

Can Popular Youth Music and Media Be a Culturally-Informative Approach to Address Health Education, Media Literacy and Diversity in Schools?

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The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2011) monitors six health concerns that are linked to risk behaviors through the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) administered to school age youth (Frieden, Jaffe, Cono, Richards & Iademarco, 2014). Four of these six behaviors contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and are addressed specifically in this manuscript. They are: a) behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; b) sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV; c) alcohol and other drug use; and d) tobacco use (Behavioral Health Barometer, South Carolina, 2013).

Racial and ethnic minorities are at greater risk for adverse physical and mental health outcomes linked to risk behaviors and this is particularly the case in some southern states in the United States (U.S.) (Behavioral Health Barometer, South Carolina, 2013). These same racial and ethnic sub-groups are also found to bear higher risk for disengaging from school or school withdrawal altogether, also known as dropping out. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that certain youth in schools may be particularly vulnerable based on the confluence of educational factors, racial disparity, and health trajectory. Concurrent with education, racial and health risks, today's youth typically spend a significant amount of their time engaged in recreational and social media with documented effects on health and educational attainment. References to popular youth music and media in this manuscript include song lyrics, sound recordings and music videos. Interventions that mitigate negative influences of popular youth music media (PYMM) may have significant personal and public health benefits (Austin, Pinkleton, Hust & Cohen, 2005; Bergsma & Carney, 2008). Harnessing the learning opportunities associated with the use of PYMM may have positive effects on education in general, as well as improving literacy (Integrating Media Literacy into your Curriculum, 2010) and health education (Villani, 2001), in particular.

A model program or intervention to address these issues would ideally be evidence-based and leverage the broad appeal and pervasive influence of music, media and technology in the lives of adolescents (i.e., ages 11-18). Such a model or program may appeal to black and Hispanic youth based on data indicating these youth spend more time with recreational media than their white counterparts (Rideout, Foer & Roberts, 2010). Additionally, such a model would link key features of popular youth culture (PYC) to competence building in five key areas of positive youth development. These are: academic, behavioral, emotional, moral and social competence. Ideally, youth who may be at higher risk for adverse outcomes will report improvements in school connectedness and health-related media literacy. Additionally, trained observers would report improvements across the five key competency indicators linked to positive youth development. An additional longitudinal outcome measure is promotion to the 10th grade for students who received the intervention prior to or during the 9th grade versus students who did not. To test the hypothesis that such an approach is efficacious, an intervention is needed that incorporates select features of PYC and leverages the ubiquitous appeal of popular youth music media (PYMM).

Popular Youth Culture

Popular youth culture refers to what is popular among most youth ages 11-25, irrespective of race or socioeconomic status (Richardson & Scott, 2002). For clarification, the focus of this manuscript is on adolescents aged 11-18 who are at higher risk for adverse academic, behavioral, emotional and social outcomes in school settings due to the confluence of race and economic disparity.

Many of these youth live in America's low income, urban centers where poverty, violence, police misconduct, drug abuse, drug trafficking, and educational inequity prevail. Popular youth culture generally dictates what become shared norms and normative behaviors among young people, regardless of any apparent differences.

Rap music, for example, is but one expression of popular hip-hop culture however, rap dominates PYC across youth of all racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds in the U.S. Tate (1999) noted that hip-hop referred to a cultural response from the working and lower income youth to perceptions about their economic and social stigmatization. Rap music dates back to the mid-seventies (Henderson, 1996) and its mass appeal was solidified in the late eighties. Popular youth culture and particularly music media may have the content and context to educate, engage, excite and inspire youth growing up in the digital age, especially those from diverse backgrounds and may be vulnerable due to racial and economic disparity.

Popular Youth Culture

Popular youth culture refers to what's trending in the mainstream among youth aged 11-25, irrespective of race or socioeconomic standing. PYC is described by Harper (2002) as paying attention to: a) how youth spend their time; (b) what they value; (c) their attitudes, concerns, styles and behaviors; and (d) how they interact with mass mediated messages, their peers and society-at-large. Hip-hop music is a key feature of popular youth culture in the United States and in many parts of the developed or developing world (Androutsopoulos, 2009). Hip-hop and rap music is in the main stream across the world with mass appeal among youth and emerging adults on all continents. Rap is hip-hop's original form of lyrical expression and was once the emblematic language of lower income African American urban life (Dyson, 1994). Rap music began as a political commentary on drugs, violence perpetrated by police and material deprivation in impoverished communities. Early rappers captured the emotional frustration of those who were oppressed and they frequently addressed what they saw in mainstream America as unattainable and restricted (Dyson, 1994).

Today, rap and hip hop resonates with diverse audiences globally, especially among young people. Rap is arguable the international language of youth and Dr. Eric Dyson describes groups of people ranging in age and socio-economic backgrounds as being able to relate to the anger and frustration rap artists articulate about the ills of mainstream American society. One opinion holds that popular song lyrics are a form of education and may teach Black youth and others who identify with oppression and marginalization, a powerful lesson on solidarity, as well as provide emotional reinforcement (Powell, 1991) that may be associated with resilience.

Hip-hop artists and other entertainers play a role in shaping future society's values, collective consciousness, cultural norms and cultural pursuits (Richardson & Scott, 2002). Shared norms provide young people with "a deep sense of belonging and often with a stronger preference for behaving in certain ways" (Hilliard, 1989, p.66). Richardson and Scott (2002) also raise the point that it may be difficult for a person who is not economically disadvantaged to appreciate the nuances and context in which rap and hip-hop exists and flourishes. This highlights the need for a culturally-informed approach to teaching and learning, particularly for those who are more engaged in digital entertainment media.

A few key questions emerge from the literature about the potential of using popular youth culture and popular youth music media for instructional purposes. These questions range from general concerns about the content of PYMM being acceptable or feasible for use in school settings, to specific concerns about how racial and ethnic groups may respond to images and themes in popular youth media. One argument put forth by Androutsopoulos (2009) is African American and Hispanic youth are portrayed negatively in rap and hip-hop and this may contribute to these youth feeling culturally isolated in America and stigmatized internationally. This could contribute to the notion that rap and hip-hop culture is universally appealing across racial, ethnic and socio-economic differences, because it is a "counter cultural narrative" with tenants in social activism.

Dialogue between adults and youth with emphasis on critical thinking and self-reflection about popular youth culture seems to be missing from serious discussions about engaging students in school culture and climate, as well as promoting culturally relevant pedagogy, and facilitating competence in youth. This dialogue between youth and a caring, competent adult may be particularly helpful in cultivating creativity, curiosity, self-reflection and agency, both personally and collectively. Moreover, these attributes are pivotal to youth thriving in the 21st century. Based on the authors' review of literature and related professional experiences, a culturally-informed dialogue between youth and the adults who support them may go a long way toward bridging the communication gap and maybe even improving school climate and culture.

If significant progress is to be made that assists youth with developing academic, behavioral, emotional moral and social competencies, then strategies targeting youth should be informed by individuals who are competent and comfortable deconstructing popular youth culture. A youth-friendly dialogue about popular youth culture may provide important insight into the complex social and environmental landscape that young people must navigate in order to survive and thrive. Additionally, this dialogue may help adults gain insight and an understanding of the attitudes and behavioral norms that are modeled in popular youth media and perpetuated by its young consumers. According to Harper (2002), any intervention that targets behavioral, emotional, moral and social competence among youth must demonstrate a fundamental understanding of youth culture, acknowledge their design for living, and acknowledge their way of interpreting their own environment. Young people's views about behaviors linked to sex, alcohol, substance use, violence and trauma may not align with adult expectations. This is further complicated when adult expectations differs from what is espoused in school.

Ideally, a health education intervention designed for adolescents would intentionally engage youth in activities and discussions that allow them to articulate their values, attitudes, beliefs and give them an opportunity to discuss, explain and defend their choices. Such an intervention would align with national and state adopted standards in core subjects and be paired with accurate, credible and reliable information that promotes health education, media literacy and respect for diversity. Additionally, this intervention would be evidence based which means it would have been subjected to evaluation studies that have specified outcomes. This scenario could yield important knowledge about the potential use of PYC and PYMM as a strategy to engage youth in a culturally-informed approach to address health, education, diversity and disparity.

This review of the literature covers youth risk and problem behavior, youth media trends and youth who are often referred to as 'high risk' often because of their race or family background which is marked by household income and perpetuated as "social class" within the U.S. This review highlights the need for more evidence-based approaches to increase school engagement and school connectedness among those described as being at 'highest risk'. The focus here is on potential benefits for more culturally informed, pro social learning that emphasizes health and media literacy. A deployment-focused model is one example of an evidence-based approach that provides intervention developers with the opportunity to co-create a manualized intervention with key stakeholders that would be followed by an expert evaluation. Ideally, such a model would leverage the broad appeal and pervasive influence of music, media and technology. Additionally, such a model would appeal to the multi-sensory learning needs of diverse populations. Connecting popular youth culture with efforts to improve student engagement may yield significant individual and population-based benefits.

Background

Researchers have identified five contextual features (Wilson, Smith, Potter, Kunkel, Linz, Colvin, & Donnerstein, 2002) of popular youth music media with specific emphasis on the content of music videos. These high risk portrayal factors provide rich content and context for mediated deconstruction led by a caring, competent adult. Additionally, a close examination of these features could facilitate individual deconstruction, discussion and pro social collaborative learning among young people by analyzing and critiquing the themes and messages in music media. It is common knowledge that graphic portrayals, which can be extensive, often present realistic scenarios where justified behavior, is sometimes portrayed by attractive characters. Since high-risk portrayal factors in music videos are correlated with high risk behavior among youth then additional research could help illuminate how PYMM may be used to address diverse health beliefs and health, risk reduction. Additionally, student engagement, school connectedness and other pro social teaching and learning can be addressed.

Ten prevailing themes emerge in popular youth music media based on a content analysis of 30+ years of music videos from Grammy award winning songs. These themes emerged from unpublished, formative research conducted by the author of this manuscript. They are: 1) alcohol, tobacco and other drugs [ATOD]; 2) casual and suggestive sex [CSS]; 3) criminal activity [CA]; 4) dark and deviant behavior [DDB]; 5) foul language [FL]; 6) interpersonal conflict/bullying [IC/B]; 7) materialism; 8) narcissism; 9) social problems [SP]; and 10) violence, aggressive behavior and trauma [VABT]. Of these ten, five may be correlated with risky health behavior and adverse health outcomes. These are: ATOD, CSS, DDB, IC/B, and VABT and these five provide content for health education, media literacy, student engagement in learning and school climate and culture.

Children of parents with less education tend to be from low-income households. Often times, these children display more emotional and behavioral problems than children from middle-class families (Adams, Hilman & Gaydos, 1994).

Not surprisingly, these children come to school with more chronic stress compared to children born to middle-class families. According to Adams et.al examples of highly stressful conditions common in homes of low-income families include: a) interpersonal conflict at home; b) neighborhood crime; c) community violence, and d) substandard housing. These conditions can lead to children feeling anxious, depressed, hostile and fearful (Attar, Guerra, & Tolan, 1994; Kotlowitz, 1991; Richters & Martinez, 1993). Behavior that is linked to being disengaged may be how some of these youngsters express themselves given their reality and lived experiences.

One approach to addressing the needs of these students is to offer enrichment activities that extend learning opportunities beyond the typical school day and augment the traditional curriculum with more opportunities for applied, multi-sensory learning. Extending the school day via after-school or summer enrichment programming is a known protective factor that increases academic performance for students from low-income family backgrounds, especially when such programming is structured and cognitively stimulating (Posner & Vandell, 1994). The findings from the Posner and Vandell (1994) study suggest that extended-day programming appeals to stakeholders such as parents/guardians, students and school officials for a variety of reasons. These reasons range from feeling good about getting help with homework to participating in structured activities immediately following school. In addition, programs that help students connect with the traditional school curriculum can provide additional support to students whose schools and districts may lack adequate resources to address their learning and developmental needs. These programs also may help students better understand the academic, behavioral and social expectations in the traditional American schooling experience. Culturally-relevant afterschool and summer enrichment programming can reach students who may struggle with the cultural dissonance that can exist between PYC and adult expectations in school settings. This may be particularly the case for those who have not benefited from early family support or school support, or those who have not participated in early intervention programs designed to foster school achievement.

The Role of Media in the Lives of Adolescents

Based on trends, today's youth spend a significant amount of time engaged in media entertainment. In fact, media entertainment is so pervasive in young people's lives that it can be considered their primary form of recreational activity. According to the most recent Kaiser Family Foundation study on recreational media trends among youth, young people between the ages of 8-10 spend more time with media than in any other activity, with the possible exception of sleeping (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). A comprehensive array of media is included in these studies which take place every five years tracking media consumption trends among youth in the specified age bracket. Since 1999, when the first study was conducted, adolescents significantly have increased the amount of time they spend consuming recreational media (Rideout, et al., 2010). Kaiser researchers also gathered highly detailed information about young people's media behavior and found that five years ago, youth averaged nearly seven hours and forty minutes daily using multiple forms of media. Given the surge in social media over the past five years, this estimate is likely to have increased significantly.

Most media use among young people is concurrent, and when performing multiple tasks. Concurrent use may result in even greater exposure given the amount of time many youth spend multi-tasking. Young people today are likely packing at least ten hours and forty-five minutes worth of multimedia into their day, based on a conservative projection using five year old data (Rideout, et al., 2010). This upward trend suggests young people may soon be exposed to nearly 11 hours of total media content per day. This is an increase of more than three hours of media exposure per day compared to ten years ago.

The mobile and online media revolutions have converged in the lives of youth in the U.S. with certain sub-populations spending more time with recreational media than others. According to the CDC's 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey [YRBSS], black and Hispanic youth are more likely than white students across the United States to have used computers for recreational purposes (e.g., watching television) (Frieden, et al., 2014). *Figure 1* illustrates two additional important points highlighted in the Kaiser results: a) students of color are using every form of media more than their white counterparts; and b) children of parents with less education use the media more than children of parents with some college or parents who have education beyond college.

| In a typical day, average amount of time spent with each medium out of 24 hour day: | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | RACE/ETHNICITY | | | PARENT'S EDUCATION | | |
| | White | Black | Hispanic | HS or Less | Some College | College+ |
| TV Content | 3:36 | 5:54 | 5:21 | 4:46 | 4:55 | 4:07 |
| Music/Audio | 1:56 | 3:00 | 3:08 | 2:48 | 3:01 | 2:11 |
| Computer | 1:17 | 1:24 | 1:49 | 1:28 | 1:40 | 1:24 |
| Video Games | :56 | 1:25 | 1:35 | 1:17 | 1:07 | 1:11 |
| Print | :39 | :33 | :34 | :35 | :30 | :44 |
| Movies | :13 | :43 | :33 | :32 | :17 | :23 |
| TOTAL MEDIA EXPOSURE | 8:36 | 12:59 | 13:00 | 11:26 | 11:30 | 10:00 |

Figure 1

Student Engagement and Recreational Media Use

According to Rideout et al. (2010), youth who spend more time with media report lower grades and lower levels of personal contentment. Examples of low levels of personal contentment are young people reporting feeling sad or bored frequently. Light media users, on the other hand, are described as being 66% more likely to report that they get good grades compared to heavy users who are 47% more likely to report receiving fair/poor grades (i.e., C’s or lower). Heavy media users are also more than twice as likely to report getting into trouble at school compared to light media users.

Media Literacy and positive youth development

These findings support the development and deployment of culturally-informed, youth-focused interventions that builds upon the broad appeal of recreational/entertainment media. Aligning enrichment and instruction with standards of learning across multiple subject areas could be particularly salient to educators and administrators if such an intervention was evidence-based, acceptable and feasible in school settings. According to media literacy experts (e.g., Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2012), efforts to increase media literacy in schools is consistent with teaching and learning goals for this millennium. Forums where youth may access, analyze, evaluate and create media are recommended by Klosterman, Sadler, & Brown (2012). Most importantly, teachers and students who are familiar and already using a variety of media formats are more likely to be engaged, given the broad appeal of music. Critical thinking about media content enables teachers to engage urban youth in prosocial learning that is culturally relevant, culturally familiar and culturally responsive. This requires a certain proficiency in media literacy and respect for diverse perspectives.

Media literacy is achieved when individuals understand the role of media in society as well as acquire essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary to participate in a democracy (Center on Media Literacy, 2015). For at least the past thirty years, many competence-promotion efforts have worked toward developing skills in youth that integrate *feelings* (emotional competence) with *thinking* (cognitive competence) and *actions* (behavioral competence). The integration of all three purportedly helps children achieve specific learning goals. Interestingly, these are the same three skills that serve as key indicators of a student being actively engaged in learning (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). Music and media content is rich with opportunities to tag and talk about cultural and societal norms and allow multiple stakeholders to ask the proverbial question: “do you see what I see?”

Positive youth development (PYD) often takes the form of programs that seek to address many of the academic, behavioral, emotional, moral and social concerns that occur during adolescence. Richard Catalano and colleagues found that a model PYD program promotes at least one of 14 key goals. One goal is the delivery of programming that aims to improve competence across the following five objectives: a) behavioral; b) cognitive; c) emotional; d) moral and, e) social competence in youth (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2004).

Positive Youth Development and Competence

In recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on competence linked to PYD, especially in relation to key skills required to thrive in the 21st century. This emphasis is reflected in the advocacy of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21 Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015).

The emphasis on 21st century competencies by the Partnership may be especially important for vulnerable, youth at-risk whose parent's own schooling experiences may not have been positive. These parents may have experienced difficulties in school, and consequently, may not be able to provide adequate support for their child to effectively negotiate the demands of a today's competitive learning environment.

The emphasis on competency in relation to key skills required of students to be successful in school is consistent with what is known about students' difficulty transitioning from middle school into high school. The ninth-grade is a particularly difficult year for 12-14 year old youth (Neild, Stoner-Eby, & Furstenberg, 2008). According to Akos, & Galassi (2004), the ninth grade has been identified as the gateway year because many students get off track academically during their ninth-grade year. Stagnation often results in progressively disengaging from school and eventually dropping out altogether.

Dropout prevention

A key component to school connectedness and preventing students from dropping out is to ensure that students have opportunities to experience *autonomy, relatedness* and *competence*. Based on the work of Ryan and Connell (1989), these are the three factors researchers believe are critical to sustaining student's motivation to learn and staying engaged in the process of acquiring new knowledge. Ryan and Connell emphasized that autonomy includes students *having a sense of choice in the activities they pursue*. For school age youth, choice means presenting no fewer than two options and encouraging youngsters to weight their options versus telling them what to do. For example, allowing students the opportunity to choose between using PYMM or a traditional curriculum gives them a sense of autonomy in choosing what they will learn versus being forced to learn something that they may not immediately see any relevance. Consequently, this approach to learning puts some of the choices about instructional content in the students' hands. Such an approach, however, requires adults to have contextual knowledge and cultural proficiency in navigating the complex landscape of PYC and PYMM, without coming across as being judgmental or culturally out of touch.

Student success factors

Students' success is correlated highly with access to interpersonal relationships, and these relationships are especially important to middle and high school students. A caring competent adult must create a sense of belonging to attract and sustain ninth graders' interests in learning. This is believed to be critically important. *Relationship, reliability* and *parental collaboration* are three important student success factors that the research suggests must be addressed. Ideally, these three factors also should be evaluated independently to assess the extent to which there is measured or observable change along the continuum. Additionally, these factors should also be in a model as potential mediators or moderators when assessing whether population youth music and media be a culturally-informative approach to address health education, media literacy and diversity in schools.

Even though schools cannot change the socioeconomic factors affecting the lives of their students, they can address student risks based on what is known. Teachers and administrators can also monitor a few key indices. For example: a) Is there a positive and safe learning environment; b) Have the academic and social expectations been set high; and 3) Is there a system in place to facilitate and reinforce academic and social success consistently (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007). Ensuring academic and social success in schools is dependent largely upon two factors: a) access to a culturally-enriching, culturally-responsive curriculum; and b) being properly prepared to meet the needs of all children, regardless of their abilities, differences or diverse backgrounds.

Conceptions and values about student diversity converge especially as it relates to one's *attitude, beliefs, perceptions* and *personal dispositions*. Attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and dispositions about discrimination, racism, sexual orientation and social class are often tied to one's value system and demonstrated in interpersonal communication. Discussions about individual or shared values in relation to many of the themes and messages in youth music and media could be sensitive, thereby requiring a proficiency in managing diverse perspectives, engaging dialogue and facilitating teaching and learning aligned with health, education and respect for diversity.

Health education, media literacy and positive youth development

Leveraging the broad appeal and pervasive influence of media and technology in the lives of adolescents provides an opportunity to link discussions about PYC and PYMM to values. Additionally, this may be an approach to reducing the number of students disengaging from school or "dropping out" due to lack of interest in the traditional school curriculum.

Students who are marginalized based on race or socio-economic background (i.e., social class) are at greater risk for adverse academic (Borofsky, Kellerman, Baucom, Oliver, & Margolin, 2013; Henry, Knight, & Thornberry, 2012); behavioral, emotional (Boxer, Sloan-Power, Mercado, & Schappell, 2012); and social outcomes in school (Lubans, Plotnikoff & Lubans, 2012). By aligning the classroom with real world environments and focusing on communication and critical thinking, marginalized youth may be more engaged in and connected to learning that which is relevant and applicable to their daily lives. These youth may also feel valued and be more motivated to learn (Forrest, Bevans, Riley, Crespo & Louis, 2013). For some, this may be the first time their perspective is solicited for discussion. The approach to teaching and learning that links academic enrichment and student engagement to PYC and PYMM holds much potential, yet has not been fully explored.

Shared standards in education

In general, healthy students learn better. It is well-known that healthier students tend to do better in school. These students have higher attendance, perform better on tests and have better grades (Forrest, Bevans, Riley, Crespo, & Louis, 2013). Although many states in the U.S. have adopted common core standards for mathematics and English language and arts/literacy (Common Core State Standards Initiative: Preparing America's Student's for Success, 2015), they have yet to formally adopt common standards for health education and media arts. These two content areas have not received the same attention as their counterparts, nor have they benefited from the national standard momentum. The health education standards, for example, were developed and endorsed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (National Health Education Standards, 2013), but there are no mandates for how states must implement these standards.

Standard 2 of the health standards, for example states: "the student will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors" (Zais, 2011), however, there is no guidance or support for how this is to be achieved. Additionally, there are no national standards specifically for media arts despite the trends noted above. Some states in the U.S., however, have combined their academic standards for media arts with the State's standards for the Visual and Performing Arts. State standards in media arts are organized on the basis of six standard statements and corresponding performance indicators. For example, Standard 3 of the South Carolina Media, Visual and Performing arts states: "*the student will access, analyze, interpret, and create media texts*"; and Standard 4 states: "*the student will make connections between music, other art disciplines, other content areas, and the world*" ((Zais, 2011). Addressing the Health Education, Media, Visual and Performing Arts standards can be achieved by leveraging the appeal of popular youth culture and popular youth music media to cultivate critical thinking, communication and collaboration – three 21st century skills required to thrive and excel in school.

Curriculum Intervention Research

*Music's Energy: The Message in the Music*TM (*ME-MIM*) is one example of a curriculum intervention that is described as an integrated, standards-based curriculum that is intentional about engaging students in social learning via PYC and PYMM. Individual activities and group discussions are implemented over seven modules that are designed to complement core academic instruction. *ME-MIM* uses popular music media (i.e., printed song lyrics, sound recordings and music videos) to capture and sustain the attention of youth and their parents who also may have grown up in the digital entertainment age. The pedagogical underpinnings of *ME-MIM* target seven key competencies. These are: 1) collaboration; 2) communication (oral, written and listening); 3) creative expression; 4) critical analysis (i.e., critical viewing and critical listening); 5) information-seeking; 6) note taking; and 7) reading comprehension. The next logical step for *ME-MIM* in a program of research is to identify a model for intervention development that lends itself to action research with key stakeholders.

The Deployment-Focused Model of Intervention Development and Testing (Weisz, 2004) [DF Model] is one approach to designing an intervention that is evidence-based that could work well in practice settings. There are three primary aims to the DF Model that may bridge the research to practice gap. These are: a) producing treatments that can be manualized, fitting smoothly into everyday practice; b) generating useful evidence on outcomes in practical settings; and c) producing a body of outcome evaluation research that is externally valid. This research should inform the necessary conditions in practice settings. The DF model consists of six steps to intervention development and testing and can be combined with action research.

Action research and the DF Model

The Action Research Cycle (Coughlan & Coughlan, 2002) is useful in conveying the three main steps in this type of applied research. The Cycle consists of three steps: a) a pre-step which is to understand context and purpose; b) six main steps to gather feedback, analyze data, plan, implement and evaluate; and c) a meta-step to monitor. The DF-Model (as adapted by Molina, Smith and Pelham (2005) consists of six other steps that could be quite helpful in guiding the development of an intervention to address health education, media literacy and youth recreational media trends. An action research study using the DF Model might be quite useful in bridging the common research to practice gap and illuminating the question “can popular youth music and media be a culturally-informative approach to address health education, media literacy and diversity in schools?” To date, there are no empirical studies about a program or intervention that attempts to address health education and media literacy, and that also incorporates PYC and PYMM. Additionally, there are no empirical studies that measure specific changes in the five key competencies that are required for students to thrive in school. An exhaustive review of the literature found no published studies that aim to address the aforementioned topics collectively.

*Musics Energy: The Message in the Music*TM may be an approach to teaching and learning that addresses this gap, however, published evaluation studies are needed. Empirical studies are specifically needed to better understand *ME-MIM* and its programmatic goals, theoretical base and pedagogical foundation for addressing pro social learning and clarifying values. Testing *ME-MIM* through a Phase 1 study of action research, for example would help illuminate its theoretical underpinnings and contribute to identifying positive outcomes.

Conclusion

Much has been learned from this review of literature linking health, education and youth media trends to the need for culturally-relevant health education, media literacy and positive youth development. There is clearly a need to improve academic and health trajectories for an increasingly diverse population of learners. While the U.S. education and health care systems are undergoing reform, prevention and early intervention are emphasized in both reform efforts (Barnett, 2011). There is no better time to focus our efforts on prevention than during childhood and adolescence as these young people mature. An integrated approach to addressing health and media literacy in diverse educational settings through approaches such as *ME-MIM* hold much promise toward realizing the full benefits of these reform efforts.

There is clearly a need to prevent negative influences and outcomes linked to adolescent risk and problem behavior, much of which is portrayed in popular media targeting young consumers. Action research is one approach and incorporating the ubiquitous appeal of PYMM to enable critical thinking and deconstruction could prove beneficial. Assessing the extent to which PYMM may facilitate teaching and learning could be a strategy to engage students who are disengaged from the traditional public school curriculum. Ideally, these approaches will be supported by rigorously evaluated studies that have been published in peer-reviewed journals. Such evidence-based approaches could be part of the educational and health care reform efforts leveraging the pervasive role of media in the lives of adolescents and highlighting the social learning opportunities.

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