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 propels to investigate the impact of rap and hip-hop music on 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 body dissatisfaction, 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 toward women (e.g. objectification and misogyny). Future research should consider 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 to and used by adolescents and adult males (ages 12-24) in the US (American Psychological Association (APA), 2007; Ward, 2003). For example, 8 in 18-year-old males 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; KFF, 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 (Conrad, Dison & Zhang, 2005; Ward, 2003). 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 masculine physique (also referred to as the drive for masculinity) can lead to males engaging in dangerous weight control behaviors and negative mental health outcomes (Olurinna, Papp, Boweswicz, & 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; Foxley, 1999; Hansen & Hansen, 2000; Martins et al., 2006; Raeder, 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 ideal lifestyle (Wingood et al., 2003). Young adults often model themselves in terms of dress, character, and behavior after musical figures (Brathwaite, 2012; Martins et al., 2008; Wingood et al., 2008). Musical artists associated with rap and hip-hop music create lyrics saturated with self-objectification, misogyny, and female sexual objectification (Brathwaite, 2012; Brathwaite et al., 2008).

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 to 83% 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).

- Most misogynistic themes coming from the lyrical content deal with offensive messages, sexual objectification, distrust, legitimation of violence and prostitution (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009; 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 power to subjugate women, and incapable of emotional attachment.
- Depictions of women in Western culture, media, and rap music can have a substantial influence on behavior, affect, 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, Hall, Asberry, & Boed, 1995). These themes make up a large portion of rap and hip-hop music’s lyrical content (Brettler 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 Rae “Superman” …
...They call me superman, rap tall houses in a single bound I’m single now, got no ring on this finger now. I’d never let another duck bring me down, is a relationship, save it b*tch, baby? You make me sick! Superman ain’t save it’s not! 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 of that bastard. There’s no love here, leave handprints all across you. Don’t touch what you can’t grab, end up with two backhands…Put antennae on a lump, and nap till you go away. (Eminem).

Young Money “Every Girl”
I like a long thighed black girl, open up her legs then flit nigguage – that p*ssy’s fine and on that that p*ssy… go on and threw it back and beat it like you ‘spoused to … girl I just got that dope it’s fine, now come here let me dope you up…(Lil Wayne) …just wanna feel it’s every girl in the world… it don’t matter who you is missin you can get the business. …(Joe Mills, 2007).

PURPOSE & HYPOTHESES

- Given the idealized muscular physique and hypermasculine behavior promoted in rap and hip-hop culture, the overarching purpose of the current study to examine the relationship 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 I: Participants in the sample will report higher mean levels of appearance-ideal internalization (INT-CEQ), negative attitudes towards women, and cultural expectations of masculinity compared to published normative data.

Hypothesis II: 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 size dissatisfaction will be positively correlated.

METHODOLOGY

Participants
500 males age 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 and Background- written for the purposes of this study, to gather demographic information about the participant

REFERENCES

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Sociocultural Attitudes Toward Appearance Scale-3 (SAAS-3; Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Gauda & Hennberg, 2004). The SAAS-3 measures the pressure for an ideal body and its influence on its audience to meet cultural standards set by the media norms.
Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS I & II; O’Neil, helms & Gable, 1986)) measures men’s responses 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 (O’Neil, helms & Gable, 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 relationship between variables will be predicted using correlations.
IRR approval for the study is currently in progress.