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Theory

Integrating Hip-Hop Culture and Rap Music Into Social Justice Counseling With Black Males

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In this article, the author suggests that Hip-Hop culture and rap music, in particular, can be integrated into individual counseling interactions with Black male clients to discuss the social injustices (e.g., hypercriminalization) they face. Literature examining the history of Hip-Hop culture and how rap music has been used therapeutically with Black males is presented. The article concludes with a vignette illustrating how Elligan's (2000) rap therapy framework can help explore experiences Black male clients encounter.

Keywords: Hip-Hop, rap music, Black males, social justice counseling, social issues

> *The minute they see me, fear me /*
> *I'm the epitome, a public enemy.*
>
> —Ridenhour, Sadler, and Shocklee, 1988, track 3

Despite having overcome countless hurdles to achieve demonstrable successes in virtually every American institution (e.g., education, politics, business), Black males, on the whole, remain a highly stereotyped and stigmatized American subgroup (Dancy, 2014; White & Cones, 1999). This stigmatization is rooted in hyperbolic, stereotypical tropes of Black males as hypersexualized and menacing individuals biologically predisposed or culturally inclined to engage in criminal, nihilistic behavior (Alexander, 2012; Collins, 2006; Jackson, 2006; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2011). The criminal proclivity narrative is ascribed onto Black male bodies early in childhood and intensifies markedly as Black males mature through adolescence and transition into adulthood (Dancy, 2014; Duncan, 2002; Ferguson, 2001; Henfield, 2013; Noguera, 2008).

The weight of the historical and contemporary codification of the menacing Black male trope in policies and social practices can be psychosocially and physically fatiguing (Smith, Hung & Franklin, 2011) and has discernible, devastating implications on Black males' lives (Harrell et al., 2011; Williams & Mohammed, 2013). A recent study revealed that Black boys are more likely than white boys to be perceived as older and more mature than they actually are and therefore less innocent (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, & DiTomasso, 2014). Educationally, Black males are more likely to receive more punitive disciplinary action (e.g., suspensions, expulsions, arrests) than white males for similar infractions; have routine exposure to lower teacher expectations; experience underrepresentation in more rigorous K–12 academic course work; and suffer lethal, extrajudicial encounters with vigilantes and the police with astonishing regularity (Dancy, 2014; Henfield, 2013; Howard, 2013). These trends are emblematic of a cumbersome nexus of oppressive ecological forces that weigh heavy on countless Black males.

The importance of negating these barriers has been emphasized sporadically within the counseling profession. The former president of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), Carlos Hipolito-Delgado, pledged his commitment to affirming the lives of Black males across the nation shortly after the uprisings in Ferguson, Missouri, and across the nation in protest of the killing of Michael Brown. In a statement, Hipolito-Delgado (2014) spoke directly to the various forms of institutional oppression that African American males must continually overcome. Specifically, he acknowledged that

> examinations of most sociological indicators demonstrate the inequities faced by communities of color in general and African American males in specific. For example, educational achievement rates and incarceration rates speak to the under representation of African American Males in higher education and the over representation of African American Males in special education and the prison system.

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The following year, AMCD hosted two sessions of a webinar titled *Providing Culturally Responsive Services to African American Males* (M. Brooks, S. K. Butler, & A. R. Washington, webinar, June 2015).

During the initial session, one of the presenters, Michael Brooks, a Black male counselor educator, made an unsolicited reference to Kendrick Lamar's rap song "Alright" (Duckworth, Spears, & Williams, 2015), a song that had become an anthem of dissent in response to a crescendo of xenophobic political rhetoric and recurrent police brutality within Black communities (Love, 2016). Brooks's spontaneous reference to Lamar's song highlights the cathartic role Hip-Hop culture and rap music has played in articulating the frustration Black males experience because of long-standing social inequalities and wanton, racially motivated violence (Collins, 2006; Love, 2016; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2011; Washington, 2015). Hip-Hop culture and rap music resonate with many Black males because they encapsulate the aspirations and frustrations of Black males who have had to confront sociopolitical disadvantage and marginalization (Greene, 2014; Kitwana, 2002; Land & Stovall, 2009; Levy & Keum, 2014). Data indicate Black males' connection to Hip-Hop and rap music. In their study on patterns of audio and video media consumption among 8- to 18-year-olds, Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout (2005) found that "over three-quarters of African American kids report listening to Rap/Hip Hop (81%), vs. 60% of Whites and 70% of Hispanics" (pp. 28–29).

For these reasons, I believe that it behooves counselors to develop a working knowledge of Hip-Hop culture and rap music, at the very least, and to envision how these things are germane to social justice counseling with Black males. It is important to state that this position does not assume that Black males are a monolithic group with respect to Hip-Hop culture and rap music. The presence of lewd and misogynistic lyrics within Hip-Hop and rap music is but one legitimate, resounding criticism articulated by prominent cultural critics (Rose, 1994, 2008) and Black males who have expressed distrust and disdain for Hip-Hop and rap music (e.g., McWhorter, 2003). However, as valid as these criticisms are, what can be deduced from Roberts et al.'s (2005) study is that a substantial number of Black males who might conceivably receive counseling services also listen to rap music.

In this article, I endeavor to advance the conversation about how counselors can effectively use Hip-Hop culture and rap music when working with Black male clients. I present a brief history of Hip-Hop culture, emphasizing how the social ecology of the South Bronx circa 1970 informed Hip-Hop's evolution (Chang, 2005). Examples of how rap music has been used by counselors and other therapists (e.g., social workers) are also provided. Finally, following Gonzalez and Hayes's (2009) example, the article concludes with a vignette that illustrates how counselors might use rap music to initiate conversation with Black males about factors affecting their lives.

Hip-Hop Culture: A Brief History

The South Bronx in the late 1960s was Hip-Hop's epicenter (Chang, 2005). As a form of cultural expression, Hip-Hop culture encapsulates many quintessential principles, values, thoughts, beliefs, and ways of being exhibited by people of African and Latino ancestry who emigrated from disparate locations throughout the diaspora, particularly the Caribbean islands, to the United States. Verbal improvisation, call-and-response, and a belief in the cathartic nature of musical vibration are just some of the Afro-Caribbean principles present within Hip-Hop culture (Callahan & Grantham, 2012). In addition, Black musical genres including jazz, the blues, funk, soul, and rhythm and blues all had unique, pronounced, and indelible impacts on the culture that would eventually come to be known as Hip-Hop (Rose, 1994).

During the 1960s and into the 1970s, the deceleration in manufacturing, a period referred to as deindustrialization, had profound socioeconomic repercussions on Black and Latino working-class Bronx residents (Bonnette, 2015; Love, 2013; Ogbar, 2007; Petchauer, 2009; Washington, 2015; Wilson, 2009). Manufacturing jobs that allowed large numbers of Americans with limited education to achieve a modicum of economic prosperity started vanishing swiftly. In addition, as employment opportunities were evaporating and poverty and despair were festering, economic austerity measures in the Bronx retracted desperately needed social service programs (e.g., music programs, afterschool programs; Chang, 2005). This made an already precarious economic and social situation for Bronx residents even grimmer.

Frustrated by inconsistent employment, insufferable chronic poverty, and attendant violence, young Black and Latino men and women developed Hip-Hop culture to communicate their feelings (Chang, 2005; Rose, 1994). Although this emoting was important to Hip-Hop's emersion, perhaps the most integral factor undergirding Hip-Hop's emergence was the desire by Black and Latino youth to unify Black and Latino communities that had splintered because of violent clashes precipitated by sparse economic resources (Chang, 2005). Subsiding tensions and fostering constructive dialogue about the indispensableness of collective struggle were what Hip-Hop culture helped to accomplish. This sociopolitical consciousness and activism, which would become one of Hip-Hop's most recognizable characteristics, can be traced back to the incisive content delivered by prominent spoken word artists from the late 1960s, namely, The Last Poets, Gil Scott-Heron, and Nikki Giovanni (Lamotte, 2014). Regarding the Last Poets' contribution to Hip-Hop's political underpinnings, Malone and

Martinez (2010) stated that "their flowing vocal styles were the precursors to rap music" (p. 536).

Hip-Hop culture is projected outwardly through its four fundamental elements: (a) emceeing (also known as rapping), (b) djing (or turntablism), (c) b-boying/b-girling (also called breakdancing), and (d) graffiti art. Whereas the DJ was initially Hip-Hop's central figure, since the 1980s, the emcee and Hip-Hop culture have become virtually synonymous. In addition, Hip-Hop culture can no longer be narrowly confined to the aforementioned four elements of rapping, djing, breakdancing, and graffiti. Corporate commodification and exploitation, for better or for worse, have made Hip-Hop culture "a multi-billion dollar industry that influences everything from automotive design and fashion to prime-time television programming, collegiate and professional sports, mass media marketing and Madison Avenue advertising" (Taylor & Taylor, 2004, p. 251). Given the ubiquity and social relevance of Hip-Hop culture, educators and various clinical professionals have been considering the applicability of Hip-Hop to their work. I discuss this body of literature, often referred to as Hip-Hop scholarship, in the following section.

Hip-Hop Scholarship

Hip-Hop scholarship from across the academic spectrum (e.g., urban education, social work) is diverse (Petchauer, 2009) and explores, in part, how Hip-Hop culture and rap music can increase positive academic and therapeutic outcomes with young and adult Black men in educational and clinical settings (Callahan & Grantham, 2012; Gonzalez & Hayes, 2009). However, within Hip-Hop scholarship, the voices of counselors and counselor educators are conspicuously absent. With the exception of a few examples (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Gonzalez & Hayes, 2009; Lee & Lindsey, 1985; Washington, 2015), a review of the counseling literature base will reveal scant ancillary references to Hip-Hop culture or rap music. The earlier works were visionary because they began with the supposition that Hip-Hop culture and rap music, as modes of cultural expression, had inherent therapeutic and educational value.

Hip-Hop and Therapeutic Interventions

Despite being virtually invisible within the current Hip-Hop discourse, counselors and counselor educators were initial forerunners in the Hip-Hop therapy movement (Lee & Lindsey, 1985). More than 30 years ago, Lee and Lindsey (1985) endorsed the use of rap music during group counseling with Black elementary school students. For Lee and Lindsey, rap music could help professional school counselors develop "an understanding and appreciation of Black culture, development of motivation to achieve, development of positive and responsible behavior, and modeling of positive Black images" (p. 229).

Subsequent to these works in school counseling, professionals from clinical social work began generating literature on the subject. The social work literature has focused on how Hip-Hop helps stimulate richer clinical interactions with racially diverse clients in urban environments (Kobin & Tyson, 2006), assists clients in devising clearer and more meaningful treatment goals or outcomes (Elligan, 2004; Tyson, 2003), and increases constructive behavior (DeCarlo, 2013; Tyson, 2002). Elligan (2000, 2004) and Tyson (2002, 2006) are often cited for helping revolutionize ideas on the utility of Hip-Hop culture and rap music in clinical social work. Elligan (2000) coined the term *rap therapy*, a five-step model for infusing Hip-Hop culture and rap lyrics into clinical interactions with Black male clients from the initial point of contact (e.g., assessment) through the termination of services (e.g., action and maintenance).

Tyson (2002) exposed an experimental group to 8 weeks of Hip-Hop therapy while a comparison group received a traditional group counseling intervention. The experimental and control groups' scores on measures of self-concept and peer relations were compared to determine whether statistically significant differences existed. Despite not finding statistically significant group differences on the aforementioned outcome measures, the experimental group members did discuss the qualitative differences they perceived between Tyson's (2002) Hip-Hop therapy and other group counseling interventions they experienced previously. The experimental group members were more enthusiastic about participating in the Hip-Hop therapy group and strongly encouraged the interventionist to replicate this approach in future sessions.

The counseling profession's disengagement from Hip-Hop culture and rap music with regard to Black males is perplexing for several reasons. First, from an assessment perspective, rap music, as an expression of Hip-Hop culture, can function as part of a conceptualizing lens through which counseling professionals might achieve greater insight into Black males' worldviews, contextual experiences, and short- and long-term aspirations (Elligan, 2000, 2004; Washington, 2015). This is crucial because the overwhelming majority of counseling professionals' life experiences—because of the racial, gender, and cultural composition of the profession—are in stark contrast to the intersecting racial, gender, and class subject positions Black males occupy and the narratives consistently expressed within Hip-Hop culture and rap music (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011).

Second, Hip-Hop culture and rap music typify aspects of multiculturalism and social justice, two anchoring ideals of the counseling profession (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2016; Washington, 2015). The Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler,

& McCullough, 2015) explicitly state that privileged and oppressed counselors and clients should understand how historical and contemporary forms of social injustice profoundly alienate and marginalize people on the basis of race, class, gender, and other subject positions. From the very beginning, Hip-Hop culture and rap music have done precisely that by unabashedly publicizing how racism, classism, and sexism, albeit to a much lesser degree, have adversely affected Black and Latino communities (Baszile, 2009). Thus, much within Hip-Hop culture and rap music reflect the principles of multicultural competence and social justice expressed throughout counseling (American School Counselors Association, 2012; Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2015; Griffin & Steen, 2011; Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Ratts et al., 2016).

Discussing Oppression Through Rap Music

Oppression can be defined as the use of sociopolitical power to severely constrain or restrict outright the optimum development of an individual or group of people (Bartky, 2004). Oppressive conditions can be exerted on individuals and marginalized groups through a number of seemingly harmless or relatively inconsequential social policies in various societal institutions (e.g., penalizing ethnic hairstyles in public schools), not simply through an abusive imposition of tyrannical power or blatant violence (Keisch & Scott, 2015; Ratts et al., 2016). For example, Young (2009) posited that socializing institutions, such as public education and the corporate media, wield power by imbuing the belief within the general public that the condition of oppressed individuals (e.g., incarceration) is a result of their own shortcomings rather than the confluence of inhibiting structural forces.

Combatting oppression, as an act of promoting empowerment, is intertwined with social justice counseling (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Lee, 2005). For Lee (2005), "empowerment is a developmental process in which people who are powerless or marginalized in some fashion become aware of how power affects their lives" (p. 186). Social justice counseling is a theoretical and pragmatic extension of multiculturalism's fundamental premises that seeks to engender a radical redistribution of vital resources among groups. From this perspective, counseling with Black males is not merely a relationship to discuss individual issues; it is, instead, an enterprise that involves an honest and critical analysis of how unmitigated oppression dehumanizes by impeding self-actualization. Through Hip-Hop culture and rap music, social justice counselors could examine, for example, how converging social and political apparatuses—the disproportionate impact of zero-tolerance pre-K–12 disciplinary policies, the hyperpolicing of Black neighborhoods, the school-to-prison pipeline, the prison industrial complex, and mass incarceration—impinge on the life chances of Black males (Love, 2013; Washington, 2015). This point is taken up in the following fictional vignette, which is based on highly publicized encounters between Black men and campus police.

Vignette

Following Gonzalez and Hayes's (2009) lead, in the vignette below, I rely on Elligan's (2000) five-step rap therapy approach (i.e., assessment, alliance, reframing and restructuring, role playing with reinforcement, and action and maintenance) to demonstrate how rap lyrics can be used to critique issues of social injustice with Black males. Elligan's (2000) model involves the intentional use of Hip-Hop culture and rap lyrics when working with Black males in clinical settings beginning with the first interaction and concluding with the termination of services.

> John is a 35-year-old Black man who resides in a moderately sized state in the Southeast. John is an adjunct instructor at the same prestigious predominantly white institution where he matriculated as an undergraduate and graduate chemistry student. When he is not lecturing, he can be found in the campus library researching topics that pertain to his course. John is pleased with his position and feels like an accepted member of the campus community.
>
> However, on more than one occasion, when walking around campus, John has been stopped by campus police who have inquired about his purpose for being on campus. Even after presenting his campus identification card during these encounters, John is questioned by the officers about his presence on campus after business hours. During one of these encounters, an officer explicitly stated that John did not belong on campus. Offended by the statement, John demanded the officer's name and the name of his superiors. Contending that John was behaving aggressively, this officer summoned assistance to have John forcibly removed from campus. The entire incident jeopardized John's employment and caused him tremendous anger and embarrassment. More than once since the incident, John has attempted to process his thoughts and emotions with his colleagues. John's colleagues have routinely suggested that he was being hypersensitive or that he was invoking race—that is, playing the race card—unnecessarily.
>
> Seeing no other viable alternatives, John sought counseling to therapeutically discuss the harassment from campus police that occurred at his place of employment. After investigating several options, John received a referral to a community counselor who relies on Elligan's (2000, 2004) rap therapy approach. Intrigued by the idea of rap therapy, John scheduled an appointment with the counselor.

Assessment

The assessment period provided an opportunity for the counselor to determine whether John identifies with rap music; this identification would make John an appropriate candidate for this type of counseling (Elligan, 2000). The initial assessment included questions about the client's preferred leisure activities; one of the possible responses was "listening to music." The assessment also allowed John to identify which musical genres he prefers. In the initial assessment and during conversation, John mentioned that he finds the narratives within rap music affirming. His favorite rap artists are from the 1990s, a period nostalgically referred to as the golden age of rap. John finds the predominant themes of Afrocentricity and Black self-love in the music from the golden age especially powerful. From this discussion, John's counselor determined that he might respond favorably to rap therapy. After learning about the rap therapy approach from the counselor, John fully consented to participate.

Alliance

During the alliance period, the counselor and client forged a bond by discussing their corresponding interests in rap music. John's counselor—a Black man in his early 40s—shares several of John's tastes in rap music, which allowed them to discuss their convergent musical interests. These conversations were robust and provided rich insights into how John uses the themes within rap music to filter and process the incident that occurred on campus (Elligan, 2000). John's counselor questioned him about other meaningful experiences from his childhood, adolescence, and adulthood to better understand the role Hip-Hop culture and rap music have played.

Reframing and Restructuring

At this juncture, John's counselor invited him to consider how certain types of rap (e.g., social and political rap) could reframe his encounter with the police as emblematic of more pervasive biases perpetuated against Black Americans. John's counselor introduced him to the rapper Common's song "Real People" (Frasier, Lynn, & West, 2005). In the song, Common discusses the source of chronic disenfranchisement facing Black people in America as well as their pursuits of freedom, justice, and equity. Common eloquently takes up two examples of this disenfranchisement—ongoing police brutality and mass incarceration—when he rhymes, "I wonder is the spirits of Bob Marley and Haile Selassie / Watch me as the cops be tryin' to and pop and lock me / They cocky, plus they mentality is Nazi / The way they treat Blacks I wanna snap like paparazzi" (Frasier et al., 2005, track 9). Because John was momentarily detained without cause by campus police, Common's words reverberate powerfully with John. John thought more critically about how his own negative encounter with law enforcement was not unlike those described repeatedly by other Black males on his campus and across the country. Sensing that this lyric has piqued John's interest in understanding how police surveillance has historically operated as a form of social control (Alexander, 2012), John's counselor engaged him in conversation about how other historical and contemporary forms of institutional oppression (e.g., housing discrimination, job discrimination) have blunted Black people's life chances in this country. John thought about these issues as he and his counselor transitioned to the next stage of rap therapy.

Role Playing With Reinforcement

At this stage in Elligan's (2000) framework, John's counselor invited him to compose lyrics that reflect his desires to contest injustices he encounters on campus and in the surrounding community. During the role playing with reinforcement phase, John agreed to share the lyrics he wrote and to explore other rap lyrics that pertain to matters of racial injustice and police harassment. One such artist is J. Cole. In his song "Be Free," Cole (2014) celebrates the dignity and humanity of Black people who must habitually encounter police hostility and espouses the virtue and necessity of active and unrelenting resistance: "Are we all alone, fighting on our own / Please give me a chance, I don't wanna dance / Somethings got me down, I will stand my ground / Don't just stand around, don't just stand around." By examining the parallels between his lyrics and those of artists like Cole, John is impelled to confront how his university's rhetoric about an inclusive campus environment is antithetical to his experiences.

Action and Maintenance

In this phase, John feels empowered to confront the injustice he has witnessed on campus that affects him and other Black people. During the final sessions, the counselor asked John about what he would like to do to stimulate transformative action on his campus and in the campus community. John eventually decided to reach out to other Black faculty, staff, and students who have had similar encounters with law enforcement on campus to determine whether there is an institutional problem that warrants greater attention. John learned that his experience is not an aberration and that grievances by other Black faculty, staff, and students on campus have been submitted to the administration. As John stands in solidarity alongside others to forthrightly communicate their concerns to the university administration, he experiences a sense of belonging. John finds this invigorating and sees this as a part of his new professional identity moving forward.

Discussion

In this vignette, the reader is introduced to John, a Black university instructor, who is experiencing a range of emotions

after a recent encounter with law enforcement at his place of employment. John believes that he has been stereotyped and prejudicially hypersurveilled when he moves about on campus. His counselor used an unconventional counseling approach that incorporates rap music to broach conversation and action in response to this injustice. Relying on Elligan's (2000) model enabled the counselor to strategically invoke rap music to work back to the encounter with law enforcement that was the impetus for John's initial visit to counseling.

Future Directions

The barriers that dissuade Black males from accessing counseling services have been highlighted within the counseling literature. Black males are often reticent to explore counseling options because of a history of misdiagnosis, a lack of culturally relevant counseling interventions, and counselors' unwillingness or inability to acknowledge and appreciate the significance of institutional racism (Day-Vines et al., 2007; Metzl, 2009; Tovar-Murray & Tovar-Murray, 2012). Consequently, Black males may be less inclined to consider how counseling can be psychologically beneficial. Combatting this notion and presenting counseling as an advantageous intervention could involve integrating more culturally relevant material, such as Hip-Hop culture and rap music, into existing counseling modalities.

Nevertheless, much work needs to be done before Hip-Hop culture and rap music will be embraced as viable parts of the counseling process. An initial piece of groundbreaking qualitative research on the topic of Hip-Hop in counseling could explore how and under what circumstances counselors in various settings infuse Hip-Hop into their work. This research could also involve developing a repository of artists, songs, album titles, and lyrics counselors find most useful. Table 1 presents a small sample of what this repository might look like. An intriguing set of quantitative research designs could analyze if Black male clients receiving Hip-Hop-infused counseling interactions experience more favorable outcomes on some predetermined dependent variable (e.g., racial identity, critical consciousness). Moreover, a similar quantitative study may be undertaken to determine whether statistically significant differences in relation to some outcome variable are observed between Black males participating in Hip-Hop-oriented group counseling sessions and those who do not. Finally, quantitative research with Black males who have been exposed to Hip-Hop-oriented counseling might generate valuable insights into how this approach promotes therapeutic alliance, clients' investment in the clinical process, or other factors associated with positive counseling outcomes.

Conclusion

The counseling profession stands at a pivotal crucible in relation to how it supports Black males who face a spectrum of dehumanizing policies, laws, and behaviors, everything from invalidating microaggressions to the most egregious forms of physical and psychological trauma. Effectively serving Black males demands that counseling professionals nonjudgmentally comprehend the myriad forms of oppression Black males must habitually confront and traverse. I firmly

TABLE 1

Sample Repository of Artists, Songs, Album Titles, and Lyrics

Artist	Song	Album	Lyrics
Public Enemy	"Don't Believe the Hype"	*It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*	"The minute they see me, fear me / I'm the epitome, a public enemy" (Ridenhour et al., 1988, track 3)
Shad	"Brother (Watching)"	*The Old Prince*	"The tube only showed Blacks actin' the fool and I was watching" (Gorney, 2007, track 4)
The Roots	"How I Got Over"	*How I Got Over*	"Yo, when you on the corner, it's too much drama / Livin' with the police right behind ya" (Thompson et al., 2010, track 6)
Sa-Roc	"Heaven on Earth"	*Gift of the Magi*	"And America sees me / as a threat second guess me, cuz the press likes to muddy my / image in their reports" (Perkins, 2015, track 7)
Mos Def	"The Boogie Man Song"	*The New Danger*	"I am the most beautiful boogie man / The most beautiful boogie man / Let me be your favorite nightmare / Close your eyes and I'll be right there" (Saadiq & Smith, 2004, track 1)
Lupe Fiasco	"Go Go Gadget Flow"	*Lupe Fiasco's The Cool*	"That case in the court did not defer the dream / I am still a raisin' man with sun ragin' against the machine" (Lopez & Jaco, 2007, track 3)

believe that all counselors, irrespective of subspecialty or professional setting, have an opportunity to gain a deeper and more profound awareness of how Black males negotiate a society replete with race-based impediments. This deeper appreciation can be cultivated in an unconventional yet effective way, and that is by seriously examining the themes and narratives couched within Hip-Hop culture and rap lyrics in particular. These themes and narratives are valuable because they are connected to the lived realities so many Black males are always having to maneuver around and through.

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