



**Innovations in Counseling: Working with Minority Populations- Part 6**  
**Session 4: How Can Hip-Hop Culture and Rap Music Inform Counseling With African-American Men?**

**Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session with Ahmad Washington**

**Question from Andrea Westkamp**

What can be done to make the counseling profession attractive for black males? It seems like they are under-represented for a long time already.

**Answer from Presenter**

There is certainly a shortage of Black men in the counseling profession. Making the profession more appealing involves priming the counseling pipeline by planting seeds as Black boys are transitioning out of high school and into college. This means it is imperative that school counselors expose Black boys to the counseling profession and broach the possibility of counseling becoming a career choice. Second, there have to be financial incentives (e.g., scholarships) for Black men to pursue their graduate degrees in counseling. Without these programs, Black men are often burdened to pay costly tuitions to enter the profession; this is a deterrent that cannot be underestimated. Third, the counseling profession has to do a much better job of advocating on behalf of Black men, particularly with regard to the types of institutional and systemic injustice they experience in society. If the profession remains mute on subjects that are important to Black men, it stands to reason that Black men would not be invested in exploring counseling as a future career.

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**Question from Pamela Thomas**

Can you use these interventions with other young boys and men besides black boys and men?

**Answer from Presenter**

Yes. Incorporating Hip Hop with non-Black boys and men is possible. If the rationale for this work is to facilitate vocalization of what these boys and men experience, Hip Hop can assist.

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**Question from Pamela Thomas**

Do you think that black boys and men may think that black men and women counselors are also privileged based on where they are versus where the counselor is in life?

**Answer from Presenter**

It is a distinct possibility, particularly if the Black men and women counselors subscribe to conceptual and theoretical models that pathologize Blackness and deemphasize the destructive role that oppression plays in the lives of Black boys and Black men. Additionally, if Black men and Black women counselors do not acknowledge the forms of capital they possess by virtue of their occupational status (e.g., networks, advanced degrees, salaries) and how this capital produces material benefits in their lives, they could alienate their clients.



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This type of intersectional approach prevents a race only perspective that ignores how other variables, like class and SES, converge with race to impact the lives of Black boys and Black men.

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### **Question from Claudia Reiche**

In your experience, do black males terminate therapy prematurely? How could I proactively address this issue?

### **Answer from Presenter**

After making the transition from community mental health to school counseling, I have noticed that school counselors are often ill-equipped to effectively engage Black boys. My assessment is that the profession is comprised primarily of middle-class white women whose lives are markedly different from the lives of many of the Black boys they work with. This has led many Black boys to see the school counselor as something other than a resource. In my experience, these dissimilarities are exacerbated by two variables. First, these school counselors often believe Black boys are primarily responsible for the misfortunes they experience; rarely do these counselors consider how the confluence of institutional oppressions impinge on Black boys. What results is a discourse of victim-blaming that Black boys refuse to accept. Second, these school counselors often do not utilize culturally relevant resources, like Hip Hop, to foster dialogue and a healthy therapeutic relationship. In my partnerships with several local schools, I have seen almost complete participation from the Black boys I work with.

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### **Question from Peter Chirinos**

Great presentation! I'm wondering if you can explain the connections w/ KRS1 and Erik B & Rakim's music in the 80's?

### **Answer from Presenter**

If care and attention are taken in contextualizing Hip Hop culture and its evolution, counselors can make connections between the themes present in KRS-One and Erik B & Rakim's work and the music produced by contemporary artists.

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### **Question from Anne Garland**

How do you address issues regarding sexual violence and misogyny in rap lyrics?

### **Answer from Presenter**

One of the strategies I use is asking Black boys to select their favorite Hip Hop artists and dissect the messages in their music. Once they dissect the music, and the imagery in videos and popular Hip Hop magazines, we can talk about sexual violence, misogyny, and dominant ideas about masculinity. We can reflect on Hip Hop's evolution and clearly see that it has been dominated by men, and that the messages and images have historically been marketed to appeal to particular demographic (e.g., suburban white males in adolescence to young



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adulthood). This time of analysis can create a rich space where Black boys are encouraged to consider why sexual violence and misogyny and the prevalence of certain racialized tropes (e.g., the Black thug) have become so commonplace in Hip Hop. Most importantly, these conversations can be used to challenge Black boys to think seriously about how many of the messages within Hip Hop support/endorse the objectification of women and why that is so problematic.

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### **Question from Kristian Alton**

I often wonder if the misogyny in Hip Hop and rap is about creating some sense of control over something in life.

### **Answer from Presenter**

Like other systems of domination (e.g., racism) that enable dominant group members to exercise power over subjugated groups through ideologies, the misogyny in Hip Hop enables men and boys to exercise power over women and girls. What we must also remember, though, is how corporations who help advertise, produce, and circulate much of commercial Hip Hop are also invested in supporting misogyny; that point is too often overlooked.

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