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Hip-Hop Can Heal: Addressing Mental Health through Hip-Hop in the Urban Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Addressing students' mental health needs has become a growing concern amongst educators and school leaders, as 25% of adolescents are known to be diagnosed with a mental health disorder. Moreover, students in urban contexts are more likely to experience mental health challenges as they face environmental stressors in their communities that stem from a long history of structural racism, institutional racism, and discriminatory practices. Research demonstrates that promoting positive mental health with adolescents can lessen the impact of mental health concerns. In an attempt to support educators interested in supporting their students' positive mental health, this article identifies five culturally responsive strategies anchored in hip-hop culture that can be implemented in the classrooms. The authors draw from frameworks anchored in hip-hop to develop practical strategies that classroom teachers can use to support students in processing and coping with mental health stressors.

Introduction

Identifying ways to support students' mental health in schools has become an increasing concern for educators and administrators over recent years (Shelemy, Harvey, & Waite, 2019; Wiest & Lee, 2019). The United States Department of Health and Human Services' statistics demonstrate that half of all mental health problems begin before the age of 14 and that one in five children and adolescents experience a mental health problem during their K-12 school years (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Mental Health, 2017; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration., 2017). Promoting positive mental health and engaging in early interventions with children and adolescents can lessen the impact of mental health concerns (Kelly, Jorm, & Wright, 2007; Malla et al., 2016). Students in urban communities, particularly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), face unique challenges that place them at a higher risk of experiencing mental health illness, including environmental stressors related to societal issues

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including poverty (Knopp, 2012; Noguera, 2003), lack of affordable housing (Gallagher, Burnstein, & Oliver, 2018), lack of quality health care (Patel et al., 2019), and exposure to criminal offenses (Warner, 2019). As we illustrate some environmental stressors that BIPOC and urban youth may face by virtue of residing in an urban context, it is essential to recognize that the United States' history of institutional racism and discriminatory practices contribute heavily to the presence and in some cases, exacerbation of these stress factors mentioned earlier (Bailey et al., 2017). Schools that serve the largest population of BIPOC receive less funding than those that serve fewer BIPOC (Amerikaner, 2020). Alternatively, schools that serve large populations of students who live in poverty have historically been defrauded when it comes to access to high-quality teachers and advanced course offerings (Hallett & Venegas, 2011). Further, research indicates that students of color experience exclusionary school discipline practices disproportionately and at much higher rates than their White peers (Anyon et al., 2018). These are a few institutional and systemic challenges that BIPOC face. Even in the face of these challenges, many BIPOC successfully navigate spaces that have not systemically benefited and adequately supported them.

Further, BIPOC and students in urban schools are more likely to experience institutional racism by virtue of attending school systems that use eurocentric curricula that do not cater to all students' cultural needs and experiences (Aguayo, 2019). Research demonstrates that exposure to discrimination is significantly associated with high levels of perceived stress, and ultimately more significant psychological distress (Hughes, Kiecolt, Keith, & Demo, 2015; Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman, 2003). Often, students who experience higher levels of stress are more likely to carry the emotional stress caused by their environmental stressors into all spaces, including schools, making it essential that youth are supported in developing stress coping skills (Sanchez, Lambert, & Cooley-Strickland, 2013; Santiago et al., 2016).

Unfortunately, schools struggle to support students in accessing mental health support and developing a healthy coping mechanism to support students' emotional development. The reality is school counselors have limited time and resources to support students' positive mental health and are often over-inundated with tasks that do not address the mental health challenges that students face (Mau, Li, & Hoetmer, 2016). While there has been a recent focus on social and emotional learning (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015) where teachers support students in understanding and managing emotions and make responsible decisions, teachers themselves are not trained with the skills needed to address students' mental health challenges in the classroom (Schonert-Reichl, Kitil, & Hanson-Peterson, 2017). This lack of preparedness is concerning because students who experience stress without healthy emotional outlets, or support from school staff, are more likely to

abuse substances as a coping strategy (Fortuna, Porche, & Padilla, 2018; Gilhooly, Bergman, Stieber, & Brown, 2018).

When mental health services are ascertained, urban students have lacked access to mental health professionals who possess the cultural competence necessary to adequately utilize culturally sensitive interventions to support positive mental health (Betancourt, Green, Carrillo, & Park, 2005). In comparison to their White counterparts, BIPOC are significantly less likely to seek mental health services (Creedon & Lê Cook, 2016) for various reasons, including cultural stigma around accessing mental health services (Crowe et al., 2016), negative interactions with counselors who cannot understand their experiences (Lindsey, Chambers, Pohle, Beall, & Lucksted, 2013; Lindsey, Joe, & Nebbitt, 2010), and the use eurocentric counseling approaches which are critiqued as both inadequate and harmful to individuals of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds (Tao, Owen, Pace, & Imel, 2015).

Despite the inequities concerning accessing services, trends have been observed as it relates to mental health in America. Specifically, national polls suggest Americans report largely positive views about mental health and, therefore, less stigma toward services (Association, 2019). Individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 report being more open to accessing mental health care than older adults; however, there are challenges to accessing care that still exists (Harris Poll, 2015). Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al. (2018) found that middle-school-aged viewed teachers, whom they had strong relationships with, as a primary source of mental health above mental health counselors. Ultimately, this article suggests that adolescents are more open to discussing mental health today than they have ever been.

Therefore, one goal with this paper is to provide educators with culturally responsive tools to address mental health challenges in the classroom as part of their daily practice to support students' positive mental health. A second goal is to begin the creation of a culture where teachers are considering student's mental health needs as they plan for their daily instruction. Finally, the last goal of all students, regardless of exposure to mental health stressors, engaging in daily mental health practices, provides students with the outlets they need to develop their skills to cope with their environmental and emotional stressors. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore approaches, rooted in hip-hop culture, for addressing mental health in classrooms. Specifically, the authors draw from two innovative and culturally responsive frameworks that are anchored in hip-hop culture to offer a set of practices that classroom teachers can use to support students in processing and coping with emotional stressors.

Hip-hop, mental health, and education

In this paper, we explore how hip-hop can be incorporated into the classroom to address the mental health challenges of urban youth. We focus on the use of

hip-hop as a culturally responsive tool for addressing the mental health challenges of urban youth because we argue that hip-hop is a culture that was conceived to address emotional stressors that urban youth face. Recognizing the environmental stressors that urban youth face, the limitations of schools and communities to offer quality mental health services, and the stigma to seek mental health services, we are inclined to identify innovative approaches to support the positive mental health of urban youth. We argue for the daily use of pedagogical strategies that are anchored in hip-hop and that proactively address mental health concerns in the urban classroom (Martens & Andreen, 2013). The authors call for the use of a hip-hop based pedagogy as an intervention to address mental health challenges in urban classrooms as scholars have explored both the benefits of using hip-hop as a culturally responsive approach to teaching in an urban classroom (Adjapong, 2017) and the benefits of hip-hop based school counseling practices (Levy, 2019). To understand the theoretical and practical perspectives associated with incorporating hip-hop in classrooms to address mental health, we must understand the origins and context in which hip-hop was created.

Hip-hop: A culture rooted in expression and healing

Hip-hop is the most consumed genre of music by listeners across the world (Hooton, 2015). What started as a cultural phenomenon in the South Bronx during the 1970s has grown into a multibillion-dollar industry over the last five decades. However, many hip-hop music and culture consumers fail to recognize the rich history behind the birth of the innovative and progressive culture. In the late 1960s, the Bronx began to deteriorate for several reasons, including a steady rise in crime, a struggling economy, budget cuts to vital social services such as the fire and police departments, and the development of the Cross Bronx Expressway – one of the largest construction projects that the Bronx borough has experienced (Gonzalez, 2004). During the time of the conception of hip-hop, gang violence over turf reached its peak, and poverty was catastrophic (Chang, 2005). To no avail, the New York Police Department launched failed efforts to penetrate local gangs (Chang, 2005). Caro (1974) suggests that the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway is responsible for the downfall of the Bronx. Thousands of families were displaced and forced to uproot from their homes to allow for bulldozers, plows, and other construction machinery to pave the way for the Cross Bronx Expressway. Crime continued to rise in the communities that surrounded the Cross Bronx Expressway, which caused residents and businesses to relocate, deserting many buildings and storefronts.

Consequently, hip-hop was birthed as a response to the environmental stressors that urban youth and community members faced in the South Bronx during the late 1960 and 1970s. Hip-hop was created as a social and

mental health outlet (Emdin, Adjapong, & Levy, 2016) by and for Black and Latinx urban youth in response to the effects of industrialization in the Bronx (Chang, 2005; Rose, 1994). Hip-hop culture brought community members together for joyous block parties, it encouraged friendly breakdance competitions, and it provided a voice and outlet for underrepresented youth. The power of music and camaraderie united Bronx youth, and for the youth, the block party was the space of possibility (Chang, 2005). Hip-hop provided youth with an outlet to express themselves when many urban youth felt that their opinions were not considered. Specifically, scholars suggest that amid dismal opportunities to access mental health services, urban youth turned to hip-hop based community practices to process environmental stressors (Levy, Cook, & Emdin, 2018). These community-based practices include hip-hop cyphers (circles of artists sharing rhymes) where members of the hip-hop community congregate to express various emotional experiences (Levy, Emdin, & Adjapong, 2018). In preparation for hip-hop cyphers, individuals engage in lyric writing, which, in and of itself, allows space for personal reflection and catharsis (Levy & Keum, 2014). Additionally, individuals have created hip hop mixtapes (a collection of multiple songs over popular hip hop beats, distributed for free) to showcase who they are, where they are from, and their struggles and aspirations (Ball, 2011). In essence, hip-hop culture has offered participants access to community-defined practices supportive of their healing.

For this reason, we explore the use of pedagogical approaches anchored in hip-hop to support positive mental health development of students in urban schools. We believe that by drawing from the hip-hop community's inherent strengths to create their own practices for catharsis, educators can find a bevy of pedagogical practices that aid the use of mental health interventions in classroom spaces. From a pedagogical lens, researchers have argued that teachers must possess frameworks that welcome, validate, and support youth's lived experiences/context in classrooms (Emdin, 2010; Levy et al., 2018).

Hip-hop based education

Hip-hop based education refers to the use of hip-hop in educational spaces, particularly in curricular resources. Still considered a new field within education research, hip-hop education scholars have and continue to interrogate how hip-hop can be used and incorporated across all educational spaces. Petchauer's (2009) review of educational research concerning hip-hop education gathered that hip-hop based curricular approaches, addressing a variety of academic outcomes, have been present in the literature since the early 2000s. Scholars have advocated for the analysis of hip-hop texts in classrooms to support students in developing critical literacies (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Morrell, 2004). In English language arts contexts, Stovall (2006) used

hip-hop to support students' development of English language arts competencies. For the last decade, approaches to incorporating hip-hop as a form of pedagogy have become a topic of increased interest across educational curricula (Ewing, 2014), including content areas such as English (Kelly, 2013; Lyiscott, 2017) Science (Adjapong, 2019; Adjapong & Emdin, 2015; Emdin, 2010), Math (Amidon, 2013; Tillman, 2016), and support civic engagement (Alim, 2011; Childs, 2014; Love, 2014; Schupp, 2019). The main argument for the use of hip-hop based approaches is mostly the same – to address concerns regarding the lack of culturally responsive approaches to teaching and learning to support students academically as well as encouraging students to have a deeper connection with their communities and critically interrogate systems and structures that directly impact them (Adjapong, 2017; Pechauer, 2009). Further, as we consider literacy studies (Hull & Schultz, 2002) educators are encouraged to privilege the way students create and engage in literacy practices within their communities, which includes ways of communities ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted by specific groups (Gee & Gee, 2007).

Scholars have also explored the use of hip-hop based interventions in counseling practice over the last two decades (Tyson, 2002; Abdul-Adil, 2014; Geipel, Koenig, Hillecke, Resch, & Kaess, 2018). Tyson (2002) engaged Black and Latinx youth in discussions of hip-hop music as a means to promote therapeutic dialogue, finding improvements in peer relations and preference for hip-hop based counseling over traditional approaches. Researchers have suggested that listening to hip-hop music, and discussing hip-hop lyrics, could provide Black and Latinx adolescent clients with a safe platform to identify and discuss their emotions (Tyson, 2003; Washington, 2018). Kobin and Tyson (2006) suggested hip-hop therapy helps create genuine therapeutic relationships. Travis and Deepak (2011) highlight hip-hop culture as a particular empowerment tool to engage youth in counseling sessions to support the client's disclosure of difficult emotions. Recent research suggests hip-hop beat making could be used to channel and release difficult emotions (Travis et al., 2019). Levy (2019) explored the use of a group counseling model for school counselors wherein youth write, record, and perform emotionally themed hip-hop music. Scholars across both education and mental health counseling fields have explored, with success, the use of hip-hop to support youth in different capacities. As a result, we aim to offer teachers with practices that are anchored in hip-hop that address mental health needs and support the positive mental health of urban youth.

Positionality

The authors of this article have multiple and varied positions, roles, and identities that are inextricably related to hip-hop based research, specifically

as it relates to utilizing hip-hop as pedagogy and utilizing hip-hop to support the positive mental health of urban youth. One author is a teacher educator, a product of urban schooling, and with years of urban middle school science teaching experience. This author developed a framework for hip-hop pedagogy (Adjapong, 2017), which is derived from personal experience as a member of hip-hop generation and research focused on developing innovative teaching strategies that utilize urban youth culture. The coauthor developed a framework for hip-hop and school counseling (Levy, 2019) stemming from his experiences finding catharsis through hip-hop lyric writing. Both authors have experience as practitioners and researchers in urban schools. They are dedicated to identifying practical strategies to support educators in providing culturally responsive and sensitive interventions to support student achievement. Both authors have collaborated on research projects focused on identifying hip-hop based interventions, specifically on how hip-hop lyric interventions in urban classrooms could both offer students a platform to master academic content and process social and emotional obstacles (Emdin et al., 2016; Levy et al., 2018). Therefore, the authors hope to offer additional strategies based on our experiences as practitioners (teacher educator/counselor educator) and researchers in urban contexts.

Hip-hop pedagogy to address mental health

The hip-hop based strategies offered in this paper to address mental health in urban schools draw from two educational frameworks that are anchored in hip-hop culture, hip-hop pedagogy framework (Adjapong, 2017), and Hip-Hop and Spoken Word Therapy Framework (Levy, 2019). We suggest that the combined use of these two distinct frameworks has practical implications that offer classroom teachers a valuable set of tools to support their students' positive mental health.

Hip-hop pedagogy

Hip-hop pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that is rooted in hip-hop culture. This conceptualization of hip-hop pedagogy is an extension of the research and personal experiences in urban classrooms and focuses on utilizing hip-hop culture within educational, social spaces (Adjapong & Emdin, 2015). Hip-hop pedagogy encourages educators to utilize pedagogical approaches that are derived from the five creative elements of hip-hop, which include: MC, breakdancing, D.J., graffiti, and knowledge of self. Thus, hip-hop pedagogy is defined as a way of authentically and practically incorporating the creative elements of hip-hop into teaching and inviting students to have a connection with the content while meeting them on their cultural turf by teaching and through their realities and experiences (Adjapong & Emdin,

2015). Considering this, hip-hop pedagogy encourages educators to anchor their teaching strategies in the five creative elements of hip-hop so that students can engage in content using sensibilities that reflect their culture (Adjapong, 2017). Hip-hop pedagogy draws from the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), as it creates opportunities for students to be critical and challenge social, political, and systems that oppress any group of people. Hip-hop is a culture that has impacted and empowered youth populations across the globe, especially youth of marginalized groups, since its conception. For this reason, it serves as a practical approach to incorporate youth culture and critical literacy in urban classrooms (Adjapong & Emdin, 2015). Alternately, hip-hop pedagogy was conceptualized as a pedagogical framework to support content knowledge acquisition. However, it also has conceptual applications that can inform practices anchored in hip-hop that can support positive mental health outcomes of young people in urban classrooms.

Hip-hop and spoken word therapy

The authors also pull from Hip-Hop and Spoken Word Therapy (HHSWT), a culturally responsive school counseling framework whereby students engage in previously validated counseling interventions through the process of writing, recording, and performing hip-hop music (Levy, 2012; Levy & Keum, 2014). HHSWT is grounded in established counseling theories including cognitive behavioral therapy and person-centered therapy, and couples with a bevy of hip-hop cultural practices, such as lyric writing as cognitive and emotive journaling, collaboration as role-playing, hip-hop performance to bolster group dynamics, and the hip-hop mixtape to guide the counseling process. By rooting counseling tools in aspects of youth culture such as these, students can engage in the evocation and analysis of previously undisclosed thoughts and feelings. Levy (2019) argued lyric writing as cognitive and emotional journaling where students make lyric-based journal entries to process the emergence of specific difficult thoughts and feelings emotions outside of sessions. Further, through role-playing as collaboration, students work in small groups, pairs, or with their counselor to co-construct songs around emotional experiences to learn to analyze thoughts and feelings and develop solutions (Levy, 2019). The hip-hop cultural practice of the cypher is discussed as a group space where hip-hop community members convene to share their emotionally laden art (Levy et al., 2018). Levy, Emdin, Adjapong (2018) argues that the hip-hop cypher is a community-based group space utilized for catharsis that can be intentionally infused with traditional group counseling practice. To aid students in counseling sessions with the intentional exploration of salient emotional themes, Author (2018b) recommend engaging students in the cultural process of planning, marketing, and

disseminating emotionally themed hip-hop albums or mixtapes. Levy (2019) found a school counselors' use of HHSWT in group counseling inside a school hip-hop recording studio to positively support students' social and emotional development.

Addressing mental health through hip-hop strategies

Through the authors' professional experiences and research in classrooms and counseling spaces in urban schools, we provide educators with hip-hop based strategies that draw from established frameworks to support urban youth's mental health outcomes, specifically in the classroom. In this section, the authors explore a series of tools associated with a hip-hop pedagogy and mental health model, including 1) Mental Health Journaling, 2) Graffiti Association, 3) Mental Health Group Cyphers, 4) Student Curated Mixtapes, and 5) Community Mental Health Awareness.

Mental health journaling

Journaling is an activity that involves exploring your thoughts and feelings surrounding the events of your life. For the hip-hop based strategy, Mental Health Journaling students are encouraged to design a mental health notebook in which they can engage and respond to multiple mental health prompts to process daily stressors (Table 1). One limitation for educators addressing mental health in the classroom is the challenge of limited instructional time (Meador, 2019). Mental Health Journaling is designed to be an informal strategy where students are encouraged to respond daily to a mental health prompt at the beginning of each day or class meeting. Through Mental Health

Table 1. Example prompts that can be utilized with the Mental health journal strategy.

Prompt Name	Prompt Directions
Writing for Full Presence	Today you will free-write for five minutes answering the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is on your mind? • What are your inner-most thoughts? • What is keeping you from being fully present today?
Lyric Writing as Free Association	Today I will loop a hip hop instrumental for five minutes and would like you to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write 6–8 bars describing how you are feeling today
Weather Report	Today you will share your weather forecast and describe how you feel today as if you were a weather person. <p>Sunny & Warm = Exuberant Sunny = Joyful Clear = Satisfied Unhappy = Drizzle Sad/Doubtful = Thunderstorm Helpless/Depressed = Natural Weather Disaster (ie. Hurricane, Tornado, Flood, Heatwave)</p> <p>Example: Today my weather forecast is sunny because I got a new pair of sneakers yesterday, so I am feeling joyful.</p> <p>*Feel free to have students deviate from this scale</p>
What's the Word?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's going on in your local or global community? How does this impact you?

Journaling, we seek to educate students on mental health issues, including what they look like and what to do if they feel like they are struggling with mental health challenges themselves. Journaling helps students gain a deeper understanding of how to recognize when they need help and what to do if they ever feel like their own mental health is suffering (Moses, 2019). Utley and Garza (2011) note that expressive writing, such as journaling, blogging, and tweeting, function as mental health outlets. Journaling about gratitude or other positive feelings and experiences have also been used as an intervention to foster hope, life satisfaction, and self-worth amongst students (Lambert & Veldorale-Brogan, 2013). School counselors' use of reflective journaling in group counseling has led to academic, personal, and social development (Kelley, Cunningham, & Branscome, 2015).

For this practice, journaling draws from the HHSWT tool of lyric writing as cognitive and emotional journaling that tasks students with writing lyric-based journal entries to process the emergence of specific difficult thoughts and feelings emotions outside of sessions. Lyric writing has been evidenced as a safe and culturally accessible medium for Black and Latinx students to discuss emotional concerns (Tyson, 2003, Washington, 2018). Through lyric writing, students can engage in self-reflection, catharsis, conflict resolution, and self-development (Levy, 2019).

Alternatively, Mental Health Journaling draws from the MC element of hip-hop pedagogy where teachers and students are encouraged to exemplify the sensibilities of hip-hop MC's who are known to have hip-hop rhyme books where they design and keep all of their lyrics and rhymes. Similar to hip-hop MC's lyrics, all students' responses will be kept in one journal for students to keep in their possession, allowing them to use the journal outside of school if necessary. Through engaging in Mental Health Journaling daily, as a repetitive reflective practice, students will practice the behavior of addressing mental health daily (Moses, 2019).

Graffiti association

Graffiti Association is a strategy where students are encouraged to draw, paint, and/or collage pictures, words, and/or phrases to process emotional stress. Art therapy based work with urban youth has supported the use of drawing, painting, and collaging to process emotions, specifically using prompts like, "draw what they think they look like when they are happy, sad, and mad" (Walsh, 2019, p. 137). Using graffiti as a mental health practice, teachers can task students to draw a singular emotional word that resembles how a student feels upon entering class that day – this will be students' "main word." Then, students can be encouraged to create a web of other words and/or drawings that they associate with their "main word" to further detail that emotional experience.

Students will be encouraged to add colors to their drawings, as coloring is an activity that has been linked with decreases in anxiety amongst students (Carsley & Heath, 2019). Zimmer Gembeck (2016) advocates for students to develop self-system processes or emotional sensitivities that enable them to navigate stressors. These sensitivities include being able to work through maladaptive thought patterns to correctly identify the cause of stress, develop accurate perceived control over the situation, and healthy coping responses. Through Graffiti Association, students can first identify their individual feelings (main word) and then identify a variety of causes and influences of those feelings. Through individual reflection and/or group sharing, students can use Graffiti Association as a healthy coping mechanism to become aware of the cause of their stress and decide how much control they have over the feeling.

Graffiti Association directly draws from the graffiti element of hip-hop pedagogy. In hip-hop pedagogy, students create visual representations of content knowledge to demonstrate their understanding of content and to make connections between content and cultural experiences. This allows students to activate their funds of knowledge gained within their communities to help make sense of content knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006). Similarly, through Graffiti Association, students will have opportunities to tap into their funds of knowledge to make sense of, uncover, and cope with their daily stressors. HHSWT identifies youth culture as hip-hop culture and invites students to use hip-hop to process emotional concerns. While HHSWT traditionally focuses on lyrics writing, Levy (2019) suggests that future research should focus on the incorporation of other elements that would support the same social and emotional processing.

Student curated mixtape

Curating a class mixtape is another strategy to support students' mental health in classrooms. A mixtape is a compilation of favorite pieces of music, typically by different artists. In hip-hop, the disc jockey (D.J.) is responsible for reading the mood of a crowd and playing the perfect arrangement of songs to harness the crowd's energy. With curating a class mixtape, students will be in charge of being the D.J. of the classroom and harnessing energy among their peers by creating playlists that are played during class. Teachers will encourage students to curate a class mixtape of their favorite music instrumentals (music without lyrics). Students can identify songs that they like, and that reminds of positive moments and people of their life to add to the class curated mixtape. Once students identify songs, a virtual mixtape can be created in the form of an audio playlist on a music streaming service such as youtube. The student-curated playlist should be played during class as background music when students complete individual and group tasks. Research demonstrates that listeners experience a pleasurable response while listening to music. The brain

reacts in distinct and specific ways to release the “feel-good” chemical dopamine that is responsible for happiness (Salimpoor, Benovoy, Larcher, Dagher, & Zatorre, 2011). Bradt, Dileo, and Potvin (2013) found that listening to music helped reduce blood pressure, heart rate, and anxiety in heart disease patients.

The goal of utilizing a playlist curated by students is to harness the same form of energy as a traditional D.J. within the classroom. Cook, Roy, and Welker (2019) found that when students listened to music they enjoyed increases in emotional arousal were found. Therefore, encouraging students to curate a mixtape of music that they enjoy could lead to increased emotional evocation and the feeling of strong emotions within classroom spaces. Further, Dingle, Sharman, and Larwood (2018) highlight how listening to and discussing young people’s music can be a means to discuss negative emotions and foster emotional regulation skills.

Group cyphers

Group Cyphers is a strategy where students can engage in a full class discussion-based activity about mental health. This approach is rooted in group counseling research, which supports the analysis of hip-hop lyrics and music video as a vehicle for emotional dialogue (Armstrong & Ricard, 2016; Viega, 2016). Levy et al. (2018) calls for the use of hip-hop song and music video creation analysis could help students engage in action research about emotional issues of participial importance to them. The HHSWT tool of lyric writing as collaboration is used here, where students collaborate on the co-construction of hip-hop lyrics about a shared emotional theme (Levy, 2012).

In Group Cyphers teachers are encouraged to design singular lessons around an emotional theme, ideally elicited from students, where students analyze and discuss an emotionally themed hip hop music video or song before developing their own lyrics or artistic projects about that same emotional theme. Prior to beginning Group Cypher work, educators should work with the class to generate a list of emotional themes they are interested in addressing. Identifying this theme is crucial for teachers as they plan future Group Cypher lessons. In a traditional Group Cypher lesson, the structure includes 1) a reflective do-now question about the emotional theme, 2) a song or music video analysis, 3) a group discussion, 4) a small-group collaboration to create a product about the emotional theme, and 5) a final share-out (Table 2).

Community mental health awareness

Since its conception, hip-hop has been used as a tool to raise awareness of the socio-political challenges that negatively affect marginalized communities. In 1982 GrandMaster Flash and the Furious Five released a song called *The*

Table 2. Sample lesson for group cypher strategy.

Emotionally-themed do-now question	“Who is one person you wish you had a better relationship with? Explain”
Emotionally-themed song or music video analysis	Teachers can use the following for emotionally-themed song/video selection and use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access a song and video, such as “Gonna Love Me” by Teyana Taylor, on youtube. ● Load video on projector or smartboard and hand out lyrics, highlighters, and pens/pencils to students. ● First, play the song without the video and ask youth to highlight “lyrics that are meaningful to you”. ● Then, play the song with the video and ask students to take notes on parts of the video that are meaningful to them.
Group Discussion	Using the reflections youth have generated from listening to songs and watching the music video, the teacher facilitates a discussion using the following questions (or others that come to mind): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are some lyrics we found to be meaningful? ● What are the aspects of the music video we found meaningful? ● What are some common aspects of this song/video that we all found meaningful? ● How did it make you feel to watch this video/listen to this song? ● How does this song relate to relationships in your life?
Small-Group Collaboration	Next, students break up into small groups to collaborate on the construction of a song, poem, drawing, or skit about the emotional theme (relationships). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prior to writing, students should discuss what they want to say about relationships. ● Then, students are welcome to write lyrics, over an instrumental beat that the teacher will have playing outlet as students work. ● Students can also write poems, create a visual piece, or design a skit around the theme.
Share Out	The Group Cypher will close with a group share-out, where each small group publically shares what they have created.

Message, which became the first hip-hop song to reach mainstream America. *The Message* detailed and described the challenges of inner-city America, which included police brutality, drug abuse, poverty, lack of quality education, and crime. The music video for the song *The Message* provided suburban America with an authentic brought attention to the challenges of the inner-city. Today, prominent hip-hop artists such as Kendrick Lamar, J. Cole, and Jay-Z use their platforms to raise awareness of social injustice issues. Social justice is a core component of hip-hop culture through the element knowledge of self. The element knowledge of self is central to hip-hop. It encourages hip-hop culture participants to be aware of who they are, be authentic to themselves, and be confident in themselves to make a positive social and political change for their communities. At its core, hip-hop culture was birthed as a means to push back against the existing systemic inequalities in the 1970’s post-industrialized South Bronx community in order to provide an outlet and voice for urban youth.

For the Mental Health Awareness strategy, we encourage educators to create opportunities for young people to learn and gain a deeper understanding of mental health. From disorders to treatments, to how mental health impacts young people and adults in their schools, local and global

communities. Once students gain a deeper understanding of various issues of mental health, encourage them to find creative ways (i.e. poster, PSA, social media post) to share their mental health knowledge with their communities. Further, students can work alongside teachers and administrators to develop mental health interventions and outlets for the school community. Considering mental health in all aspects of school systems is necessary to support the well-being of both students and staff at a school.

Discussion

Addressing mental health in schools has become an increasingly popular topic in both teacher education and counselor education. We recognize that all students experience mental health stressors at some point during their childhood or adolescence, but urban youth experience stressors by virtue of living in an urban community that is challenged by societal issues such as poverty, limited access to quality health care, affordable housing, and exposure to crime (Gallagher et al., 2018; Knopp, 2012; Noguera, 2003; Patel et al., 2019; Warner, 2019). Research demonstrates that 1 in 4 adolescents experience a mental health disorder (Merikangas et al., 2010), but more than half do not receive mental health services (Merikangas et al., 2011). When services are received, they are critiqued for a lack of cultural sensitivity (Tao et al., 2015). The current paper offers teachers a practical and culturally responsive, set of tools to offer mental health support students to address these concerns.

Currently, schools are not meeting the mental health needs of students. Educators and school counselors require support, time, and resources to address students' mental health. During their pre-service education, most teachers do not receive detailed social and emotional learning training to support students' mental health in the classroom (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). The pedagogical strategies explored in this paper sought to address this need directly, offering teachers a handful of practical pedagogical approaches to meet students' mental health needs. As an indirect practice to meet the personal/social needs of students, school counselors are expected to collaborate with staff within the building to deploy school-wide interventions (ASCA, 2019), often to combat the lack time to engage in group and individual counseling with students (Mau et al., 2016). The practices detailed in this study offer teachers an opportunity to address the mental health needs of all students that might otherwise not have access to a school counselor.

Further, counselors are responsible for building referral networks with teachers, supporting teachers in sending students who could benefit from more regular support to the counselor for additional resources. By engaging in daily mental health practices in classrooms, teachers enable themselves to pinpoint mental health concerns that students demonstrate, and are provided

with the opportunity to make the appropriate referral to counseling staff. Implementing mental health strategies in classrooms across a school can also create a school culture where mental health support and interventions are normalized and regularly addressed.

Currently, mental health services offered in schools and urban communities often lack cultural relevance (Betters-Bubon, Brunner, & Kansteiner, 2016; Tao et al., 2015). Also, many cultures, including hip-hop culture, stigmatize accessing mental health services (Crowe et al., 2016). There are incremental shifts in hip-hop culture where mental health discussions are becoming increasingly popular, and hip-hop is being used to combat mental health in a number of studies (Levy et al., 2018; Viega, 2016). In this paper, we identified culturally responsive mental health strategies and approaches that are derived from hip-hop culture. While various conceptual articles explored the use of hip-hop in classrooms (Emdin, 2010; Kelly, 2013; Love, 2014), a specific focus on mental health is lacking.

Conversely, counseling, and hip hop-related research seldom offer teachers practical support in classrooms (Armstrong & Ricard, 2016; Washington, 2018). Therefore, the amalgamation of HHSWT (Levy, 2019) and hip-hop pedagogy (Adjapong, 2017) in this paper sought to combine two disparate counseling and pedagogical frameworks to offer classroom teacher's the tools to support student's mental health. Understanding the limitations of instructional time within classrooms, we intentionally conceptualized strategies that can be implemented in any classroom, regardless of content or grade level. The strategies provided can also be implemented daily or where there's an inherent need to address students, mental health concerns.

Conclusion

This paper explored approaches, rooted in hip-hop culture, for addressing mental health in classrooms. Specifically, hip-hop counseling and hip-hop pedagogical frameworks have distilled into a set of practices that classroom teachers can use to support students in processing and coping with emotional stressors. The practices discussed in this paper provide educators with culturally responsive tools to address mental health challenges in the classroom as part of their daily practice. The daily use of the mental health pedagogical practices described in this paper can create and harness a culture where teachers consider students' mental health as they plan for their daily instruction. Regular use of mental health practices can increase mental awareness amongst both students and staff. By engaging in classrooms where mental health practices are used daily, students can be offered the opportunities and develop skills to cope with their environmental and emotional stressors. However, it should be noted that teachers cannot replace the work of licensed therapists or certified school counselors.

Instead, the practices offered in this paper seek to illuminate strategies that teachers can ethically engage in, akin to social and emotional learning classroom practices that fall in the purview of the teachers' role (Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017), while working collaboratively with school counselors, social workers, and psychologists to refer students who are in need to additional emotional support.

Implications

Implications for hip-hop based mental health practice in classrooms are vast. Teachers seeking culturally responsive ways to support students' mental health outcomes in classrooms could consider adopting any practices outlined in this paper. While the authors intended to describe practices in a way that makes them palatable and replicable, it should be noted that teachers might benefit from additional training if they are interested in building capacity within their school spaces focused on mental health interventions. Specifically, it is recommended that schools tap their school counselors to hold basic counseling skills professional development sessions for teachers to support them in facilitating emotional dialogues with students. We also encourage teachers to seek additional training if they are interested in engaging in long-term hip-hop based practices and interventions as hip-hop culture has been known to be easily co-opted and used for unintended purposes. This might look like a cultural competency training with a specific focus on the use of hip-hop strategies. It is recommended that teachers looking to begin deploying practices like those described within this paper consult with the school support staff in their building (school counselors, social workers, and/or school psychologists) to establish protocols for the referral of students who require emotional support that transcends what can be addressed in classrooms. The conceptual argument presented in this paper presents a rationale for research that explores the use of these practices. While the authors believe the conceptual rationale for the use of the recommended strategies is strong, it should be noted that the strategies themselves were not explored empirically in this paper. Therefore, the authors recommend future research engage in a mixed-method study across multiple schools, assessing the deployment of these practices, to develop empirical support for hip-hop based mental health practices in classrooms.

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