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 music. In popularity and commerciality, 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's 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-EDI), negative attitudes toward 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 compare the influence of rap and hip-hop music on male and female's 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 adults (ages 12-24) in the US (American Psychological Association [APA], 2007; Ward, 2003). 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 83 hours a week (Brathwaite, 2012; KFF, 2010). The increased accessibility and use of various media exposes the average American to images and messages 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, Dixon & 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 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 (Oliveria, Pope, Borowsky, & Colman, 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; Raebel, 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 optimal 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., 2006; Wingood 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; Brathwaite 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 analyses, 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).

• The overall misogynistic themes coming from the lyrical content deal with offensive messages, sexual objectification, distrust, legitimization of violence and prostitution (Weitzer & Kuhrau, 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, wise 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 among students (Johnson, Adams, Hall, Ashburn, & Boyd, 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., 2013; Weitzer & Kuhrau, 2009).

• Emerging from Diana Ross “Superman”...

...I can call you Superman, hop tall bases in a single bound I’m single now, got no ring on this finger now. I’d never let another chimp bring me down, is a relationship, save it ‘kay, baby? You make me sick? Superman ain’t sayin’ “I’ll save you”! Don’t put your plan, I’ll put you out, won’t get out, I’ll push you out, wouldn’t pin on fire to get you out...I’ll slap you out of that bar stool. This looks like love, you love handprints all across you. Don’t touch what you can’t grab, end up with two backhands...Put anthrax on a lump, and slap you till you don’t see (Emerson, 2003). Young Money “Every Girl”

I love a long-haired thin red head, open up her legs then flip vaginas—that p’、“”I’m at it and so that p’、“”go on and when I throw it back and beat it up like they ’spoused to...girl I just that dope ’k, now come here let me do 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...” (Joe Mills, 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 interrelation 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.

Hypotheses

H1: Participants in the sample will report higher mean levels of appearance-ideal internalization (INT-EDI), negative attitudes towards women, and cultural expectations of masculinity compared to published normative data.

H2: 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 participant.

Sociocultural Attitudes Toward Appearance Scale-3 (SATA-3; Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Gauna & Heinberg, 2004). The SATA-3 measures the pressure for an ideal body and its influence over its audience to meet cultural standards set by the media norms.

Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRC-I & II; O’Neal, Helms & Gable, 1986)) measures men’s responses to situations, thoughts and behaviors related to gender expectations. The GRC-I attempts to assess how men deal with expectations of money, power, relationships and their emotions (O’Neal, Helms & Gable, 1986).

Projected Analysis

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 assessed using bivariate correlations

IRB approval for the study is currently in progress

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