

# Influences of hip hop on today's generation: rising deviance essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



Hip-hop is a popular form of music in today's mainstream culture. In its first realm it appeared in forms of jazz as a verse style capturing the absence of melody, but has since evolved into a form of capitalizing egoism through criminal references. Therefore, deviance within youth in society is rising thanks to hip-hop music and the trends it provokes. Throughout Rap's history, artists have depicted a lifestyle of drugs and violence along with instances of drug use, aggression and sexism, which is being passed onto listeners, who are mainly young people. These young people view successful artists as major influences, and look to them as heroes. But should this generation really be looking up to artists who speak so highly of violence, misogyny, and drug use? Charis E.

Kubrin of George Washington University even goes as far as to say " Instead of music lyrics reflecting pre-existing identities, in this view, they help to organize and construct identity" (Kubrin 370). So many people are listening to music that inevitably influences a person's psychological process. The song " Juicy" by Notorious B. I. G, a father of hip-hop, specifically references the behaviors which may influence today's youth to perform in accordance to the rappers' actions mentioned in their lyrics.

For example, the song states: " I was a terror since the public school era, bathroom passes, cuttin' classes, squeezing asses, smoking blunts was a daily routine, since thirteen, a chubby ni\*\*\* on the scene". (Dr. M, how should I cite songs? ) In this verse, Notorious B. I. G. describes skipping his classes in high school by means of obtaining a legitimate pass of absence, in which he takes that opportunity to indulge in reckless things such as

smoking marijuana at a very adolescent age and pursuing women. This example of classic rap reflects the trendy music that youths of our society are not only listening to but also influences them to make the same decisions as these rappers in order to obtain success.

Rap music has a history of depicting violence. Many artists have past and/or current affiliation with gangs in which they tell the story of through their song lyrics. Becky Tatum asserts in her article about the link between rap music and violence that " Although original songs were about partying and having a ' good time', themes quickly evolved to include issues such as racism, police brutality, drug addiction, stereotyped racial roles and material deprivation. "(Tatum 340) Rap music tends to be considered the voice on the urban African American youth, which alludes to the stereotype that all rap music promotes these less appealing themes. Interestingly enough the primary consumers of rap music are from the white suburban middle class.

Some studies suggest that youths from suburban areas are attracted to the music because the ghetto [in reference to rap music] " represents a ' place of adventure, unbridled violence, erotic fantasy and/or an imagery alternative to suburban boredom'"(Tatum 341). To understand why rap music has such a bad reputation it is easiest to break the genre down into sub-genres: (1) Hardcore rap also known as Lifeline (2) commercial or soft rap (Tatum 341). Pursuit of Happiness would be considered soft rap while Easy Duz It would be Hardcore.

Breaking down even further the genre of Gangster rap as a sub category of Hardcore becomes the focus of criticism. When youths emulate the behavior depicted in song lyrics it spreads violence from the streets of the inner city to the streets of suburbia. Specific song lyrics referencing violence can be seen in NWA's release of Easy Duz It in 1988. " Because I'm a gangsta having fun; Never leave the pad without packing a gun; Hitting hard as F\*\*\*, I make you ask what was it; Boy you should have known by now, easy duz it" presents this as the day to day lifestyle which in turn listeners want to act like. During this decade topics of Rap music have progressed forward to making money, sexism and using drugs as seen perfectly in Lil' Wayne's 2008 release of P\*\*\*\* Money Weed". The chorus alone repeats the phrase " Oh yes I love her like p\*\*\*\*, money, weed", 36 times throughout the song. Topics of this song demoralize women and present them as objects to be obtained on the road to ' success' as defined by the artists' lifestyle.

Recently Kid Cudi came in to the music scene singing about topics related to drugs and sexism. His 2009 release of Pursuit of Happiness begins " Crush a bit, lil' bit, roll it up, take a hit; Feelin' lit feelin' light, 2 a. m. summer night; I don't care, hand on the wheel driving drunk I'm doin' my thang... " This verse alone promotes habitual drug use and driving under the influence which sets a bad example to impressionable youths.

Over the long history of the rap and hip-hop genres, lyrics have become more and more violent while the artists have become more successful. In reference to the song " Juicy", Notorious B. I. G. started off as being poor and a deviant youth but worked his way up to successful artist. Youths of our

society see his and many other artists' actions as the correct way to obtain success, and therefore have become more violent and felonious.

Rap music presents several themes that promote negative activities such as drug use, violence, and misogyny. Through promoting these themes, young people see them as positive actions, resulting in success of the artists that promote these subjects. Smoking marijuana and doing other drugs are common topics in the hip-hop and rap worlds. Several artists, such as the Kottonmouth Kings, use marijuana as a subject matter in almost all of their work.

For example, the song "All About the Weed" by Three 6 Mafia states: "It's all about the weed, my spirit is restless, I'm nervous with ganja, ganja business runnin' things in Cali, sore red eyes." Along with this song, countless others put marijuana and other drugs on a high pedestal, and introducing young listeners to the drug world very early. According to University of California at Berkley Researcher Denise Herd, of the School of Public Health, "Eleven percent of the biggest rap hits between 1979 and 1984 contained drug references - after 1993, 69% of rap songs contained drug references. The incidence rate of drug references in popular rap songs rose 600% during the two decades studied, and that while in early rap lyrics drug references were mostly negative, there has been an evolution towards the glamorization of drug use" (Herd 1). The appeal of drugs in our society has obviously sky rocketed with these statistics, so has the use of drugs at younger and younger ages. According to the organization Students Against Destructive Decisions' statistics, "In 2005, 9.

9% of youths ages 12-17 were current illicit drug users: 6. % used marijuana, 3. 3% used prescription drugs for non-medicinal purposes, 1. 2% used inhalants, 0.

8% used hallucinogens, and 0. 6% used cocaine. " (SADD Org. 1) Young adults are at their most impressionable age; they are trying to truly figure out who they are. In seeing how much rap and hip-hop artists romanticize the use of drugs, it is safe to presume that teens and young adults indulge in the use of drugs as a means of " fitting in" with the trends of society.

Violence is another prominent subject within rap music.

According to Kubrin, " Through the telling of the code, both in the streets and in the music, residents and rappers actively construct identities and justify the use of violence. Rap lyrics provide vivid " vocabularies of motive", which structure violent identities and justify violent conduct, providing a way for listeners to understand and appreciate violent conduct" (Kubrin 364). Violent lyrics of hip-hop discuss aggressively going against another person or group for power, status, and money. In Juelz Santana's song " Murda Murda", he raps: " My gun tucked, I gives a f\*\*\*, So, welcome to jamrock, No, welcome to my damn block, Where the slugs and cans pop, For the ones and tan rocks, Kids play in the sandbox, Other kids lay in boxes with sandtops, You can't stop this". In this verse, Santana is stating that violence is the only means of obtaining power in his neighborhood and that even though it can get extreme, violence is the only mean of obtaining a higher status. This song is an example of how violence is glamorized as power.

When one is able to inflict violence for power, then they have status. Rap music revolves around power and how one will go to great lengths in order to obtain it. Discussing violence in a song that young people are going to listen to according to the current fad of hip-hop, rap artists are transferring their aggression to their listeners and stating that in order to obtain status like they have, one must go through great lengths to obtain it. According to the experiment " Problem Behavior: Heavy Metal and Hip-Hop Style Preferences and Externalizing" conducted at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, there is a connection between problem behavior and listening to hip-hop music.

Students were first asked what their music preferences were and then were given a series of self-report questions on their responses in various situations. Their responses were then measured on a scale of one to ten, one being not violent and ten being extremely violent. In conclusion, studies found that " preferences for both heavy metal and hip-hop predicted later externalizing problem behavior" (Selfhout 441).

There is evidence for the fact that hip-hop music negatively affects young listeners and their behavior. So why aren't hip-hop artists trying to tone it down a bit? In many scenarios, rap artists aren't necessarily trying to perpetuate violence through their lyrics, but young, influential listeners still interpret the violence and corruption in negative ways. This is seen in the lyrics of Immortal Technique, an independent rapper who ties underlying tones of self-determination and benevolence into his violent, outspoken lyrics. Although his overall message is acceptance and destruction of classism, as a result his previous social status and upbringing, his lyrics

express a much more aggressive tone, as seen in one of his verses from the song "Leaving the Past": "You see the Spaniards never left, despues de Colon, And if you don't believe me you can click in Univision, I never seen so much racism in all of my life, Every program and newscast, and all of them white, Step in my way ni\*\*\*, I wouldn't wanna be ya', I burn slow like pissing drunk with gonorrhoea. In this verse, he is clearly trying to make a point about systematic racism in south America, but the message can lead youth astray with the backlash of physical threat towards the opposition. However, physical violence is not the only sort of violence used in hip-hop music; the use of misogyny towards women is also a prevalent subject used in the music industry. The use of the terms "bi\*\*\*\*\*" and "ho" are constantly brought into rap lyrics, objectifying women and making it seem alright to treat a human as something to be used. In this genre of music, artists seem to always be complaining about a woman or talk about her derogatorily, as if she is below the man.

The song "She Swallowed It" by N. W. A. states "This is a b\*\*\*\*\* who did the whole crew, And she'll let you video tape her, And if you got a gang of ni\*\*\*\*, The b\*\*\*\*\*'ll let you rape her". This lyric involving degrading sexual violence is simply an example of the many approaches artists use to demoralize women and make them appear as an object and not an individual.

In the article "The Words Have Changed but the Ideology Remains the Same: Misogynistic Lyrics in Rap Music" Terri Adams and Douglas Fuller describe the two kinds of women that rap artists seem to two catagories: b\*\*\*\*\* and hoes. "The bitch in Misogynistic rap, takes the form of a money-



hungry, scandalous, manipulating, and demanding woman. The bitch is a woman who thinks of no one but herself. The ho is illustrated as a sex object that can be abused in any form to satisfy the sexual desires of a man. The ho's entire self-image is wrapped up in doing anything for a man. "

(3SOURCE) In terms of the effects misogynistic lyrics have on young listeners, young men could see this as a point that treating women in this regard is acceptable.

Adams and Douglas state, " rap has the potential of becoming a means for defining gender relations among the youth. That is, one must consider the potential shaping force that misogyny in rap may have on how young people may view themselves and the relations between the sexes. " (3SOURCE)

Looking towards long term effects, these lyrics could have the potential to influence how society entirely views women; as selfish and mean or as things to be used for sexual pleasure.

Lyrics within rap music could potentially influence young people enough to potentially sky rocket the deviance levels in our society. And considering the amount of technology that comes to us everyday, these explicit words are reaching young adults at younger ages. An example of explicit hip-hop ideals found in young people is that of Latarian Milton, a seven year-old from Palm Beach, Florida. The young boy had stolen his grandmother's car to go joy riding and crashed into several parked cars and a sign, totaling the car and infuriating his grandmother.

Why? " I wanna do it 'cause it's fun... it's fun to do bad things...

"I wanted to do hoodrat stuff with my friends" said the young man after the incident. (YOUTUBE) Today's pop culture puts supposed "hoodrat" actions on a pedestal; if one performs bad things that many famous hip hop artists claim to do in their music, one can be just as powerful. If these "fun and bad things" include drug use, violence on all levels, mistreatment of women, and totaling your Grandmother's car at seven years old, why is rap music so popular? The glamorous lives that these rap stars lead and the power they hold. Young people who enjoy their work view the artists' lyrics as a behavioral influencer.

Because they see success within the lyrics of rich and famous people, the misconception is made that if the action is mirrored, one is able to gain success and power through drugs, violence, and misogyny. If Notorious B. I. G was able to go from "a terror since the public school era" to rich and famous hip-hop artist through acting deviantly, young people seem to think they can go on the same path.