that were supported by statistical patterns and trends.

A further review of the literature on resilience suggested that that definitions of resilience extend beyond the initial definition considered by BRL, which was focused on feeling hopeful about the future and capacity to learn and grow from challenges. In fact, aspects of a broader definition of resilience were reflected in the non-resilience questions, including questions that focused on whether participants could seek out help from adults and rely emotionally on their community. Other questions explored youths' view of themselves regarding confidence, ability to overcome obstacles, and hope for their future. Based on this, questions were divided into two domains conceptually: the capacity to recover from obstacles given an individual's qualities and experiences and the identification and use of interpersonal and community resources.

Two statistical analyses were run with regard to exploring these two domains. First, a principal components factor analysis was run to see how many factors emerged from the data. Typically, 10 observations (i.e., participants) are needed for each item, and in this case, a PCA would be run only after 200 participants answered the survey. Given that research with this measure is ongoing, procedures to compute the PCA in the future were put in place with the current analysis. The PCA factor loadings reflected the two factors that generally mapped onto our conceptually identified domains. Several items appeared to load equally well on both factors and some items failed to load well on either. Each of these items were examined further and placed in one of the two factors based on conceptual reasoning. The items in the two factors are listed in Table 1. Given limited applicability of the conclusions based on the sample size, the specific factor loadings are not reported.

Second, Cronbach's alphas for the new domains of interest were calculated and found to be strong at both at the pre-test (internal resources α = .85; interpersonal/community resources α = .77) and post-test (internal resources α = .83; interpersonal/community resources α = .73).

Given these high internal reliability ratings, a total score for each domain at pre and post-test was calculated for each participant and used in subsequent analyses.

TAG participation may impact resilience due to recognition of internal resources

In order to examine if TAG participation impacted participants' capacity to overcome obstacles, a repeated measures t-test was computed between pre- and post-test scores. Initial results suggest that TAGs may have a positive effect on participants' capacity to recognize and utilize their internal resources to overcome adversity, although there was no statistically significant difference between pre-and post-test evaluations. Given the small sample, pre/post means were examined and a 1-point increase was found (Pre-test $\bar{x}$=33.68, SE=1.6; Post-test $\bar{x} =$ 34.55, SE=2.1). Although this is not statistically significant, it does show, given the small sample, movement in the right direction.

Qualitative data supports the possibility that participation in a TAG positively affected participants' capacity to recognize their internal strengths, skills, and attributes in order to over come adversity. First, participants shared that they gained skills and perspectives that will help them get through difficult experiences in the future. One participant reported, "I'll get confidence whenever I need it," reflecting the participant's belief in himself and his capacity to get through difficulties. One participant stated, "It helped a lot; rapping is the only thing that helps me to 'bounce back'." This participant identified an internal coping strategy that increased his capacity to respond to challenges and reported that he feels better equipped to do so in the future. Finally, another participant simply stated, "This has helped me with my bounce back." Although not very descriptive, it does confirm that the participant felt more able to recover from challenges after participating in BRL TAGs.

Second, participants wrote about how participation in BRL improved their self-confidence; the internal belief that an individual is capable of success and deserves success directly influences their capacity to respond to challenges. One student reflected that participation in BRL TAGs affected his confidence "a lot because I never performed on stage." In BRL, participants are encouraged to perform for their peers as well as in their showcase at the end of the session as a method of boosting confidence and belief in one's own skills. Another student reported, "It's made me more comfortable with certain things." This statement reflects the student's growth in challenging themselves and their ability to succeed. Finally, another student strongly stated the impact of BRL on their confidence. "It impacted my confidence a lot. I feel so much more confident than I ever did." This confidence speaks to the participant's awareness about his ability to respond to difficult situations, to overcome obstacles and to learn from his experiences.

TAG participation significantly improves resilience due to identification of community and interpersonal resources

In order to examine if TAG participation impacted participants' resilience in terms of their capacity to identify and use their interpersonal and community resources, a repeated measures t-test was computed between pre- and post-test scores. TAGs appeared to significantly impact participants' capacity to identify and use community/interpersonal resources ($p= .01$). This suggests that participation in TAGs increases participant resourcefulness and clarifies the social supports available. When comparing pre- and post-test mean scores, participant capacity to identify and utilize interpersonal/community resources was stronger at the end of treatment (post-test $\bar{x}=38.59$, SE=2.32) than at the beginning (pre-test $\bar{x}=34.57$, SE = 2.34).

Qualitative data further supports the idea that participation in a TAG positively impacted participants' capacity to identify community and personal resources and utilize them. Participants who answered the fill in question asking about changes in their connection to adults and other resources indicated that they felt more able to identify and use these resources following participation in the TAG. One participant reflected on his opinion of adults, stating, "It has showed me that there are people out there that are kind hearted and caring for people other than themselves." This illustrates how he was able to view adults as sources of support and begin to identify people who want to help. Another participant discussed that he feels respect towards adults in his life and can recognize what they might offer him, noting "It helped me to be more respectful". Similarly, another shared that "It has helped me gain enough confidence and understanding that it is okay to need help." This speaks to the engaging in a supportive community in order to develop self-confidence and feel capable of seeking help when it is needed. Another participant reflected on his opinion about getting support, noting, "At first, I didn't like getting help, but then I realized it's important. I now like getting support from others." These responses indicate that participation in BRL TAGs helped participants to recognize the adults in their lives as resources and begin to consider how they might help when needed.

Chapter V

Discussion

Resilience is a crucial element of adolescent life as young people struggle to define who they are among the social pressures and the changes that teenagers endure (Johnson, 2014). In this time, youth programs can be critical for their development, especially those who encounter social prejudice including police discrimination (Altman, 2016) and judicial injustice (Abdullah, 2015). Youth programs offer an opportunity for young people to develop resilience by exploring their experiences and sharing their stories with their peers (Alvarez, 2006; Futch, 2011; Gann, 2010). These programs often create a safe environment where participants feel heard and valued (Gann, 2010), which enables young people to recognize their own self-worth, increase self confidence, and develop the capacity to overcome adversity (Alvarez, 2006; Alvarez 2013; Futch, 2011; Gann; 2010). Many youth programs allow young people to develop a support community in order to explore individual and ethnic identities, which can impact a young person's ability to recognize community and interpersonal resources and reach out for help when they need it (French et al., 2006; Okeye-Adeyanju et al., 2014). Finally, youth programs help young people to develop an awareness of their agency and their ability to effect change in their community (Schwartz et al., 2012).

Recently there has been a growing interest in how the arts can provide a therapeutic platform to provide counseling services to underserved communities of young people including poetry (Levy, 2012; Olsen-McBride & Page, 2012), theater (Futch, 2011), as well as Hip-Hop and Rap (Alvarez, 2006; Gann, 2010; Tyson, 2003; Tyson & Porcher, 2012). In particular, Beats, Rhymes, and Life (BRL) is a Hip Hop Therapy Program based in the Bay Area that seeks to

provide young people the opportunity to explore therapeutically relevant topics by engaging in Therapeutic Activity Group (TAGs) centered around Hip-Hop. Group activities include exploration of the history or Hip Hop and it's impact on the lives, perspectives, and values of TAG participants, community formulation, and Hip-Hop skills such as lyric writing, performing, and music production. This study focused on Hip-Hop therapy in particular in order to provide empirical evidence about this youth program and its ability to impact resilience in young people.

This study sought to accomplish three main tasks. First, the study aimed to examine the current outcome measurement and provide recommendations for how to revise the current measurement tool. Second, the study aimed to understand if and how participation in BRL TAGs increased participant's resiliency defined by their ability to recognize and utilize their internal resources and personal strengths to respond to challenges. Third, the study aimed to understand if and how participation in BRL TAGs increase participant resiliency as defined by ability to identify and utilize interpersonal and community resources. The findings are discussed below to highlight the strongest findings first and lead to recommendations as this paper concludes.

TAGs Participation Improves Use of Social Support Networks

Results indicate that participants are more able to identify and utilize their interpersonal and community resources after participation in BRL TAGs. Specifically, after participating in TAGs participants reported feeling more able to get support without feeling ashamed. This indicates that participants are more willing to admit that they need help when they feel down rather than the need to ignore their feelings or deal with them on their own. Furthermore, it suggests that participants are able to identify who might be helpful to talk to and support them. These changes can be crucial to young people when they are struggling with social, political, and

personal issues because they are less likely to feel alone and overwhelmed. Additionally, the ability to reach out to community members and utilize resources is an essential aspect of resilience because it provides additional coping strategies and support. The development of this aspect of resilience points to greater engagement with and trust in adults such as teachers, and mentors, as well as increased cooperation and social support.

This change in identification and use of interpersonal and community resources suggests that BRL provides a meaningful form of therapeutic intervention for participants. Participants are able to overcome social and cultural stigma towards therapy because BRL provides a supportive community where participants can share their ideas and encourages participants to challenge themselves emotionally and artistically. In TAGs, participants report feeling valued and heard while engaging with emotionally charged content. This experience gives participants an experience of therapy where they can have fun and make new friends based on their true expression of themselves. In this way, participants learn to ask for help in a culturally congruent way. Participants report that writing Rap lyrics and listening to Hip-Hop provides a coping strategy that they can rely on when they need it. BRL engages with this interest and encourages participants to not only develop their artistic skills but to explore their emotions and experiences through their art and in the experience of sharing their voice and their story with their family and community. BRL does not try to force participants to engage in therapy in a way that feels uncomfortable to them, but rather shapes the therapeutic intervention to match the needs of participants, thereby providing a therapeutic intervention that feels authentic, supportive, and engaging. This experience affirms the interests, values, and experiences of the participants while providing a community of peers and adults that have similar experiences and interests. Within

this open, caring, and engaged atmosphere, TAG participants feel valued, heard, and comfortable and can therefore explore their identities in an authentic and safe way.

TAG participation may impact capacity to recover from adversity

Although not statistically significant, the results highlighted the possibility that participation in TAGs may positively affect participants' ability to rebound after encountering challenges. This is corroborated with the qualitative data from participant's write-in answers. For example, participants reported that they felt more able to perform on stage, which suggests that they were challenged by the idea of performing when they began participating in the TAG. However, by the end of the program they were able to surmount their fears and perform for their loved ones at the showcase. One participant reported knowing that they would have the confidence they need when it's necessary, which speaks to their sense of their ability to rise to challenges as they occur. Finally participants reported that BRL helped them with their rapping skills, which served as a coping mechanism after adverse experiences.

Individual resilience may be the culmination of the ability for an individual to recognize their strengths, skills, and attributes after developing the ability to identify their support network and reach out for help in order to respond to challenges and overcome adversity. The recognition of one's positive traits is not always easy; one must not only possess self-confidence but also have a deep understanding of their identity as an individual and as a member of a larger group in order to appreciate their strengths. In addition to relying on one's self and believing in one's capacities, it is equally important to identify important, supportive, and empathetic people who can be relied up to help in difficult situations. Together these two aspects of resilience provide an individual with enough flexibility and strength to respond to adverse situations internally while

formulating a community to support the individual externally. As such, the community formulation may fortify individual resilience because it enables individuals to recharge after setbacks and provides the support needed to meet future challenges with resilience again.

The results above indicate that having a community, where young people feel safe, heard and valued, is an important element of youth programs and in the development of resilience. It also suggests that BRL may increase one's internal resources to cope with adversity through community engagement. However, this pathway of change requires further exploration.

In moving forward with this research, BRL must further explore these two domains of resilience and understand how BRL impacts the development of this important trait. Since the results indicate that Hip-Hop in particular offers a possible therapeutic intervention that young people will find interesting and fun while providing an opportunity to engage in group therapy, future studies might consider exploring what situations and conditions participants find challenging and what types of adverse experiences they have already encountered in order to provide context for any resilience gained through TAGs. Future studies might include additional questions in order to assess in greater detail the participants' level of social support as well as ability to recognize community resources and willingness to ask for help at the beginning of TAGs. This would require a larger sample in order to more accurately assess youth capacity to overcome adversity and utilize community and interpersonal resources.

Study Limitations

There were several limitations during this study. Conceptually, the survey did not originally assess for resilience; this construct only emerged after the survey items were reorganized using theoretical and statistical information. As such, there may be key aspects of

resilience that are not assessed in the current measure. Therefore, future research should review the literature on resilience more thoroughly and based on the findings, should explore the possibility of additional items in each domain or expanding the domains that inform resilience.

Methodologically, it was difficult to receive both pre-tests and post-tests from participants who engaged in both the drop-in programs and the treatment groups due to scheduling and motivation issues. This led to challenges when analyzing the data. Future research should consider how to maximize participant retention and completion of pre/post tests in order to increase sample size. For example, future research could integrate more directly into the TAG curriculum in order to ensure higher rates of survey return. It may also be beneficial for research teams to meet with TAG participants during the beginning of the session in order to explain the purpose and importance of the survey as well as to answer any questions and address any concerns participants may have. This face-to-face contact and interaction with participants may increase interest and engagement with the research component, although this should be considered in the context of engagement with TAG leaders and issues of building trust. If researchers directly administered the pre-test and post-test surveys there would be fewer complications compiling data.

A Few Thoughts on Measuring Resilience

Hip Hop therapy provides an important tool to engage youth that are underserved by the mental health field in a therapeutic environment that can impact their resilience. Literature suggests that resilience is a term that encompasses more than simply overcoming obstacles. Instead, we can understand one component of resilience as the ability to recognize one's internal strengths and engage them when needed. This reflects an individual's agency to change difficult

situations and focuses on the aspects of a problem that an individual can control. This character trait helps young people to feel good about who they are and develop communities that can support that confidence. As such, resilience can also be understood as the capacity to realize that one is not alone in the world and does not need to battle challenges alone. Recognizing the community and interpersonal resources that an individual might utilize when they need extra support is an essential aspect of resilience as well. In sum, the ability to not only ask for help but to first identify what help is available is a pivotal aspect of resilience.

It is important for youth programs, such as BRL, to understand and foster this multidimensional definition of resilience. Adolescence is a time of identity development and learning how an individual fits into the world around them. This process includes a period of individual as well as group-based identity development, such as ethnic and racial identity. Youth programs that promote supportive communities, encourage exploration of experiences, and foster the sharing of personal stories help young people to realize their internal strengths and introduce a new perspective on their lived experiences.

It is important for youth programs to help young people to recognize their strengths and their coping mechanisms so that when they are faced with challenges and obstacles they feel confident in their ability to respond. BRL helps young people to increase self-esteem and self-confidence so they can appreciate their personal attributes and skills. This enables young people to develop better and more individualized coping strategies, which include but are not limited to writing lyrics and performing songs. Furthermore, developing skills and examining past experiences and perspectives with a group promotes positive identity development both individually and in terms of ethnic and racial identity.

Fostering a multidimensional understanding of resilience impacts the lives of young people and enables them to better navigate the social, political, and personal trials they often endure during adolescence. These obstacles can feel insurmountable if dealt with alone. However, with a supportive community and awareness of one' internal resources young people can overcome these challenges in order to change their own lives and serve as role models for younger generations.

Implications for Clinical Social Work Practice, Training, and Policy

This research seeks to provide empirical support for Hip Hop Therapy as an effective intervention for young people of color who are often underserved within the field of mental health. Hip Hop Therapy provides the opportunity to use the process of exploring Hip Hop history and culture, writing lyrics, forming a safe, supportive community, and the performance of Hip-Hop to engage in group therapy and provide invaluable coping mechanisms and mental health support for young people. However, proper understanding of Hip Hop music and culture that does not other or pathologize is very important for the authentic implementation of this intervention.

Hip-Hop music was formed as musical method of giving a voice to the underserved and mistreated populations in New York. However, commercialization of Hip Hop has limited the themes and messages within the music and culture and promoted negative stereotypes that center around issues such as misogyny, aggression, and violence. This selective representation has led to the misunderstanding and stigmatization of Hip Hop music and culture by dominant American society. The image of people of color, promoted in mainstream Hip Hop, can negatively impact the forming identities of young people and galvanize cultural ideas about manhood that stigmatize mental health and emotions. However, young people of color in the United States

today, still recognize the positive messages within Hip Hop that gives voice to their experiences, promotes self-confidence and resilience, and gives young people a dream of becoming what they want to become. This dream encourages young people to write lyrics as a way of responding to the stresses of adolescence, and in doing provides a therapeutic coping mechanism.

Hip Hop culture provides an identity, a culture, and a community within which many people can feel at home and at ease, which is important for the development of cultural pride and identity as well as individual identity. The process of developing identity is an important aspect of adolescence and provides the opportunity for young people to discover their strengths and skills in order to use them in times of need.

Hip Hop Therapy offers the opportunity to utilize an important aspect of life for many young people in order to provide mental health support. Therefore, it is important for mental health professionals to recognize the function and importance that Hip Hop music and culture has on the lives of many young people of color. A deeper understanding of Hip Hop can enable mental health providers to harness the inspiring aspects of Hip Hop and highlight them in Hip Hop Therapy interventions. In this way, mental health professionals and social workers can, not only help to alleviate stigma around Hip Hop music in mainstream culture but also bridge this gap for young people seeking mental health support.

Conclusion

This research explored the important role that youth development programs play in the lives of young people as they struggle to define their own identities amidst social, political, and personal issues of adolescence. This research focused particularly on the impact of Hip Hop Therapy on resilience of youth participants. The findings suggest that participation in

Therapeutic Activity Groups (TAGs) positively impacts youth capacity for resilience in terms of their capacity to utilize community and interpersonal resources when needed. The findings suggested that TAG participants might also support youth's capacity to recognize their internal strengths, skills, and attributes in order to overcome adversity. High levels of resilience can help young people to cope with challenges of adolescence and provide positive coping mechanisms that they can use throughout their lives. This research indicates a need for future research to further investigate the role that Hip Hop plays in the lives of young people and how to highlight those elements within a therapeutic setting.

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Figure 1

Revised Resilience Factors

Statement

Factor one: Internal Characteristics

I feel like my ideas, feelings, and thoughts matter

I can get through difficult times

I feel like I belong

I feel stronger after I deal with a difficult situation

Sharing my ideas, thoughts, and feelings with others is worth the risk

I feel like there are things I can do to make things better

I feel hopeful about my future

Factor two: Community and Interpersonal resources

Community/interpersonal resources

I have people who I know will be there for me when I need them.

I feel like there are adults (like counselors, teachers, therapists, mentors) in my life who I can ask for help and/or support, when I need it

It is important to figure out how to work with other people

It's best to keep my problems to myself

I feel like I can trust the adults around me (like counselors, teachers, and mentors) to follow through on their promises.

Being part of a group makes me stronger.

I feel comfortable asking friends and family for help and encouragement.

I feel that the adults around me (like counselors, teachers, and mentors) encourage me to improve myself.

Figure 2

TAGs Impact on Use of Inner Strengths

	Pre-Test mean (SE)	Post-Test mean (SE)	P-value
Factor 1: Internal Resources	33.68 (1.1)	33.55 (1.1)	NS

Figure 3

TAGs Impact on Use of Community & Interpersonal Resources

	Pre-Test mean (SE)	Post-Test mean (SE)	P-value
Factor 2: Community & interpersonal Resources	38.59 (1.27)	34.57 (1.27)	.01

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

TAG Survey

Today's Date:

In our TAGs, we ask you to do activities that we think are important in shaping how you think about yourself and your ability to shape the world around you. We believe that what we do in the TAGs is an important process of healing and community building, and we need your help to understand more about what works for you and what doesn't.

First, tell us a little bit about yourself...

1. What are the **last 2 letters** of your **first name?**

2. What is the **last letter** of your **last name?**

3. What **month** were you born in?

4. How would you describe your gender?

5. How do you identify racially?

6. How old are you?

7. Have you ever done a TAG before?   Y   N

If so, how many?

Now, take a minute to read and think about each question.

How true does each question feel about you?

1. I feel like my ideas, feelings, and thoughts matter.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

2. I have people who I know will be there for me when I need them.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

3. I feel like there are adults (like counselors, teachers, mentors) in my life who I can ask for help when I need it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

4. Things from the past make it hard to me to pay attention to the present.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

5. I have confidence in myself.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

6. I feel lonely a lot of the time.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

7. It is important to figure out how to work with other people.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

8. I can get through difficult times.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

9. It's best to keep my problems to myself.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

10. I feel like I can trust the adults around me (like counselors, teachers,and mentors) to follow through on their promises.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

11. I feel like I don't belong.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

12. Being part of a group makes me stronger.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Very

Untrue

Neutral

Very

True

13. I usually reach out to others when I'm having hard feelings.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Very

Untrue

Neutral

Very

True

14. I feel stronger after I deal with a difficult situation.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Very

Untrue

Neutral

Very

True

15. Sharing my ideas, thoughts, and feelings with others is worth the risk.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Very

Untrue

Neutral

Very

True

16. I feel comfortable asking friends and family for help and encouragement.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

17. I feel like no matter what I do, things aren't going to get any better.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

18. It is important to pay attention to what others are saying even if I'm distracted by my own feelings or thoughts.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

19. I feel that the adults around me (like counselors, teachers, and mentors) encourage me to improve myself.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

20. I feel hopeful about my future.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Very   Neutral   Very

Untrue   True

21) List three things you do to feel better when you are having a hard time emotionally

1)

2)

3)

22) My greatest strength is:

23) I need help/support with:

24) How has participating in this TAG impacted your sense of confidence, if at all?

25) How has participating in this TAG impacted your ability to get support from others, if at all?

26) How has participating in this TAG changed your cooperation skills, if at all?

27) How has participating in this TAG changed your opinion about the adults in your life (like counselors, teachers, therapists, mentors), if at all?

28) How has participating in this TAG impacted your ability to "bounce back"?

29) How has participating in this TAG impacted your mood?

30) Anything else you want us to know?

Appendices B:

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

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

Best regards,

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