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The Critical Cycle of Mixtape Creation: Reducing Stress via Three Different Group Counseling Styles

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ABSTRACT

While significant attention has been given to student learning loss across summer, much less attention is given to student stressors and mental health concerns. To assist youth in processing and coping with emotional stress, research explores approaches to group counseling wherein youth write, record, and perform emotionally themed hip hop mixtapes. Hip hop, counseling, and social work literature lack studies comparing the effectiveness of different group types. This study examined a hip hop integrated therapeutic model within three groups using distinct leadership styles; within a high school summer enrichment program. Results suggest statistically significant reductions in stress and depressive levels.

Significant attention has been given to the student learning and retention trend commonly known as "summer learning loss" or "summer learning slide" (Bowers & Schwarz, 2018; Rall, 2016). The erosion of school-year academic gains during the summer months is known to have a negative and disproportionate impact on youth from low-socioeconomic status families (SES; Bowers & Schwarz, 2018). While the magnitude of academic gains actually lost during the summer is debatable, as is the idea that summer loss is a primary factor in long-term achievement gaps, having access to educational experiences during the summer is meaningful (von Hippel & Hamrock, 2019). Additionally, researchers have posited that another educational trend known as "summer melt" (i.e., dissipating motivation or ability to attend college after high school graduation, despite having the academic competence and credentials) negatively impacts at least 18% of high school graduating Black and Latinx youth (Castleman & Page, 2014). Both trends suggested that counselors and other educational professionals can support youth during summer months (Poynton & Lapan, 2017). However, much less attention has been given to mental health concerns that exist during the summer months (Lewis et al., 2018). Travis et al. (2019) introduced the term "summer strain" to illuminate that "student stressors, the residual effects of trauma, and general mental health concerns" persist across summer, often as a result of "reduced access to school-based structure, support, safety, and services ... and a reduced buffer to home instability during these months" (p. 2).

Continued services across the summer months are of particular concern given the reality that Black and Brown youth are significantly less likely to receive mental health services in comparison to White youth (Creedon & Cook, 2016). These services have often been group-

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based and critiqued for their lack of cultural relevance (Chu et al., 2016). The lack of adequate mental health services remains a serious concern for low-SES youth who often live in communities exposed to variety of systemic stressors (Berg et al., 2009; Bohrnstedt et al., 2015; Pierce et al., 2017; Santiago et al., 2016). Therefore, there is a strong rationale for the exploration of innovative and culturally sensitive approaches to mental health-based summer group work with youth of low-SES status.

Adolescent Stressors

When considering the mental health of adolescents, researchers have documented that those who identify as Latinx or Black face unique challenges within the United States, and thus could benefit from coping strategies to support their emotional, physical, and social well-being. For example, researchers found Latinx adolescents to experience high levels of peer and academic stress, as well as poverty-related stress – factors significantly associated with negative mood states (Cook et al., 2019). Researchers demonstrated how Latinx adolescents in high school who had immigrant parents reported significantly higher stress related to racial discrimination in comparison to those whose parents were born in the U.S. (Sirin et al., 2015). Further, stress rated to racial discrimination was found to be a significant predictor of developing somatic symptoms in Latinx youth (Sirin et al., 2015). The term "racial discrimination stress" can be operationally defined as the psychological and physiological stress response that results from the short term, chronic, or accumulative of acts of racism and/or discrimination (Carter, 2007; Clark et al., 1999).

Latinx youth are vulnerable to experiences of "acculturation conflict" – conflict that occurs due to differences in cultural values between adolescents and their parents, given differential levels of acculturation (Huq et al., 2016). Acculturation conflict between parents and adolescents predicts significantly higher depressive symptoms among youth (Huq et al., 2016). Research has illuminated how news and events in the U.S. surrounding immigration and residency status can cause stress, as well as deterioration of access to mental health services for Latinx youth and their families (Perreira & Pedroza, 2019; Roche et al., 2018). Investigators have documented how for contemporary Latinx adolescents in high school, exposure to racial discrimination was associated with negative impacts on their coping efficacy (Sánchez et al., 2017). The range of current trends, from threats to emotional well-being to threats to coping strategies, has displayed the value of using interventions to ameliorate stressors and enhance Latinx adolescents' coping strategy repertoires (Santiago et al., 2016).

The value of empowerment and coping amid risk is also important for Black youth. While researchers identified and promoted the strengths, resilience, and the reinforcing value of community for healthy development within the African American community, threats to well-being must be recognized (Love, 2019; Toldson, 2011; Travis & Leech, 2014). For example, compared to youth from other racial/ethnic backgrounds, African American youth of low-SES backgrounds are reported to face a higher risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system, poorer mental health status, lower levels of school engagement, higher levels of involvement in illicit drug use, and higher rates of contracting sexually transmitted infections (Voisin et al., 2016). Further, researchers found that economic stress and discrimination faced by Black youth were significantly associated with internalizing symptoms (e.g., anxious/depressed, withdrawn, somatic complaints). For African American high school students, research shows that high

levels of discrimination were significantly associated with high levels of perceived stress, and ultimately with greater psychological distress (Hughes et al., 2015; Sellers et al., 2003).

Finally, investigators found that for African American adolescents, psychological outlook mediates the relationship between neighborhood risk levels and increased engagement in substance use (Wallace et al., 2017). Given the sum total of these trends, including threats to psychological and emotional well-being, as well as recognition of self-medication and substance use as unhealthy coping strategies (Bravo et al., 2017), researchers suggested significant opportunities exist for development of and access to interventions that foster acquisition of coping strategies (Sanchez et al., 2013). In particular, group work emerged as an important medium through which adolescents can practice and develop coping skills (Shechtman, 2017)

Group Work

Addressing Stress Through Group Work

Group work with adolescents is discussed as beneficial in helping with academic achievement (Goldstein et al., 2015), career trajectory concerns (Dispenza et al., 2016), and negotiating grief and loss (Marino et al., 2015). Engaging adolescents in group work to cope with the experience of stress has also shown evidence of being efficacious. For instance, a mindfulness-based group curriculum was helpful in reducing the perceived stress of 20 Latinx middle school adolescents (Edwards et al., 2014). Researchers found the cultivation of mindfulness skills in group work can support high school-aged youth with navigating emotional stressors (Wisner & Norton, 2013). Creative arts strategies in group counseling have also demonstrated a positive impact on stress reduction, such as with the use of music, visual arts, drama, and cinematography (Martin et al., 2018). Digital storytelling as a narrative therapy has emerged as a powerful therapeutic tool in group work with adolescents (Sawyer & Willis, 2011). Bibliotherapy in group work with school-aged youth is noted as useful in deepening insight and self-image, navigating stressful life events, and developing life skills (McCulliss & Chamberlain, 2013). Regardless of the approach, researchers illustrated the usefulness of group work for building community and cohesion among members, which are developmental assets for well-being (Guth et al., 2019; Hermann-Turner et al., 2019). Research on arts-integrated strategies indicated substantial evidence of efficacy among youth and adolescent populations (Oh et al., 2018; Perryman et al., 2019; Travis & Deepak, 2011). However, approaches to group work are critiqued for framing group facilitators as experts, thereby failing to privilege and validate youth voice, their cultural knowledge, and their lived experiences (Cook & Krueger-Henney, 2017; Levy et al., 2018). While creative approaches to group work are described within the literature broadly, researchers identified a need to explore the role of the facilitator in their use of group work approaches and leadership styles that empower youth (Cook & Krueger-Henney, 2017).

Leadership Styles

When considering the role of the facilitator in group work, questions regarding the most effective leadership style for generating positive outcomes for participants are debated (Chen & Rybak, 2017; Gladding, 2015; Milsom, 2018). Some scholars have argued for the effectiveness of authoritarian leaders, who view themselves as experts, follow a rigid structure, and take the

helm in guiding the group process (Hogg & Adelman, 2013). On the other hand, researchers posited democratic group leaders pull from the person-centered philosophy (Rogers, 1970) and deploy a moderate amount of control, believing in the group's potential to guide the process and meet its desired outcomes (Milsom, 2018). Democratic group leaders are hands-on when necessary, while trusting the group to guide the process. Conversely, laissez-faire group leaders are encouraged to provide no structure to participants and leave the guiding of the group process completely up to participants (Gladding, 2015). When considering which group leadership style is the most effective, researchers deduced that the developmental stage of group's members should guide the selection of a leadership style. Heavily structured, authoritarian, and content-based groups are perceived as more appropriate for younger-aged adolescents, whereas less structure and more room to explore should be considered for older adolescents (Sink et al., 2011). Despite leadership style, researchers called for facilitators to monitor power dynamics to ensure youth are empowered to help guide the counseling process (Cook & Krueger-Henney, 2017).

Hip Hop-Based Approaches in Group Work

While addressing social and emotional concerns in group work is warranted, traditional approaches to mental health strategies have been critiqued for lacking cultural responsiveness and the positioning of youth as equal partners in the group work process (Corrigan et al., 2014; Fisher-Borne et al., 2015). Exploring this concern, researchers highlighted that counselors using Westernized or "classical" counseling methodologies are culturally insensitive and potentially harmful to Black and Brown youth (Tao et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2014). This research indicated that classical approaches to counseling often ignore the cultural knowledge, strengths, and lived experiences of nonwhite people, leaving them feeling both invalidated and distrusting of services (Lindsey et al., 2010; Tao et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2014). Therefore, scholars called for the use of action-oriented counseling practices in group work which shift away from talk therapy, and counter cultural inequities through capitalizing on youth's lived experiences to engage them in guiding the counseling process (Cook & Krueger-Henney, 2017; Smith & Chambers, 2015; Travis, 2013, 2016).

Prioritizing cultural sensitihipvity and engagement, Hip Hop-based approaches to group work with adolescents are documented within the literature across the last two decades (Armstrong & Ricard, 2016; Leafloor, 2012; Travis & Deepak, 2011; Tyson, 2002; Washington, 2018). Hip hop is cited as the most consumed genre of music by listeners across the world (Hooton, 2015). Originally however, hip hop was birthed as a response to the emotional stressors that urban youth and community members faced as a result of the industrialization of the South Bronx during the late 1960s and 1970s (Chang, 2005; Rose, 1994). Researchers highlight Hip Hop as a social and emotional outlet created by and for Black and Latinx urban youth as a means to process inequities (Emdin et al., 2016), as well as promote peace, love, unity and having fun (Chang, 2005). Scholars also explored both the empowering and risky engagement of Hip Hop culture, but the evidence strongly suggested Hip Hop music can positively impact the well-being of adolescents (Travis & Bowman, 2015). Therefore, to assist school-aged youth in exploring, processing, and coping with emotional stress, Levy (2019) explored the use of a group counseling model for school counselors wherein youth write, record, and perform emotionally themed Hip Hop music. Others, for example, suggested that a Hip Hop, empowerment, and beat-making model in group work might be effective as a summer learning strategy to support youth in improving their mental health

(Travis et al., 2019). A scoping review of existing Hip Hop and counseling literature, however, suggested a need for group studies with more rigorous methodology that compares the effectiveness of different group types in meeting student outcomes (2020). In the present program, a Hip Hop integrated empowerment and therapeutic model are used to bolster social and emotional support for youth in addition to the basic academic focus of a summer enrichment program for high school youth. Specifically, the following two Hip Hop-based approaches to group work with adolescents were used to guide group curriculum creation and facilitation.

The Critical Cycle of Mixtape Creation

Levy et al. (2018) discussed the Critical Cycle of Mixtape Creation (CCMC), which explored the creation of the *Hip Hop mixtape* as a distinct Hip Hop cultural process. According to Levy et al., (2018), Hip Hop mixtapes "are collections of songs that are recorded over popular hip-hop instrumentals and distributed for free" (p. 4), often used by novice artists to share their stories as a first foray into the Hip Hop music community. Following the same critical process as youth participatory action research, the CCMC is rooted in youth participatory action research cycle of investigative inquiry (Cook & Krueger-Henney, 2017), CCMC uses Hip Hop song construction to engage young people in researching an issue they deem important to their community (Levy et al., 2018). The CCMC contains a series of steps, including: (a) identify action mixtape area of interest, (b) research mixtape content, (c) discuss and digest findings, (d) develop a tracklist, (e) plan the recording and release of mixtape, and (f) evaluate mixtape process and response to release (Levy et al., 2018).

Individual and Community Empowerment

The researchers also drew from the Individual and Community Empowerment framework and associated Hip Hop and Empowerment. Travis and Bowman (2015) explained this underlying framework and the premise that all music engagement is functional and empowering. The framework includes "five thematic dimensions commonly found in music (i.e., esteem, resilience, growth, community, and change) that are developmental in nature, unifying of person and environment and guides for assessment, analysis, and intervention planning" (Travis & Bowman, 2015, pp. 92–93). This framework informed the creation of Hip Hop and Empowerment strategies infused within the group curricula.

The aforementioned literature showcased a need to use culturally sensitive mental health-based summer group work with youth of low SES backgrounds. Further, scholars have highlighted the use of Hip Hop-based approaches as culturally sensitive models for group work. Additional evidence suggests a need for research exploring a variety of leadership styles in group work to examine potential differences in outcomes for adolescents.

The Purpose of the Study

Consequently, the purpose of the present study is to compare three uses of a Hip Hop-based group work curriculum across three groups with three different leadership styles, ranging from highly structured or authoritarian to a more non-deliberative or laissez-faire style. This present project helps to address two major research questions:

(1) Do adolescents experience any change in well-being (stress, anxiety, and/or depression) across the summer mixtape program (i.e. pre-program to post-program)? Our

hypothesis is that the summer mixtape program will facilitate statistically significant improvements in well-being between Time 1 and Time 2.

(2) If there are any changes in well-being among students across the summer mixtape program, then, is there an association between leadership style and well-being (stress, anxiety, and/or depression) among students across the summer mixtape program? Our hypothesis is that well-being outcomes will differ depending on leadership style, and that between group differences in well-being scores will be statistically significant.

Methods

Participants

This study occurred during a six-week high school student summer enrichment program held at a university in the Southwest United States. A total of 18 high school-aged youth, ages 14 to 17, volunteered to participate in a five-day Hip Hop mixtape camp for an hour and 45 minutes per day. Among these adolescents, eight identified as girls and ten identified as boys. Ten participants identified as Latinx, three identified as Black, and two identified as multi-racial/multi-ethnic as Black and Latinx.

Setting

The university-based research lab affiliated with the second author includes a music studio with multiple workstations used for research, education, and therapeutic interventions. This space was developed functionally and esthetically as a setting grounded in Hip Hop culture and was used to host the week-long mixtape camp. For the present study, the researchers had access to both the music studio and to an adjacent classroom space with multiple tables (formed into a square so all participants could move around easily as well as face each other when sitting), computers, audio speakers, and chalkboard. The curriculum was designed to allow youth a range of music engagement opportunities including lyrics and video exploration and analysis, composition and arrangement through lyric writing, beat-making, and song creation. Other aspects of Hip Hop culture were prominent throughout including regular integration of a cypher, shared jargon, the music played during breaks, the topics discussed, and casual attire.

These experiences were structured as a mental health support extension of the larger summer enrichment program offered at the university. The facilitators called on a local teaching artist and producer from the community who specialized in beat production and working with youth to join them for the mixtape camp. Throughout the camp, youth spent time in the classroom meeting space where they engaged in large-group discussion around music videos and song lyrics, and researched lyric content. An additional music studio space existed where they could participate in lyric writing, beat creating, and recording. The recording studio included extensive music technology (including six music stations linked to Mac computers, with an Ableton Push, MIDI keyboard, and access to a Pioneer DDJ) and software (including Ableton Live, Logic Pro, and Pro Tools) consistent with creating and producing music within Hip Hop culture, but applicable to a wide range of music genres and types. The researchers believe in Hip Hop culture as a vehicle for change and wished to offer youth the opportunity to engage in group work within a culturally salient space (i.e., the Hip Hop studio) to support the action-oriented and youth culture-centered group process. The first and second author of this paper served as the

main facilitators for the week-long mixtape camp, supported by the teaching artist. The authors identify as a school counselor and social worker respectively, bringing forth their own theoretical perspectives and facilitation skills to a coordinated approach to group work. Further, both authors engage in Hip Hop culture as creatives. The lead author engages in their own music-making as an emcee and was more active during the intervention offering the requisite skills to support youth in the physical recording of their music.

Procedures

The co-PIs of this study designed and facilitated the curriculum for the five-day Hip Hop mixtape creation camp using the Critical Cycle of Mixtape Creation and the Individual and Community Empowerment frameworks. To recruit participants, the researchers informed the camp administrators that up to ten youth could participate in each of the three groups (30 youth total). In the weeks prior to the start of the summer mixtape camp, the camp leadership team collected parental consent for all interested parties. The researchers were unaware of how many total youths expressed interested in participating, as they purposefully distanced themselves from selection, to avoid selection bias. Consent was received for a total of 18 students, the camp placed 6 students in each of the three groups based on the availability in their schedules. To respond to the gap in literature questioning the ideal leadership style to use in group work (Gladding, 2015), the researchers varied the structure of each of the three youth groups according to the researcher-assigned leadership style (see Figure 1). Without any knowledge of the group participants, the researchers randomly assigned a leadership style to the following three groups: a deliberative group (Group 1), a semi-structured group (Group 2), or a non-deliberative (process) group (Group 3).

Across the five-day period, each group worked through the CCMC process of writing, researching, recording, and ultimately performing their project at a final camp listening party. In alignment with the CCMC process, this five-day group process included:

- Day 1: identifying an area of interest,
- Day 2: researching and digesting content for their project,
- Day 3: developing a product,
- Day 4: recording and planning the release of the project, and
- Day 5: sharing and evaluating the project.

While each of the three groups followed the CCMC process, the co-PIs (the authors) facilitated each group with distinctively different leadership styles (group 1: deliberative/authoritarian; group 2: semi-structured/democratic; group 3: non-deliberative/laissez faire). The curriculum of each group was designed by the authors to ensure that their facilitation had fidelity to the assigned leadership style. For example, the signature assignments (ice breaker, cypher and reflection, artist profile, identification of group project theme) were altered in each group with goals of fidelity. By randomly assigning leadership styles to groups before they were filled with participants, the facilitators attempted to control for any bias regarding which facilitation would work best for any given group. After each day of facilitation, the group leaders convened to debrief, in attempt to ensure that leadership styles were adhered to during each group session. To illuminate the differences in

GROUP #1 (DELIBERATIVE)	GROUP #2 (SEMI-STRUCTURED)	GROUP #3 (NON-DELIBERATIVE)
Welcome, and goal of day/week.	Welcome, and goal of day/week.	Welcome, and goal of day/week.
Individual and Community Empowerment: Read and Introduce Dimensions (esteem, resilience, growth, community, change)	Individual and Community Empowerment: Read and Introduce Dimensions (esteem, resilience, growth, community, change)	Individual and Community Empowerment: Read and Introduce Dimensions (esteem, resilience, growth, community, change)
Icebreaker – Chosen Songs K.R.I.T. Here - Big K.R.I.T. - Reflection	Icebreakers – Hip Hop and Empowerment (HHE) Song Options	Icebreaker – Any Song Group chose "Apparently" - J. Cole
CYPHER & Reflection: Traditional beat cypher activity, facilitator chose beatbox speed	CYPHER & Reflection: Traditional beat cypher, group voted on beatbox speed	CYPHER & Reflection: Traditional beat cypher, group voted on beatbox speed
Group norms	Group norms	Group norms
Artist Profile: 6 Chosen Areas The following 6 areas: Stage name; Hometown; Favorite artist & song; Group and Individual goal; Social Justice Theme; Your Strength/Superpower	Artist Profile – Choose 6 of 8 possible areas	Artist Profile – Choose Any 5 Characteristics Asked to create a stage name and any 5 artist characteristics.
Identify Group Project Theme: Track/Song Themes linked to Social Justice (Pulled from artist profile discussion)	Identify Group Project Theme: Track/Song Theme linked to anything shared discussion from artist profile	Identify Group Project Theme: Group explored and decided on goals for final project (Music video, song, and beat)
HW: Think about a song related to your theme (Diversity and Labels)	HW: Think about a song related to your theme (Goals)	HW: Think about a song related to your theme (Bouncing Back)

Figure 1. Hip Hop group curriculum by different leadership style, day 1.

curriculum design, Figure 1 outlines the group lesson for Day 1 with columns tailored to each facilitation style. The contents of Figure 1 are also discussed.

The Deliberative Group (Group 1)

The first group was facilitated with a deliberative group structure, and an authoritarian leadership style, where youth were taken through the CMCC process in order to create a social justice-themed song. The specific outcome was chosen by the facilitators before the

group began to maintain alignment with the deliberative structure and authoritarian leadership style. In this group a series of group activities were developed by the facilitators with the purpose of directly guiding members through the process of identifying, researching, discussing, and then creating a song about a social justice theme of interest to them. For example, a signature assignment in opening group meetings was the creation of an "artist profile" where students were asked to list their artist name as well as specific characteristics that define them as artists. In the deliberative group, the youth were given five characteristics to detail, including a "social justice theme of interest". Then, when sharing out their artist profiles, the facilitators helped the group make connections regarding a shared social justice theme that would function as their mixtape area of interest, to be explored further during subsequent group meetings.

The Semi-structured Group (Group 2)

The second group was facilitated using a democratic leadership style and was therefore dubbed the semi-structured group. The semi-structured group used the CMCC model to support youth in completing a Hip Hop song about an issue of importance to them, that did not have to be rooted in social justice. In this sense, the facilitators did not pre-select a social justice topic, and instead set out to allow the group to work together to select a song theme. For the semi-structured group, a variety of choice points were provided to enable youth to take more of a leadership role than the deliberative group in guiding the direction of the overall mixtape process, while still maintaining some structure and focus from the leadership end. For example, the "artist profile" assignment was also used in this group but was adjusted to have participants choose their artist name and five specific characteristics to detail from a list of nine total characteristic options. Before beginning to work on their journals, the group reviewed the nine options, and then voted on the five characteristics their artist profiles would contain. This curricular adaptation sought to allow the group to have a choice in not only the identification of their artist characteristics, but also the flexibility in identifying their mixtape area of interest. As the students shared their artist profiles with the rest of the group, the facilitators actively listened for a shared emotional theme to foster a discussion about choices for the mixtape area of interest. Specifically, the facilitators highlighted five potential topics from what the students discussed and offered the group a chance to vote on their mixtape theme of interest, which was then further explored across the following group meetings. The semi-structured group selected "life goals" as their mixtape theme.

The Non-deliberative Group (Group 3)

Lastly, the third group was facilitated using a lassie-faire style and was named the non-deliberative group. In the non-deliberative group, each day of the five-day group was still rooted in the CMCC process but the facilitators purposefully allowed the group members full autonomy in designing their own Hip Hop project about any topic they mutually agreed would be of interest for them to explore. Whereas the other two groups were given the direction of "you will be creating a song this week" when explaining the group purpose, this group was told they would make "a Hip Hop-based project that could be a song, video, drawing, dance, or skit, or anything else they found interesting". During each of the non-deliberative group's sessions, the facilitators gave youth full control of where they wanted to take their group. While signature activities were still used across groups, they were again

adjusted to match methodologically with a non-deliberative leadership style approach. For example, the "artist profile" activity was again used, but youth were simply given the prompt of "In your notebook, create an artist profile. List your artist name, and whatever else you'd like to tell us about who you are as an artist". When facilitating the reflective discussion following this activity, the facilitators were able to use reflections, paraphrasing statements, and open-questions to support the group in collectively finding a topic. In this particular group, "relationships" were chosen as the mixtape area of interest because that is where the youth took the conversation.

Data Collection

Data in the current study were collected from participants using 14 items within two scales to represent three constructs (i.e., stress, depression, and anxiety). These data and scales were part of a questionnaire of 55 total items as part of a broader study examining music engagement and well-being. Demographic data for each participant were also collected. Each of the survey components is described in detail below. The survey was administered at the start of the first group and after the final group (pre- and post-program) via a paper and pencil.

Demographic Data

The questionnaire contained measures designed to collect participants' demographic information such as age, race/ethnicity, gender, and high school grade level. Demographic data will be used to monitor how aligned our outcomes are with trends in disparities in well-being by gender and race.

Perceived Stress

The first main construct is *perceived stress*. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) consists of 10 items that represent potentially stressful stimulus (e.g., "In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?"; Cohen et al., 1983). Scores per item range from 0 (Never) to 4 (Very Often), and the total scale range is from 0 to 40. The PSS-10 was shown to have acceptable reliability for assessing adolescents' perceived stress, with a Cronbach's alpha (α) >.70 (Gerber et al., 2012). In the current study, at Time 1, good reliability was established with a Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items (α = .847).

Depression and Anxiety

The second and third constructs are *depression* and *anxiety*, measured collectively using four items identified by Lang et al. (2009) for an Abbreviated Brief Symptom Inventory. Lang et al. (2009) identified four items that can effectively identify individuals with depression and anxiety as effectively as measures with greater numbers of items. More specifically, Lang and colleagues found that the Abbreviated BSI was highly correlated with the full BSI measure (r = .91 for depression and r = .90 for anxiety) and significantly correlated with other reliable depression (e.g., SF-36 Mental Component (MCS), r = −.77) and anxiety scales (e.g., PTSD Checklist – Civilian Version (PCL-C), r = .69), and Composite International Diagnostic Interview diagnoses (e.g., depression = .81 and anxiety = .81) (p. 541). Scores per item

include 1 (Not at All), 2 (Several days), 3 (More days than not), and 4 (Every day), and the total scale range is from 2 to 8. The present study uses these four items with the addition of a time dimension for "over the past two weeks." It includes two subscale items for depression (e.g., "Over the past 2 weeks, have you experienced feelings of worthlessness?") and two items for anxiety (e.g., "Over the past 2 weeks, have you experienced nervousness or shakiness inside?"). At Time 1, reliability was slightly lower than the desired threshold of .7 (α = .652).

Data Analyses

SPSS 24 (IBM, 2016) was used for all quantitative analyses. Given the small sample size, nonparametric strategies were used to determine whether mean differences were significant between the intervention and nonintervention groups. The Related Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test helped to clarify whether differences existed between Time 1 and Time 2 across outcomes of stress, depression, and anxiety. The authors chose not to use an analysis of variance or a multivariate analysis of variance based on the small sample size (*n* = 18), which would have been too vulnerable to error in the results (DeWinter, 2013). We used an alpha level of .05 for all statistical tests.

Results

Stress, Depression, and Anxiety Change

The first research question asked, if the summer mixtape program was associated with any change in adolescent well-being (i.e., stress, anxiety, and/or depression)? Results found that *stress (see* Table 1) for the entire student sample (*n* = 18) decreased between Time 1 (*M* = 16.11, *SD* = 6.56) and Time 2 (*M* = 11.63, *SD* = 4.36). For stress levels, this observed reduction in mean scores from Time 1 to Time 2 was statistically significant at *p* = .002 with a very large effect size (.72). The largest effect size among groups for stress was for Group 2 (.52).

Similarly, from Time 1 to Time 2 mean *depression* scores (see Table 2) decreased from 4.05 (*SD* = 1.69) to 3.35 (*SD* = 1.71). The reduction in depressive levels between Time 1 and 2 was similarly statistically significant (*p* = .043), with a large effect size (.48). The largest effect size among groups for depression was for Group 2 (.43). Further, *anxiety* scores decreased from a mean of 4.94 (*SD* = 2.04) at Time 1 to a mean of 4.37 (*SD* = 2.15) at Time 2 (see Table 3). While anxiety levels also decreased from Time 1 (*M* = 4.94, *SD* =2.04) to Time 2 (*M* = 4.37, *SD* = 2.15), the change was not statistically significant. The largest effect size among groups for anxiety was for Group 2 (.45). To determine whether mean differences for stress, depression, or anxiety between Time 1 and Time 2 were statistically significant, the nonparametric Related Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used.

Leadership Style

The second research question asked, if leadership style was associated with potential changes in well-being (stress, anxiety, and/or depression) among students in the summer mixtape program. Results from the first research question indicated that changes in well-being existed in several well-being areas between Time 1 and Time 2. Next, an association

was found between leadership style and well-being. When looking at results by group at Time 1, participants in Group 3 reported the highest mean levels of depression ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.63$) compared to participants in Group 1 ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.21$) or Group 2 ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 2.14$). Participants in Group 3 also reported higher mean levels of stress ($M = 19.00$, $SD = 4.34$) at Time 1 compared to Group 1 ($M = 11.67$, $SD = 5.05$) and Group 2 ($M = 17.67$, $SD = 8.12$). Participants in Group 3 also reported higher mean levels of anxiety ($M = 6.17$, $SD = 1.72$) compared to Group 1 ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 2.19$) or Group 2 ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.86$).

More specifically, the statistically significant improvement between Time 1 and Time 2 for stress and depression in the full sample, and the non-significant improvement in anxiety, varied in magnitude according to leadership style. For example, the *deliberative* group (Group 1) showed slight, non-statistically significant decreases for stress between Time 1 ($M = 11.67$, $SD = 5.05$) and Time 2 ($M = 10.57$, $SD = 2.81$), for depression between Time 1 ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.21$) and Time 2 ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.71$), and for anxiety between Time 1 ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 2.19$) and Time 2 ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 2.62$). The *semi-structured group* (Group 2) showed substantial decreases in stress, depression, and anxiety over the course of the intervention. . *Stress* level reduced between Time 1 ($M = 17.67$, $SD = 8.12$) and Time 2 ($M = 10.67$, $SD = 4.18$), $p = .028$. *Depression* level reduced between Time 1 ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 2.14$) and Time 2 ($M = 2.67$, $SD = .52$), but the change was not statistically significant. A*nxiety* level dropped between Time 1 ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.86$) and Time 2 ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.21$), also not statistically significant. Finally, the *non-deliberative group* (Group 3) showed decreases between Time 1 and Time 2, although non-statistically significant, in stress, depressive symptoms, and anxiety symptoms. Large differences were found for stress ($M = 19.00$, $SD = 4.34$ to $M = 13.67$, $SD = 5.65$), and slight differences were found for both depressive symptoms ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.63$ to $M = 4.56$, $SD = 2.39$) and anxiety symptoms ($M = 6.17$, $SD = 1.72$ to $M = 5.90$, $SD = 1.76$).

Table 1. Time 1 & time 2 mean stress by group.

Participant Group Category	Time 1 Stress M	Time 1 Stress SD	Time 2 Stress M	Time 2 Stress SD	Sig	Effect Size
Group 1	11.67	5.05	10.57	2.81	.336	.23
Group 2	17.67	8.12	10.67*	4.18	.028	.52
Group 3	19.00	4.34	13.67	5.65	.058	.45
Total Sample	16.11	6.56	11.63*	4.36	.002	.72

Statistical significance was assessed using the (non-parametric) Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test; Effect sizes were calculated by using the standardized test statistic z and dividing it by the square root of the number of pairs; * The sum of the negative ranks equals the sum of the positive ranks; Variable names for Time 1 and Time 2 include Stress = Stress variable mean; Depression = Depression variable mean; Anxiety = Anxiety variable mean.

Table 2. Time 1 & time 2 mean depression by group.

Participant Group Category	Time 1 Depression M	Time 1 Depression SD	Time 2 Depression M	Time 2 Depression SD	Sig	Effect Size
Group 1	3.33	1.21	2.83	1.17	.180	.32
Group 2	4.17	2.14	2.67	.52	.066	.43
Group 3	4.67	1.63	4.56	2.39	.498	.16
Total Sample	4.05	1.69	3.35	1.71	.043	.48

Statistical significance was assessed using the (non-parametric) Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test; Effect sizes were calculated by using the standardized test statistic z and dividing it by the square root of the number of pairs; * The sum of the negative ranks equals the sum of the positive ranks; Variable names for Time 1 and Time 2 include Stress = Stress variable mean; Depression = Depression variable mean; Anxiety = Anxiety variable mean.

Table 3. Time 1 & time 2 mean anxiety by group.

Participant Group Category	Time 1 Anxiety M	Time 1 Anxiety SD	Time 2 Anxiety M	Time 2 Anxiety SD	Sig	Effect Size
Group 1	4.00	2.19	3.90	2.62	1.0*	*
Group 2	4.67	1.86	3.33	1.21	.059	.45
Group 3	6.17	1.72	5.90	1.76	6.80	.10
Total Sample	4.94	2.04	4.37	2.15	.221	.29

Statistical significance was assessed using the (non-parametric) Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test; Effect sizes were calculated by using the standardized test statistic z and dividing it by the square root of the number of pairs; * The sum of the negative ranks equals the sum of the positive ranks; Variable names for Time 1 and Time 2 include Stress = Stress variable mean; Depression = Depression variable mean; Anxiety = Anxiety variable mean.

Participant Change by Gender, Race, and Age

Mean levels of stress, depression, and anxiety were examined by gender, race and ethnicity, and age.

Stress. At Time 1, mean stress levels (see Table 4) for girl participants ($M = 19.0$, $SD = 6.07$) were substantially higher than for boy participants ($M = 13.8$, $SD = 6.29$). Both levels were higher than the norm gender-based means found in the primary source literature associated with this scale at 13.7 (boys) and 12.1 (girls) respectively (Cohen et al., 1983). For girl participants, a reduction in stress from Time 1 ($M = 19.00$, $SD = 6.07$) to Time 2 ($M = 11.12$, $SD = 3.14$) was statistically significant ($p = .012$) with a large effect size (.60). Differences between Time 1 and Time 2 are non-significant for boys, but small decreases in stress scores were observed. For the current sample, when examining race and ethnicity, the highest Time 1 stress level ($M = 21.5$, $SD = 3.54$) was found for participants that identified as multi-racial/multi-ethnic, compared to levels for participants that identified singularly as Black ($M = 14.66$, $SD = 5.13$) or Latinx ($M = 15.1$, $SD = 7.14$). For youth identifying as Latinx, a reduction in stress between Time 1 ($M = 15.10$, $SD = 7.14$) and Time 2 ($M = 9.84$, $SD = 3.40$), was statistically significant ($p = .009$) with a large effect size (.61). Statistically significant reductions were also found in stress mean scores by age. Participants who reported they were 15 years of age experienced a significant mean score reduction in stress between Time 1 ($M = 17.00$, $SD = 7.45$) and Time 2 ($M = 10.00$, $SD = 2.74$) ($p = .042$), including a large effect size (.48). Participants who reported they were 16 years of age also experienced a mean score reduction in stress between Time 1 ($M = 15.87$, $SD = 7.06$) and Time 2 ($M = 11.05$, $SD = 4.20$); statistically significant at $p = .020$ with a large effect size (.55).

Depression. For Time 1 depression levels (Table 5), similar to results for stress, higher levels were reported for participants that identified as girls ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.99$) compared to boys ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.35$) and multi-racial/ethnic participants ($M = 5.50$, $SD = .71$) compared to Latinx ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 2.16$) and Black participants ($M = 3.66$, $SD = .58$). For girl participants, a reduction in depression occurred between Time 1 ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.99$) and Time 2 ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.64$); it was statistically significant ($p = .027$) with a large effect size of .52. A small decrease in depression was observed among boys between Time 1 and Time 2, but it was not statistically significant. Alternatively, while non-significant, the effect size (.43) was substantial for the decrease in depression among Latinx participants between Time 1 and Time 2. Also, for Time 1, participants who were the age of 15 reported higher levels of depression ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 2.70$) compared to 17 year olds ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.0$), 16 year olds ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.46$), and 14 year olds ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .71$). Among participants 16 years of age, depression levels decreased between Time 1 ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.46$) and Time 2 ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.14$); statistically significant ($p = .039$) with a large effect size of .49.

Table 4. Time 1 & time 2 mean stress levels by gender, race and ethnicity, and age.

Participant Group Category	Time 1 Stress M	Time 1 Stress SD	Time 2 Stress M	Time 2 Stress SD	Sig	Effect Size
Gender [a]						
Girl	19.00	6.07	11.12	3.14	.012	.60
Boy	13.80	6.29	12.04	5.28	.188	.31
Race and Ethnicity	14.66	5.13	15.00	7.0	1.0*	*
Black	15.10	7.14	9.84	3.40	.009	.61
Latinx	21.50	3.54	14.50	2.12	.180	.32
Multi-racial or ethnic						
Age						
14	17.50	2.12	16.50	9.19	.655	.11
15	17.00	7.45	10.00	2.74	.042	.48
16	15.87	7.06	11.05	4.20	.020	.55
17	14.33	8.39	12.66	3.06	.655	.11

Statistical significance was assessed using the (non-parametric) Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test; Effect sizes were calculated by using the standardized test statistic z and dividing it by the square root of the number of pairs; * The sum of the negative ranks equals the sum of the positive ranks; [a] Gender ascertained by self-report; Variable names for Time 1 and Time 2 include Stress = Stress variable mean; Depression = Depression variable mean; Anxiety = Anxiety variable mean.

Anxiety. For Time 1 anxiety levels (see Table 6), similar to levels of stress and depression, girls ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 1.83$) reported higher levels than boys ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 2.06$). For girl participants, a reduction in anxiety level mean scores from 5.75 ($SD = 1.83$) to 4.19 ($SD = 1.44$) was statistically significant ($p = .028$) with a large effect size (.52). Anxiety levels showed a small increase for boys. However, individuals identifying as multi-racial/ethnic exhibited lower levels of anxiety ($M = 4.50$, $SD = .71$) compared to Black ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.73$) and Latinx ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 2.62$) participants. Like with depression, while non-significant, anxiety levels among Latinx participants decreased over time, with a modest effect size of 38. Further, participants who were 14 years old reported the highest levels of anxiety ($M = 6.50$, $SD = .71$) compared to mean levels for participants that were 15 years old ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 2.41$), 16 years old ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 2.39$), or 17 years old ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .58$). Small decreases in anxiety occurred for 15 and 17 year old participants, each yielding modest effect sizes of .32.

Correlations. Correlational analyses revealed statistically significant positive correlations among depression, stress, and anxiety at Time 1 (see Table 7). The coexistence of these symptoms at each time point aligns with literature on comorbidity of stress, depression, and anxiety (Cummings et al., 2014). However, there was no correlation between depression at Time 1 and depression, or stress, or anxiety at Time 2. A statistically significant positive correlation existed between anxiety at Time 1 and Time 2. Yet, there was no correlation between anxiety at Time 1 and depression or stress at Time 2. A statistically significant positive correlation existed between stress at Time 1 and Time 2. But there was no correlation between stress at Time 2 and depression or anxiety at Time 2. Finally, like Time 1 there were statistically significant positive correlations among depression, stress, and anxiety at Time 2, supporting a heavy association among these constructs.

Discussion

This current study explored the power and potential of a Hip Hop-based group work curriculum during a summer enrichment program, traditionally designed to mitigate decreases in academic knowledge while school is out of session. This study also examined the use of a variety of different leadership styles in group work to assess potential differences

Table 5. Time 1 & time 2 mean depression levels by gender, race and ethnicity, and age.

Participant Group Category	Time 1 Depr M	Time 1 Depr SD	Time 2 Depr M	Time 2 Depr SD	Sig	Effect Size
Gender [a]						
Girl	4.62	1.99	3.16	1.64	.027	.52
Boy	3.60	1.35	3.50	1.84	.496	.16
Race and Ethnicity	3.66	0.58	4.33	3.21	1.0*	*
Black	4.00	2.16	3.10	1.66	0.66	.43
Latinx	5.50	.71	3.50	.71	.157	.33
Multi-racial or ethnic (Black/Latinx)						
Age						
14	3.50	.71	5.50	3.53	.655	.11
15	4.60	2.70	3.40	2.07	.180	.32
16	3.87	1.46	2.91	1.14	.039	.49
17	4.00	1.0	3.00	0	.180	.32

Statistical significance was assessed using the (non-parametric) Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test; Effect sizes were calculated by using the standardized test statistic z and dividing it by the square root of the number of pairs; * The sum of the negative ranks equals the sum of the positive ranks; [a] Gender ascertained by self-report; Variable names for Time 1 and Time 2 include Stress = Stress variable mean; Depression = Depression variable mean; Anxiety = Anxiety variable mean.

Table 6. Time 1 & time 2 mean anxiety levels by gender, race and ethnicity, and age.

Participant Group Category	Time 1 Anxiety M	Time 1 Anxiety SD	Time 2 Anxiety M	Time 2 Anxiety SD	Sig	Effect Size
Gender [a]						
Girl	5.75	1.83	4.19	1.44	.028	.52
Boy	4.30	2.06	4.52	2.67	.457	.18
Race and Ethnicity	5.00	1.73	5.40	3.14	1.0	.11
Black	5.00	2.62	4.00	2.36	.104	.38
Latinx	4.50	.71	5.00	1.41	.157	.11
Multi-racial or ethnic (Black/Latinx)						
Age						
14	6.50	.71	7.00	2.83	.655	.11
15	4.60	2.41	3.20	1.79	.180	.11
16	5.00	2.39	4.69	2.23	.674	.10
17	4.33	.58	3.73	.46	.180	.32

Statistical significance was assessed using the (non-parametric) Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test; Effect sizes were calculated by using the standardized test statistic z and dividing it by the square root of the number of pairs; * The sum of the negative ranks equals the sum of the positive ranks; [a] Gender ascertained by self-report; Variable names for Time 1 and Time 2 include Stress = Stress variable mean; Depression = Depression variable mean; Anxiety = Anxiety variable mean.

in outcomes for adolescents. The curriculum itself was designed as a stress reduction intervention in response to Travis et al. (2019) who suggested that youth experience increased stress, general mental health concerns, or "summer strain" during the summer months, and that music-integrated strategies may help buffer summer stressors. The current study sample ($n = 18$), consistent with prior research, reported elevated levels of stress at the pre-program assessment. Based on these findings the sample seemed appropriate to participate in the study. The demographic makeup of participants was largely students that identified as lower-SES, and Latinx, Black or multi-ethnic as both Latinx and Black. Prior research suggested that these two groups experience a set of stressors specific to their racial/ ethnic and economic backgrounds, often stemming from familial economic concerns (Sanchez et al., 2013), race-based discrimination (Hughes et al., 2015; Sánchez et al.,

Table 7. Correlations for stress, depression, and anxiety symptoms at time 1 and time 2.

Scale	STRESS 1	STRESS 2	DEPR 1	DEPR 2	ANXIETY 1	ANXIETY 2
STRESS 1	1	.659**	.664**	.271	.548*	.249
STRESS 2	.659**	1	.213	.551**	.415	.543*
DEPR 1	.433**	.213	1	.377	.561*	.264
DEPR 2	.476**	.551*	.331	1	.460	.774**
ANXIETY 1	.548*	.415	.561*	.460	1	.695**
ANXIETY 2	.249	.543*	.264	.774**	.695**	1

** Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (2-tailed).
Note for Scales: DEPR represents depression symptoms.

2017), immigration and residency status (Perreira & Pedroza, 2019; Roche et al., 2018), and acculturation (Huq et al., 2016).

With regard to the first research question, results support the hypothesis that from pre- to post-summer mixtape program, youth would experience significant changes in well-being (stress, anxiety, and/or depression). Of the three well-being indicators, significant decreases were observed for both stress and depression, but not for anxiety. The significant decreases in stress experienced among participants in the current study's sample are laudable, particularly given research that suggested the benefits of a range of effective coping among Black and Latinx youth (Sanchez et al., 2013; 2017). Additional analysis indicated that the individuals who identified as multi-ethnic (as opposed to singularly Black or Latinx), were more vulnerable to the experience of stress and/or depression. Sánchez et al. (2017) suggested that experiencing race-based stressors might be magnified for those identifying as multi-racial or multi-ethnic.

At the Time 1 assessment for stress, all age groups were higher than the national mean score of 14.2 (Cohen et al., 1983); giving credence to the work of Travis et al. (2019) which pointed to the "value of screening and treatment for depression and anxiety among middle school youth, especially during the summer months" (p. 16). Aside from stress levels, the current study also found significant decreases in depression for the entire youth sample. These findings echo research on art-effects on depression, like Slayton (2012) who found a social justice art therapy intervention useful in promoting decreases in the experience of depression among adolescents.

With regard to the second research question, results supported the hypothesis that there was a significant association between leadership style and well-being (stress, anxiety, and/or depression). While the entire youth sample experienced significant decreases in stress and depression between Time 1 and Time 2 of the mixtape camp, an analysis of youth outcomes by leadership style indicated that only the semi-structured group participants experienced a statistically significant reduction in stress. In short, much like the literature suggested, leadership style proved to be an important factor in predicting outcomes for youth participants (Gladding, 2015). In this sense, the democratic or choice-based group process was most conducive of positive outcomes, which counters notions that authoritarian (Gladding, 2015; Sink et al., 2011), or full youth driven-processes (Milsom, 2018), were the most appropriate for adolescents.

Additionally, correlational analysis revealed statistically significant positive correlations among depression, stress, and anxiety, at Time 1 for participants. However, there were no correlations between Time 1 depression and Time 2 values for depression, stress or anxiety suggesting that among youth struggling with mental health concerns there is both an

association among mental health challenges at any given point in time, but also an amen-ability to change over time. While anxiety at Time 1 was significantly correlated with anxiety at Time 2, similar to depression, Time 1 anxiety was not associated with stress or depression at Time 2, again suggesting to the possibility of favorable changes in symptoms over time. Similar correlation patterns existed for stress, with a significant Time 1 to Time 2 correlation, but no correlations between Time 1 stress and Time 2 depression or anxiety. Lastly, because there were (a) significant correlations among depression, stress, and anxiety, and (b) significant correlations among depression, stress, and anxiety at Time 2, but no relationship *between* Time 1 and Time 2 for the dissimilarity of these variables (e.g., Time 1 stress and Time 2 depression), it suggests that whatever factors contributed to a non-relationship between Time 1 and Time 2 are worth further exploration. Results also suggest the mixtape camp and underlying theories of change may have supported individuals whose comorbid symptoms did not persist between Time 1 and Time 2.

This study also adds support to the usefulness of the critical cycle of mixtape creation as a culturally salient, action-research-based, group work process – originally theorized by Levy et al. (2018). In the current study, the CCMC functioned as an effective group work modality, incorporating Hip Hop and Empowerment strategies guided by the individual and community empowerment framework, leading to reductions in stress, depression, and anxiety among participants overall. While the CCMC is a novel approach, its action-based nature adds support to the argument that action-oriented group work practices in group work could counter cultural inequities (Smith & Chambers, 2015) and were supportive of youth engagement and their ability to guide the group work process (Cook & Krueger-Henney, 2017). The power of using the CCMC is further supported by the largest stress, depression, and anxiety reduction occurring in the semi-structured group, as group mem-bers were given choices to guide the group process (crucial to effectively deploy the CCMC model), while still being driven by a mixtape-creation model.

The findings in the current study also add important empirical support to the burgeon-ing field of Hip Hop approaches in mental health, including but not limited to counseling, social work, psychology, and psychiatry (Alvarez, 2012; Armstrong & Ricard, 2016; Leafloor, 2012; Travis & Deepak, 2011; Tyson, 2002; Washington, 2018). Specifically, the current study found that the mixtape as a Hip Hop-based cultural process or community practice could be effectively used to guide the development of interventions. Prior Hip Hop and counseling research spoke to the use of Hip Hop cultural practices in session to counter the cultural inadequacies of traditional approaches to counseling and therapy (Levy, 2019). Hip Hop-based approaches, like those used in the present study, offer youth the opportunity to actively engage in the therapeutic process (Travis, 2016). Additionally, other group work scholars have demonstrated how rap music can be used in group counseling curriculum to support Black male teens in developing financial literacy (Burt, 2020). The inclusion of a teaching artist (a producer and audio engineer) as an additional group facilitator sup-ported students in accessing ancillary components of Hip Hop mixtape making (i.e., creating beats and the overall background music to support lyrics). Similar to the present study, researchers posited that teaching artists hold an essential role in connecting schools and universities with community-based art (Low et al., 2016). It should also be mentioned that in the non-deliberative group, youth pulled from other creative art and cultural elements to share their thoughts/feelings (such as making a music video). This finding adds to the importance of allowing the culture and competencies to manifest fully. While

significant differences in all youth outcomes were found in the semi-structured group, youth were limited to just lyric writing. An argument can be made that even a small amount of structure might limit the manifestation of strengths, intelligences, and cultural expressiveness youth possess.

Finally, the results suggest that Hip Hop integrated strategies can be successfully implemented in a variety of facilitation formats and leadership styles. This finding is novel given that different types of leadership styles are under-explored within existing research on Hip Hop integrated strategies. While all leadership styles helped facilitate decreases in stress, depression, and anxiety, if facilitators are specifically interested in substantial reductions in stress alone, there may be more value in a semi-structured methodology (Group 2). However, further research is needed to examine the validity of these conclusions.

Implications

The implications for this study in the field of education, with regards to stress, coping, and resilience are vast. For children and families, the study helps shed light on the opportunities for meaningful non-academic activities during summer months that focus on strategies to reduce stress, anxiety and/or depression, when so much emphasis is on academic opportunities to combat potential summer learning loss. Counselors looking to engage youth in group work during the summer months, are encouraged to facilitate using either a deliberative, semi-structured, or non-deliberative group structure, given that each approach can positivity impact clients' well-being. The current study also supports the use of a structured Hip Hop-based framework for group work during the summer months.

Educational and other youth development settings can similarly benefit from these findings when considering the types of programming to develop and maintain during summer months. Young people need emotional support in the summers. While summer academic supports may also be meaningful, as pointed out in prior research, there is tremendous value in positive and supportive youth development activities. These activities are strategies that buffer stress and promote opportunities for empowerment and social and emotional development as well. More research on group work to address well-being needs during the summer months is recommended.

Implications also exist for culturally responsive group work praxis. The present data support the use of the critical cycle of mixtape creation as a culturally sensitive process that can be used in work with Black and Latinx youth to support well-being. Similarly, the present data support prior research of the individual and community empowerment framework as an effective strategy for work with Black and Latinx youth (Travis et al., 2019). Counselors looking to engage youth in group counseling work might consider Hip Hop-based approaches knowing that whether they facilitate with a deliberative, semi-structured, or non-deliberative group structure, their clients' well-being can be supported. For school counselors who are searching for resources for their students during the summer months, youth-centered mental health programs should be considered that capitalize on hip hop based frameworks. Future research on arts-based strategies for group work to address students' well-being needs throughout the summer months should be explored.

Finally, among mental health professionals, there is room for flexibility in leadership style depending on objectives, but there appeared to be a particular benefit to strategies that offered both structure and youth autonomy. As mentioned earlier in this paper, research on

hip hop based group facilitation with different leadership styles is limited. The current study therefore supports the claim that additional research is needed to explore different groups utilizing hip hop based frameworks to help identify best practice. Ideally, future research should be conducted with a larger sample size than the current study.

Limitations

A few limitations to this study exist. First, this study relied on a small sample size (n = 18). Additionally, a control group could have helped minimize threats to internal validity. When examining the results of this study, it did appear that each group differed in their pre-program stress scores. It is reasonable to question whether the initial level of stress (particularly when they were higher in some groups compared to others) impacted statistically significant changes at the post-program assessment. Further, while the researchers asked the groups not to speak with others about their projects and the functionality of their group, contamination is a potential threat to internal validity given that youth from each group returned to a singular location together in the evening. The non-independence of group observations presents an additional limitation for which we did not control, potentially influencing the validity of results. Specifically, because participants were selected from the same larger summer enrichment program population, non-independence could have caused participants to influence each other to demonstrate similar behaviors, cognitions, and emotions (McCarthy et al., 2017). Given the differing group contexts that participants engaged in, it is also possible that non-independence due to common fate occurred allowing participant behavior to be impacted by the environments themselves (Grawitch & Munz, 2004). These results suggest there are many opportunities for further research where similar groups are aligned with more similar baseline stress scores and more matched strategically to true comparison groups not participating in music-integrated activities.

Conclusion

The current study indicates there is value for summer enrichment program educators to consider including group work opportunities for youth, and to offer support for dealing with emotional stress, depression, and anxiety that would otherwise not be provided. Researchers call for the use of culturally responsive approaches to group work to support youth of color and low-SES youth in accessing adequate mental health services (Tao et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2014). In support of this research, the current study illuminates the positive impact of Hip Hop-based approaches in group work for youth who identify solely or partially as Latinx or Black/African American.

Notes on Contributors

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