INFLUENCE OF RAP AND HIP-HOP LYRICS ON MALE BODY IMAGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Rap and hip-hop music are a widely popular and accessible genre of media. Its popularity and controversial lyrics raise questions as to the effects it may have on its audience. This study proposes to investigate the influence of rap and hip-hop music on male body image and attitudes towards women in men. We hypothesize that exposure to rap and hip-hop music will be correlated with higher mean levels of disordered eating attitudes (INT-ED), negative attitudes towards women, and cultural expectations of masculinity compared to published normative data. Participants will be 500 male college students between the ages of 18 and 24 from a large public university. Participants will complete online measures addressing questions about their body image (e.g. drive for masculinity) and attitudes towards women (e.g. objectification and stereotyping). Future research should compare the influence of rap and hip-hop music on male and female self-concept and attitude formation based on the gender of the artist.

INTRODUCTION

Various forms of portable media (e.g., television, movies, magazines, internet, and music players) are increasingly accessible and used by adolescents and adult males (ages 12-24) in the U.S. American Psychological Association (APA, 2007; Ward, 2008). For example, 8 to 18 year-olds devote an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes per day to the use of entertainment media, totaling more than 53 hours a week (Brathwaite, 2012; KTF, 2010). The increased accessibility and use of various media exposes the average American to messages and images reflecting appropriate gender roles, appearance ideals, and cultural values.

One of the current and more visible trends across mediums is an increase in the prevalence and explicitness of sexual and objectifying references (Coroian, Dixon & Zhang, 2003; Ward, 2008). An emerging body of research suggests that negative effects of media exposure are also seen in men. Research suggests that the male drive for attaining a muscular physique (also referred to as the drive for masculinity) can lead to males engaging in dangerous weight control behaviors and negative mental health outcomes (Olivardia, Pope, Borus, & Cohan, 2004).

One form of entertainment media that is particularly popular and replete with sexually objectifying content is music, with rap and hip-hop music being the most popular genre (APA, 2007; Farley, 1999; Hansen & Hansen, 2000; Martins et al., 2006; Ræder, 2008). Adolescents and young adults attempt to identify with the characters and themes depicted in music videos and lyrics because they portray societal expectations and standards of the optimistic lifestyle (Wingo et al., 2003). Younger adults often model themselves in terms of dress, character, and behavior after musical figures (Brathwaite, 2012; Martins et al., 2006; Wingo et al., 2003). Musical artists associated with rap and hip hop music create lyrics saturated with self-objectification, misogyny, and female sexual objectification (Brathwaite, 2012; Bretherrler et al., 2006).

To date, relatively little research has examined the influence of music lyrics as a form of entertainment media. The majority of existing research includes content analysis, and examining African American attitudes towards sexual relationships. Little research exists on the influence of other aspects of rap and hip-hop music on its audience. Researchers focus on females and often neglect to address these influences in the male population.

WHY LYRICS?

- Forty-four in 53% of music videos and 70% of rap, hip-hop, and rhythm & blues (R&B) include song lyrics with content that is sexually degrading towards women and promotes materialism, power and physical prowess (APA, 2007).
- The overall misogynistic themes coming from the lyrical content deal with offensive messages, sexual objectification, distrust, legitimation of violence and prostitution (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2000; Brathwaite, Zimmerman, & Bunning, 2006).
- Contemporary rap and hip-hop music depicts unequal gender roles and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity.
- In rap and hip-hop music, males appear as stronger, virile beings with physical attributes and incapable of emotional attachment.
- Depictions of women in Western culture, media, and rap music can have a substantial influence on behavior, affects, and one’s self-concept.
- Johnson and colleagues found that constant exposure to rap music with violent themes resulted in a greater tolerance for violence in dating situations (Johnson, Adams, Hull, Ashburn, & Reed, 1995). These themes make up a large portion of rap and hip-hop music’s lyrical content (Bretherrler et al., 2006; Sommers-Flanagan et al., 1993; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009).

SAMPLE LYRICS (CENSORED)

The following selections exemplify the common themes in rap and hip hop music and the messages conveyed in rap and hip-hop music:

Eminem featuring Dina Ray "Superman"...
...They call me superman, cop tall lies in a single bound I’m single now, get no ring on this finger now. I’d never let another chick bring me down, is a relationship, save it b**ch, stay out... You make me sick! Superman ain’t a�in s***!... Don’t put up, I’ll put you out; won’t get out, I’ll push you out, wouldn’t pin on fire to put you out... I’ll slap you out that harstool. There goes another hustler, leave handprints all across you. Don’t touch what you can’t grab, end up with two backpacks... Put an ax on a lumpa, and slap you till you can’t stand... (Eminem, 2003).

Young Money "Every Girl"
I hope you remember that when you opened up her legs then Flirtatious that p***y of yours in and out on that p***y... go on and knock it back and try it like you ’spood to do... I’ll just serve it up to you... I’ll come here and serve you... (Lil Wayne) I just wanna f*** every girl in the world... it don’t matter who you is miss you can get the business... (Jae Millz, 2007).

PURPOSE & HYPOTHESES

- Given the idealized muscular physique and hypermasculine behaviors promoted in rap and hip-hop culture, the overarching purpose of the current study is to examine the use and influence of rap and hip-hop music on the internalization of Western sociocultural ideals conveyed through rap and hip-hop music lyrics, the endorsement of misogynistic attitudes towards women, and body dissatisfaction in a diverse college male sample.

Hypothesis 1: Participants in the sample will report higher mean levels of appearance-ideal internalization (INT-ED), negative attitudes towards women, and cultural expectations of masculinity compared to published normative data.

Hypothesis 2: Self-reported rap and hip-hop music consumption, internalization of Western media ideals of appearance, negative attitudes towards women, and cultural expectations of masculinity and body dissatisfaction will be positively correlated.

METHODOLOGY

Participants
500 male ages 18-24 attending the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses. Participants will receive course credit for their participation.

Measures
Demographic History and Background - written for the purposes of this study, to gather demographic information about the participants
Rap-music Attitude and Perception Scale (RAP; Tyson, 2005). The RAP is a 26-item instrument that measures attitudes and perceptions of rap music. The RAP scale is a tool for understanding the effects of the internalization rap and hip-hop music has on youth and young adults (Tyson, 2005).

Male Figure Drawing utilizes nine male figure drawings to illustrate different levels of masculinity for men’s ideal body image (Lynch & Edlebrock, 1998).

Sociocultural Attitudes Toward Appearance Scale-3 (SATA-3; Thompson, van den Berg, Roche, Garret & H elders, 2004). The SATA-3 measure the pressure for an ideal body image and influence over its audience to meet cultural standards set by the media norms.

Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS-1 & 3; Neel, Helms & Galve, 1986) measures men’s response to situations, thoughts and behaviors related to gender expectations. The GRCS attempts to assess how men deal with expectations of money, power, relationships and their emotions (Neel, Helms & Galve, 1986).

Projected Analyses
H1: Independent samples t-tests will be conducted using M (SD) from published normative samples and compared to M (SD) from the current sample.
H2: The strength of the relationships between variables will be produced using bivariate correlations.
IBR approval for the study is currently in progress.

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