Hip-Hop/Spoken Word Therapy
In Urban Schools

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Violence Exposure – Urban Youth

- Urban youth of color at greatest risk of violence exposure in US (Thomas et al., 2012)

- Violence exposure linked to poor academic outcomes, increased chances of depression, anxiety, and perpetuation of violence (Thomas et al., 2012)

- Systemic causes of community violence include gang violence, access to weapons & chronic poverty (Thomas et al., 2012)

- At an individual level, emotional deregulation, aggression, and cognitive distortions are more likely (Thomas et al., 2012)

Mental Health

- Urban youth of color are one-third to one-half as likely to receive mental health services as White youth (Holm-Hansen, 2006).

- Disparities in access and quality (Holm-Hansen, 2006).

- Young men exhibit negative attitudes toward utilizing psychological services, likely due to gender differences and the label of being perceived as vulnerable and weak in the context of socialized male gender norms (Chandra & Minkovitz, 2006)

- Evidence in the development of emotional inexpression has also been found among adolescent boys, suggesting that socialization of male emotional restrictiveness may begin at an earlier stage in life (Polce-Lynch, Myers, Kilmartin, Forssmann-Falck, & Kliewer, 1998).

Mental Health & Academic Achievement

- Academic achievement of African American and Latino/a youth who populate urban schools has been reported to fall far below that of their counterparts from other ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (NAEP, 2006; NCES, 2006)

- Healthy People 2020 views educational achievement as large determinant of health later in life (CDC, 2011)

- Urban youth – lack MH services, academically behind, increased health disparities, exposed to social norms that promote inexpression.

Mental Health In Schools

- Traditional structures inundate school counselors (Paisley & Borders, 1995)

- Schools place "seat time" in competition with counseling services (Paisley & Borders, 1995)

- Counselors expected to use "band-aid" approaches

- Solution focus counseling hailed as perfect emotional & bureaucratic balance (Allen, 1998).

- Don't address root cause, tends to isolate students further from mental health services.

- When deeper issues appear, we must refer out...
  deemed beyond scope of what can be handled in school (Richie & Parton, 1994).

Solution?

- We need to create spaces within schools for counselors to engage with students in root focused counseling, by HIGHLIGHTING YOUTH VOICE

- The pathway towards engaging these students must take into consideration, social/gender norms, inexpression, the stigma of mental health, and the long-standing distrust in counselors/counseling services.

- We need to use youth culture as the foundation for which we engage in counseling.

Hip Hop and Spoken Word Therapy

- HHSWT uses a combination of elements from cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), bibliotherapy, music therapy, and person-centered therapy (PCT).

- The use of music, poetry, and literature in combination with these theories attempts to create an environment conducive for emotional exploration in either a group of individual setting.

- Socially acceptable platform for self-exploration and emotional development – countering fear of vulnerability/weakness (Levy & Keum, 2014)

Person Centered Therapy

- *Evocation of thoughts/feelings through lyric writing.*

  - Identification of emotional concept

  - *Therapeutic dialogue around concept*

  - *Conversion of thoughts and feelings to song*

Establishment of Norms & Safe Space Through Hip Hop Cypher

Rules of the CYPHER

- Everyone has space chance to share

- All voices having equal value

- Awarding of praise to those who share

- Support of those in need

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- HHSWT focuses on 3 Interventions:
  - Cognitive Restructuring/Problem Identification
  - Journaling
  - Role-Play

- Analyze personally written music (if they have any), to aid cognitive restructuring.

- Cognitive restructuring defined as "the process by which an individual identifies and challenges irrational or maladaptive thoughts, including beliefs, assumptions and expectations, and replaces them with more rational, realistic and adaptive thoughts" (Singe & Hope, 2009, p. 64).

- Asking clients to explain the lyrics they've constructed in order to highlight client growth and emotional expression.

# Lyric Writing As Cognitive Journaling

- Homework Assignments:

  – Clients are given a journal to reflect on the music they're listening to.

  – Clients are encouraged to write their own songs or poetry in the form of self-report diary keeping

  – Lifestyle modification – consciously looking for concepts that are emotionally charged

Collaboration a Role-Play

- Role-play techniques can be used in therapy to help clients play out real-life situations, imagine how a situation would play out, and imagine how they can appropriately respond or act in certain situations (Corey, 2009).

- The Collab: Working together on a track with someone else, featuring them, or having equal air time.

- Students can work together to identify an issue – and write verses from different perspectives.

- Counselor can even hop a track, and write a verse which responds to the thoughts and feelings around an emotional issue a student has expressed in their verse.

HHSWT in Practice

Hoodies Up Mixtape
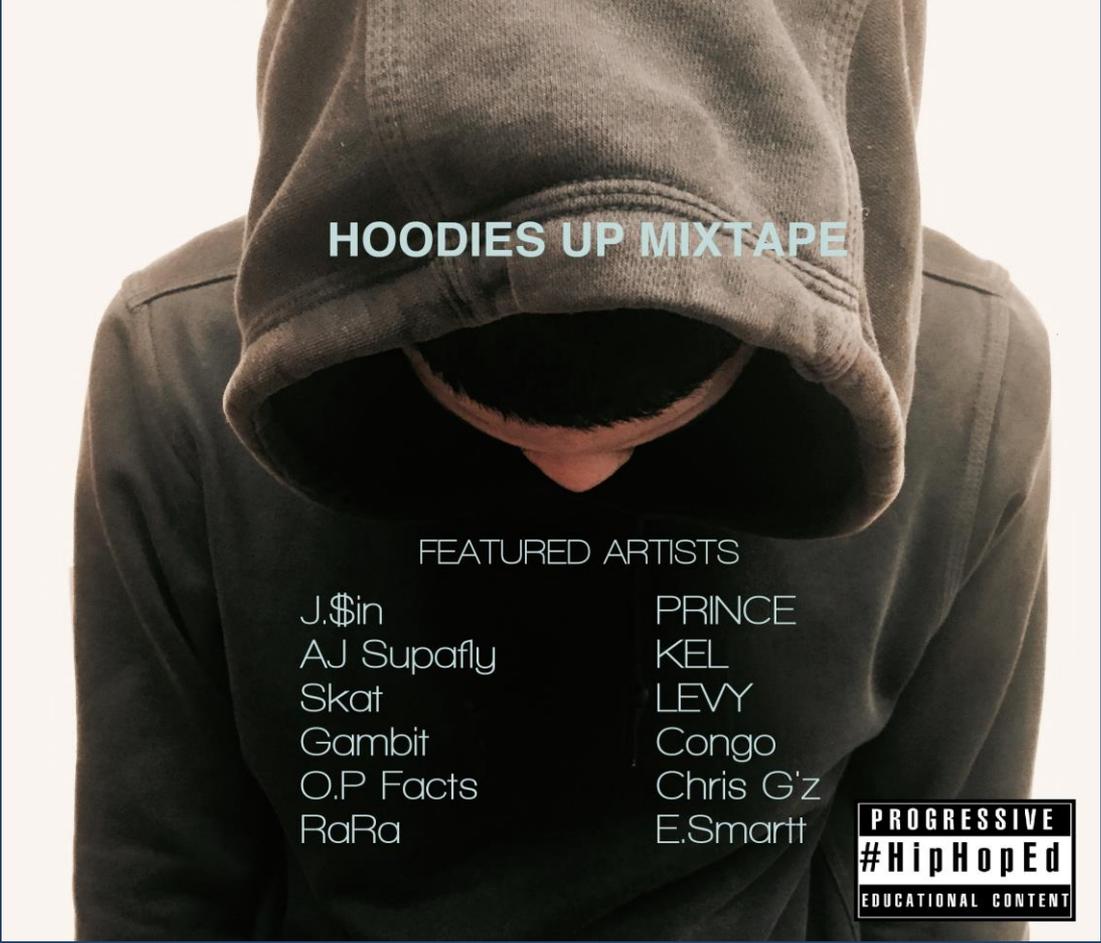
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