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Perceptions of Misogyny in Hip Hop and Rap: What Do the Youths Think?

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This article presents the results of an exploratory study conducted at a community forum sponsored by a prominent African American church and a historically Black university. These institutions are concerned with negative messages given to African American females about their appearance and their morals. The data presented describe the population of female (68.6%) and male (31.4%) participants ages 18 to 24 and inform us about their perceptions about hip hop and rap music, especially as they relate to misogyny. This study found that listening habits and age were significant in understanding youths' views about misogyny.

KEYWORDS *Misogyny, hip hop and rap music, African American females*

INTRODUCTION

The subject of hip hop and rap has perplexed adults, social workers and other helping professionals propelling them to consider ways in which to use this genre of music in positive youth development. This study used a community forum to collect data on youths' views of hip hop and rap music

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sponsored by a prominent African American church and a historically Black university both located in the eastern part of the country.

The purpose of the forum was to give youths and adults an opportunity to dialogue about the effect that hip hop culture and rap music have on youth culture. Of particular concern was how youths viewed the lyrics that referred to African American females in negative terms. This is was an especially sensitive topic in that African American women in American society typically do not represent the standards for beauty (Shelton, 1997; Rozie-Battle, 2002a, 2002b; Stephens & Few, 2007a, 2007b).

Perhaps what was more informative was the reaction some church youths had to the planning of the forum. The youths assumed that most of the adults had preconceived notions about the negativity of hip hop and rap music and, as a result, discussions regarding aspects of the music were initially strained. Further, the youths expressed concern that there were different genres of hip hop and rap music and that one needed to understand the history of those artists who fell into what they termed "conscious" and "unconscious" categorizations. Most of the adults on the committee felt that the music was offensive and did not rise to the level of artistry that the music of their generation had, even while admitting earlier forms of hip hop and rap music were acceptable to them. This brief impasse posed a problem as the event was billed as an opportunity for adults and youths to discuss this genre of music and culture, which for the most part was not quite understood by the adults (Gourdine, 2008). These barriers were overcome during the planning process by each group's being clearer in their expectations.

This article will answer the questions "How do youths view the lyrics found in hip hop and rap music in reference to females?" and "What factors contribute to their views about hip and rap music in reference to females?" These authors incorporate scholarly articles on this topic and use Black feminist theory to explain the phenomenon of negativity toward African Americans females in the lyrical content of hip hop and rap music.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF MISOGYNY

Adams and Fuller (2006) define "misogyny as the hatred or disdain of women. It is an ideology that reduces women to objects for men's ownership, use, or abuse. This ideology is wide spread and common throughout society" (p. 939). These authors point out that rap music was not the first to use misogynistic lyrics. In fact, at its beginning, rap music was an attempt to deal with oppressive situations and was seen as a sort of protest song reminiscent of the songs of the civil rights movement. It was not until the late 1980s that rap music with overt misogynistic content was introduced (Adams &

Fuller, p. 939). Several social issues emerged during this time. One was the proliferation of drugs, especially in poor Black neighborhoods. Another was the pervasive image of male rappers becoming rich by performing this type of music. Though the success of these artists was evident, they were frequently involved in the criminal justice system and literally wore their success on their bodies, giving rise to the popularization of various terms often utilized in urban communities such as "bling, bling" to describe expensive jewelry. People in poor neighborhoods saw rap as a way to make money, and they felt that their lyrics "kept it real" by telling the story about their communities (Rozie-Battle, 2002a; Clay, 2003). Traditionally, the bulk of music had messages that contained some misogynistic aspects, but it was not as overt as the genre that emerged in the late 1980s. Historically, African American women have not been respected or regarded as beautiful. Additionally, they were sexualized and seen as lacking in morals (Rozie-Battle, 2002b; Kistler & Lee, 2009). This treatment was utilized as a means of sustaining the unequal status of Blacks and promoting the maintenance of a society committed to racism. Observations of videos indicate that backup female dancers were often light-skinned and, therefore, darker-hued Black women were seen as undesirable in the rapidly growing music industry (Rozie-Battle, 2002b; Stephens & Few, 2007a, 2007b). However, these women could be seen dancing seductively behind the male performers. It is these images that adults in general are concerned about.

Adams & Fuller (2006) describe racialized misogyny as a part of America's consciousness. These authors suggest that this ideology has a profound effect on the inner psyche of African Americans as it feeds off not only hatred of women but hatred toward Blackness, which serves as a two-edged sword (pp. 942–943).

bell hooks (1994) states

> The sexist, misogynistic, patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving that are glorified in gangster rap are a reflection of the prevailing values in our society, values created and sustained by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. As the crudest and most brutal expression of sexism, misogynistic attitudes tend to be portrayed by the dominant culture as an expression of male deviance. In reality they are a part of a sexist continuum, necessary for the maintenance of patriarchal social order. (p. 2)

Hip Hop and Rap Contextualization

Researchers differ in their conceptualizations of hip hop and rap (Rose, 1994; Rozie-Battle, 2002a; Kobin & Tyson, 2006; Tyson, 2006; Iwanoto, Creswell, & Caldwell, 2007). In fact, the terms are sometimes used interchangeably (Samuels, 1991). Thus, herein the authors also utilize the terms in this manner.

Rozie-Battle (2002a) states that

> The young urban population of the 21st century is the "hip hop" generation. Generally the term refers to a combination of a music form (i.e., rap), clothing fashions, and a general "in-your-face" life style. The influence of this urban hip-hop culture has extended beyond the inner city into suburban as well as international communities. So despite the negative images the general adult population sees in this life style, youth of all races and economic backgrounds are attracted to various aspects of the hip hop lifestyle. (p. 2)

Kobin and Tyson (2006) offer a conceptualization of various components of hip hop that by their explanation is a culture that also includes music. Hip hop started in the 1970s (Rose, 1994). Hip hop and rap music are distinguished from other genres of music focused on "the spoken word." The themes addressed in rap are representative of the experiences of various oppressed persons/groups (Tyson, 2003). Furthermore, negative images of black females and a gangster lifestyle are the ones that the media promotes and give the impression that all Black communities adhere to these lifestyles. In 2004, the students at a historical Black college protested the negative images of black women used in music videos, thus indicating in this protest their resistance to the promotion of these negative images of black women and called attention to the artist who promoted the event (Reid-Brinkley, 2008). Even those youths who embrace the lifestyle agree that the media sensationalizes a way of living that can do harm to their communities (Brown & Gourdine, 1998, 2001, 2007). It appears that since the spread of hip hop throughout society, the standards by which African American youths judge themselves have changed (Rozie-Battle, 2002a). There has been a devaluing of education and, in turn, a valuing of what some would describe as a "successful" lifestyle (Rozie-Battle, 2002a). This rejection of academic achievement has been replaced by a fascination with those who endorse the "thug" life (Rozie-Battle, 2002a; Clay, 2003). This could be due to change in societal expectations as African Americans may be ridiculed if they excel in school and other aspects of their lives (Rozie-Battle, 2002a, 2002b).

Even when adults feel that hip hop and rap music are detrimental to youths, they also recognize that it can be used as a tool for understanding youths and can assist in reframing the usage of this genre of music/culture in positive ways. Efforts to concentrate on positive youth development through the use of hip hop and rap music have been made by a number of organizations that promote programs that focus on the positive aspects of youths (Rozie-Battle, 2002c).

Rozie-Battle (2002c) identifies challenges that African American girls face in society. She states that African American youths are often portrayed in the literature in very negative ways because young women focus on negative behaviors and attitudes. An assumption is that African American girls are exposed to sexual permissiveness in society and act in these ways themselves (Ladner, 1972; Rozie-Battle, 2002b; Munoz-La Boy, Weinstein, & Parker, 2007). Efforts to categorize African American women have been hampered because of contradictions in viewpoints such as "the strong black woman"—a woman who can overcome any hardships (Rozie-Battle, 2002b; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). There is also the view that owing to society's perceptions, some African American girls are a legitimate target for the poor behavior they may exhibit in society by behaving in ways that define them as "loose and lacking in morals." It is assumed that because of these behaviors, Black women can be exploited and become victims of violence. These behaviors are not just relegated to African Americans but are a part of youthful behavior in all aspects of society (Greeson & Williams, 1986; Rozie-Battle, 2002a, 2002b; Munoz-La Boy et al., 2007). Although there is violence in some African American communities, Brown and Gourdine (1998, 2001, 2007) found in their studies that girls exposed to violence still shared the values of mainstream society and remained hopeful about their futures.

Hip Hop and Rap Research

Kobin and Tyson (2006) identify three therapeutic themes in hip hop: (1) an empowerment perspective, (2) a female empowerment and feminist model, and (3) racial identity and pride. These authors state that the female rappers are seen as being empowered when they use strong lyrics such as the "b word" by making the word their own. These words signal strong black women who can take care of themselves. This may be seen as conflicting with the views of other strong Black women who have had to make sacrifices to maintain their families and their dignity when others are not likely to do so (Ladner, 1972; Rozie-Battle, 2002b; Jones & Gooden-Shorter, 2003).

There is also a contradiction between viewing hip hop and rap as political, viewing it as an art form, and viewing it as a genre of music and culture that basically does not influence politics (*Economist*, 2008). These contradictions are also noted by youths. There are those who see hip hop only as negative and those who see hip hop as being both positive and negative. In fact, the youths who assisted us in this project felt that hip hop and rap were both, and they differentiated between conscious rap, which is viewed as having meaningful lyrics, and unconscious rap, which promotes negative proclamations. Conscious rap is the music that is perceived as promoting a political message to the broader society and the communities that may be referred to in the music (Clay, 2006; Iwamoto et al., 2007; Gourdine & McFadgion [in progress]). In other words, it paints a political reality for the artist and the consumer of the music. According to the youths involved in this project, unconscious rap is thought to promote negative images.

Squires, Kohn-Wood, Chavous, and Carter (2006) examined the way African American adolescents think about gendered interpersonal violence. The participants were from a high school and a community center located in the Midwest. This research consisted of mostly middle-class participants. The authors cite three themes emerging from this research: (1) women's behaviors causing abuse, (2) nasty women versus powerful men in hip hop imagery, and (3) hard or soft? sexy or innocent? girls negotiating images of hip hop femininity.

Interestingly, in response to the first module, across each focus group participants felt the exploitation of females was primarily the women's fault and focused on their behavior and less so on the males' behavior. In terms of the second module, participants saw women as having negative images in music videos, but the male participants also felt that males had similarly negative images. In the third module, the female participants struggled with the sexual images and the idea of a strong black woman. The male participants, however, placed the blame squarely in the hands of the females, indicating they believed that females could stop the "nasty" images if they wanted to. These findings are discussed in several articles (Rozie-Battle, 2002a, 2002b) that describe the expectations of strong women, the images of over-sexualized Black women, and the belief that women can stop the negative images of themselves by changing their behavior (Squires et al., 2006). Though the participants in the study believed that women were at fault for their choices, they also believed that males were simply products of their environments (p. 733).

Stephens and Few (2007a, 2007b) used qualitative methods to examine African American early adolescents' views of African American women's sexuality. These researchers involved 15 African American male ($n = 7$) and female ($n = 8$) youths between the ages of 11 and 13. The following methods were used in the analyses: focus groups, written feedback, and the use of researcher's notes. Two significant themes emerged from this study: (1) physical attractiveness and (2) interpersonal relationships. The participants did not express the dominant culture's idea of beauty. The female participants did consider what men found attractive but found that the men's views contrasted with theirs. The females expressed that skin complexion was used as an indicator of beauty, although they felt it should not be.

Clay (2003) discussed hip hop in terms of black youths' validating their racial identity. In fact, she believes that African American youths use hip hop as a form of cultural capital. She suggests that "cultural capital is used to position people in a particular hierarchy among their peers. Furthermore, it acts as a criterion for setting up boundaries and determining who is legitimate or authentic in a setting, excluding those that lack legitimacy" (p. 1349).

Munoz-Laboy et al. (2007) assert that hip hop culture is a social medium through which many young men and women from communities of color in the United States construct their gender (p. 615). Their research looks at how young people deal with gender relationships on the dance floor. This research was designed systematically to examine the youth's experiences and their interpretation of what happened on the dance floor. This ethnographic study, in which in-depth interviews were conducted using open-end semi-structured questions, focused primarily on the young peoples' narratives. There were four themes identified in the analysis. The first was "performing on the dance floor." There was pressure to perform well on the dance floor. One female connected the dancing to having sex. The second area of analysis was the "courtship of dancing," which is interpreted as "grabbing up to dance"—this term seemed to indicate that a request to dance was not honored. The challenge is to get women to dance with you on the dance floor. The third area was "dancing boundaries and transgressions." In this area, there is an establishment of boundaries and levels of physical closeness that young men cannot cross. The young women are seen as controlling these boundaries. The fourth area is "dancing and transitions to sex." This means that young women show their like for a male by the way they dance with them on the dance floor. In their discussion, these authors stated that hip hop dancing mimic acts of sex. The authors do warn that hip hop culture should be approached as a complex social phenomenon—one that has multiple meanings (Munoz-La Boy et al.).

This literature confirms some of the thoughts of researchers about the influence of hip hop and rap music. There was some evidence that perception of physical attractiveness can be influenced by the images seen on videos. Interestingly enough, some of the females maintained positive self-images even when some of the males adhered to a different standard of beauty. The music by and large influences how youths interpret their culture and social circumstances, which can be construed along both positive and negative lines. The positive aspects are the confirmation of their cultural significance, and the negative factors are the limitations these interpretations may have on youths (i.e., disdain of education). In the study on dance, in New York the music influenced the dating/sexual behavior, apparently setting up new norms for dating behavior and relationship building.

Conceptual Framework

Collins (2000) investigates four basic components of Black feminist thought: (1) its thematic content, (2) its interpretative frameworks, (3) its epistemological approaches, and (4) its significance for empowerment (p. 17). Her work explains Black feminism as critical social theory. This theory allows for an explanation of how Black women have produced social thought to fight oppression that they have historically experienced (p. 9). Typically, Black women have had little or no opportunity to control their images. This is noted in the images of the welfare queen or the "hoochie mama" promoted in hip hop and rap music. The images of Black women in contemporary society have been linked to the popular culture. Mostly males exploit this image in their music and videos to the disdain of parents and older members of the Black community. These images are so pervasive that they no longer are a secret of the Black community but are worldwide views of Black women. There are few Black female rappers who can contradict the images that are projected, and there are limits on what males or females can project if they wish to be successful in the music industry. The question becomes whether Black women can control their images in hip hop and rap culture and music.

Collins (2000) asserts that the growing influence of television, radio, movies, CDs, and the Internet present new ways to these control images (p. 85). Within this new corporate structure, the misogyny in Black hip hop music becomes troubling. Much of the music is produced by an industry in which African American artists have little say in production on one hand and, on the other hand, Black rap music can be seen as a creative response to racism by Black urban youths who have been written off by U.S. society (Rose, 1994; Kelley, 1994, pp. 43–77, as cited in Collins, 2000). Conversely, images of Black women portrayed as sexually available "hoochies" persist in Black music videos (p. 85).

Critical to Black feminism is the responsibility of African American women to confront the controlling images promoted by institutions external to the Black community (Collins, 2000). Black women have sought to control their images through literature and intellectualism as a means of mitigating these negative images. Denial is another strategy of controlling the images of Black women. Collins exhorts that a major way to control the Black woman's image is to give them voice. This research employs Collins's conceptual framework to explain the negative images of Black women in hip hop and rap music, gain an understanding of youths' views of misogynistic lyrics in hip hop and rap music, and offer some insight as to the factors that contribute to these views through Black feminist intellectual dialogue.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection Procedures

The present study collected data at two points in time. The first wave of data was collected at a community forum on hip hop and rap music that took place on the campus of a historically Black university. At this forum, 85 surveys were collected. However, owing to incomplete data and/or forum participants' not meeting study participation criteria (i.e., initial age requirement of 13–24), only 63 surveys were valid and useable. After reviewing the completed surveys from the forum, it was found that most of the respondents were college-age students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Thus, the decision was made to narrow the age range to 18 to 24. To increase sample size, additional surveys were collected in college classrooms on the campus of the historically Black university where the community forum and first wave of data collection had taken place. This increased the sample size to 300. However, owing to incomplete data and ineligibility of respondents to participate in the study, 38 surveys were eliminated, bringing the final sample size for this study to 262.

Measures

By developing the Rap Music Attitude and Perception (RAP) Scale, Dr. Edgar Tyson (2005) sought to develop an instrument that can be utilized to measure varying attitudes of and perceptions toward rap music for the purpose of bettering communication about the music between adolescents and young adults, because, to date, there appears to be no systematic means in the empirical world of measuring the attitudes of and perceptions toward rap music among adolescents. The revised 17-item instrument contains three subscales: empowerment (EMP), which represents the notion that rap music critiques oppressive conditions in the social environment and motivates young people to better understand how to counteract those conditions (p. 64); artistic-esthetic (AE), which measures the extent to which youth appreciate the music for its beats and dance related qualities (p. 65); and violent-misogynistic (VM), which measures violent, sexist, and misogynistic images (Personal communication, 2008).

In this study, the violent-misogynistic subscale of the RAP scale was utilized to measure youths' perceptions of and attitudes toward violence and misogyny in rap music. This particular subscale contains six items that represent the perception that the content (i.e., lyrics) and culture of rap music primarily reflect violent, sexist, and misogynistic images. Each item on the scale was presented to participants utilizing a five-point Likert scale format (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree). For this subscale, scores ranged from 6 to 30, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes or the perception that the content and culture of rap music *does not* primarily reflect violent, sexist, and misogynistic images and lower scores indicating more negative attitudes or the perception that the content and culture of rap music *do* primarily reflect violent, sexist, and misogynistic images.

As reported by Tyson (2005), reliability analyses of the 25-item RAP scale yielded good internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha scores for all subscales ranging from .80 to .87 (artistic-esthetic subscale = .80; empowerment subscale = .84; violent-misogyny subscale = .87). Psychometric properties for the violent-misogyny subscale were reestablished (N = 262) in this study, yielding an acceptable Cronbach's alpha score of .74.

RESULTS

Sample Demographics

The majority of study participants were college students at either the undergraduate or graduate level (ages 18–24). More than half of the study's population ranged from 18 to 20 years of age, with 18-year-olds representing the largest portion of the sample (43.5%). Nineteen- and twenty-year-olds comprised 24.8% and 10.3% of the sample, respectively. The remainder of the sample was made up of 21- to 24-year-olds (4.6%, 6.9%, 4.2%, and 5.7%, respectively). In this study, there were 179 females (68.6%) and 82 males (31.4%). The gender ratio in this study is generally representative of the gender ratio of the university (with females being slightly over-represented) at which the data were collected (62% female and 38% male).

The majority of the study participants identified themselves as African American (84.3%). Others identified themselves as biracial (3.8%), Hispanic (1.9%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1.5%), Caucasian (.8%), Native American (.4%), or other (2.3%).

At the time of this study, 60.6% of the population was unemployed, whereas 8.8% were employed full-time and 30.5% were employed part-time. Participants also reported a wide range of majors and career interests. The career choices of participants were grouped into five broad categories: (1) medical, (2) arts and sciences, (3) professional school, (4) other/non-university major, and (5) undecided. Because the majority of participants attended the university at which the data were collected, these groupings reflect the university's categorization scheme for undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Nearly half (49%) of the participants reported that their chosen major was in the field of medicine, and nearly one-third (30.3%) reported a desire to obtain a degree from one of the various professional schools located at the university (i.e., law, social work, communications, business, engineering, pharmacy). The remainder of participants reported career interests in the arts and sciences (9.6%) and in majors that were not offered at the university (8.8%) or had not decided on their career interests (2.4%) at the time of the study. The majority of participants (42%) originated from borderline northern/southern states (i.e., Virginia, Maryland, and Washington DC), followed by 22.5% from Southern states, 18.6% from Eastern states, 12.6% from Northern states, and 4.3% from Western states.

Bivariate Analyses

LISTENING HABITS, VIOLENCE, AND MISOGYNY IN HIP HOP AND RAP MUSIC

The one-way analysis of variation (AVOVA) was utilized to examine the differences among youths who listen to rap and hip hop music for 1 hour or less a day, 2 to 3 hours a day, 4 to 5 hours a day, and 6 or more hours a day with regard to their scores on the violent-misogyny subscale. The results revealed an overall significant difference in mean scores ($F_{(3,239)} = 3.45$, $p < .05$). The results of the Bonferroni post hoc test revealed that youths who listened to rap and hip hop music for 1 hour or less a day had significantly lower scores ($\overline{X} = 15.28$) on the violent-misogyny subscale than youths who listened to rap and hip hop music for 6 hours or more a day ($\overline{X} = 17.92$). No significant differences were found between youths who listened to rap and hip hop music for 2 to 3 hours or 4 to 5 hours a day. In this study, those who listened to rap and hip hop music less frequently were more likely to have negative perceptions of and attitudes toward the music, and those who listened more frequently were more likely to have positive perceptions and attitudes.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY, VIOLENCE, AND MISOGYNY IN HIP HOP AND RAP MUSIC

An independent *t*-test was utilized to examine the difference in violent-misogyny subscale scores between those who responded "yes" and those who responded "no" to the question, "Should girls/women do anything about how hip hop and rap music make them look to society?"

The results of the test indicated a significant difference in mean scores ($t_{(df=244)} = 3.73$, $p < .05$). Results revealed that those who responded "yes" (girls/women *should* do something about how hip hop and rap music make them look to society) to the question had significantly lower mean scores on the violent-misogyny subscale ($\overline{X} = 15.45$) than those who responded "no" (girls/women *should not* do something about how hip hop and rap music make them look to society) to the question ($\overline{X} = 17.46$).

In addition, an independent *t*-test was also utilized to examine the difference in violent-misogyny subscale scores between those who responded "yes" and those who responded "no" to the question, "Should female rappers take more responsibility for how they make girls/women look in videos?"

The results of this test also indicated a significant difference in mean scores ($t_{(df=244)} = 4.40$, $p < .05$). Results revealed that those who responded "yes" (female rappers *should* take more responsibility for how they make girls/women look in videos) to the question had significantly lower mean scores (i.e., negative attitudes) on the violent-misogyny subscale ($\overline{X} = 15.38$) than those who responded "no" (female rappers *should not* take more responsibility for how they make girls/women look in videos) to the question ($\overline{X} = 17.73$).

Overall, those who responded "yes" to both questions had significantly lower mean scores, reflecting more negative perceptions and attitudes toward rap and hip hop music. Conversely, those who responded "no" to both questions had significantly higher mean scores, indicating more positive perceptions and attitudes toward rap and hip hop music.

AGE, VIOLENCE, AND MISOGYNY IN HIP HOP AND RAP MUSIC

An independent *t*-test was utilized to examine the difference between 18- to 20- and 21- to 23-year-olds with regard to their mean scores on the violent-misogyny subscale. The results of the test revealed a significant difference in mean scores ($t_{(df=244)} = 1.96$, $p = .05$). Specifically, results indicated that 18- to 20-year-olds had significantly higher mean scores on the violent-misogyny subscale ($\overline{X} = 15.95$) than did 21- to 23-year-olds ($\overline{X} = 14.87$). That is, the younger group (18- to 20-year-olds) reported significantly greater scores on the violent-misogyny subscale indicating more positive perceptions and attitudes toward rap and hip hop music than the older group (21- to 23-year-olds).

DISCUSSION

This study sought to understand perceptions of misogyny in youths ages 18 to 24 ($N = 262$) regarding hip hop and rap music. The participants were mostly African American. Though diversifying the population would yield comparative data on youths' perceptions, this study is useful in that examined the perceptions of youths in regard to their perceptions of misogyny. The impetus to study the issue had racial overtones owing to a national response to a popular radio disc jockey's negative comments about a predominately African American women's basketball team. This study can serve as an opportunity to understand how the predominately African American participants view the issue of misogyny.

The authors used the RAP Scale that was developed by Tyson (2003, 2005, and 2006). This scale measured—along with misogyny—empowerment and artistic perceptions of rap music. This study, however, focused only on those items that measured the misogynistic perceptions with this group of youth. It was the intent of the authors to understand these perceptions about misogynistic views as these perceptions would inform practitioners about concerns of youths when it came to these lyrics.

The major findings of this study were that the listening habits and age are important to consider when examining youths views of misogonistic content in hip hop and rap music. The younger the youths, the more they listened. This is important in that it appears that older youths listened less and had less-positive reactions to the misogynistic lyrics. This may imply that as youths mature, they may re-examine their opinions about hip hop and rap. This was a college-attending group, and their knowledge may also affect how they view hip hop and rap over time. Having classes or opportunities to address social issues within an educational institution may also influence the perceptions of college-age youths. Listening habits are important in understanding youths' perceptions in the portrayal of women of hip hop and rap.

Two questions on the surveys used to collect were important in this research: (1) Should girls/women do anything about how hip and rap make them look to society, and (2) should female rappers take more responsibility about how they make girls/women look in videos?

The authors used Collins's theoretical framework which states that women can control the messages about themselves through their own voices. Those who answered that girls/women should do something about negative messages also scored lower on the RAP scale, thus indicating a less-positive response to rap. Those who responded in this way perhaps feel more empowered about their ability to change the script about the misogynistic lyrics found in rap music. Those who scored higher did not think anything should be done about these lyrics. Likewise, when participants asked about the way girls/women were portrayed in videos, the participants who answered "no" scored lower on the scale. Again, this is similar to the foregoing responses. Less-positive responses to the misogynistic subscale score indicate that both men and women view the lyrics in rap as misogynistic. This is a finding that yields promise as it indicates that men and women have similar views about the content in rap. Interestingly, gender was not significant in this study. This study provides us with data to begin to plan for youths. Hip hop and rap is an important cultural phenomenon in youth culture.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Hip hop and rap influences children and youth worldwide (Iwamoto et al., 2007). They are cultural and artistic forms that resonate with youths and are more than 30 years old. Their longevity and massive appeal mean that as practitioners we cannot ignore their impact on youths. Practitioners are obligated to examine this social phenomenon as it affects the population of youths in America and around the world. They can look at the most troubling aspects and try interventions that can place this genre of music and culture in its proper perspective. It is the words, videos, and presentation of artists that concern parents and adults (i.e., teachers, service providers), as their fear is that listening to rap music and emulating certain artists' behavior will lead to youthful indiscretions.

Though the adolescent period is fraught with youthful challenges to adults or authority, managing hip hop and rap is one more area that adults must master in the rearing of their children. Service providers cannot ignore the influence of rap and hip hop either. This exploratory study indicates that the amount of time youths spend listening to rap music can influence their perceptions about it. That is, the more they listen, the more they react positively to the music. A step in the right direction is monitoring the amount of time spent listening to music, which gives youths other alternatives. This study indicates that the younger the youths, the more likely they will listen to rap. This population is college-age, and the maturity factor may have affected the findings in this study. A study looking at younger youths is needed. The opportunity to analyze the music can be useful as well. Analyzing these different genres of music will help youths place the messages in the proper context and may also assist them in developing the spoken word to address social issues of importance to them.

Of particular concern in this study were the misogynistic views promoted by hip hop and rap. If women are portrayed as being abused and symbolize persons who can be mistreated by males, this gives a troublesome message to the youths (both males and females). Both genders must understand that negative words and portrayals of women are not acceptable. Females should be empowered to give their voice to how they are portrayed and combat these words and images as well. If youths do not object to or change the script, it may be an implicit acceptance by them. According to the data in this study, both females and males feel that females can do something about these portrayals. Hip hop and rap have infiltrated the music world and, as art forms, are highly appealing, especially to youths. Unfortunately, the forms have some negativity associated with them, particularly as they relate to female and male relationships. It is the negativity that must be addressed, as it promotes gender and racial oppression, devalues females, and may promote violence between males and females. As practitioners, we cannot ignore powerful tools such as hip hop and rap to work effectively with youths and give them the voice to change and influence the message about women in society.

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