

“They Can’t Take Away the Light”: Hip-Hop Culture and Black Youth’s Racial Resistance

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Abstract

This study examined associations between Black youth’s engagement with hip-hop culture and their sociopolitical development (SPD) (e.g., critical social analysis, critical agency, and anti-racist activism). Participants included 499 Black adolescents recruited from across the United States through an online survey panel. Findings from regression analysis revealed the differential effects of rap media (music and music videos) and hip-hop media (e.g., blogs, video shows, radio) on youth’s SPD. Black youth who consumed more hip-hop media and who interacted with artists on social media had more agency to address racism and reported engaging in more racial-justice activism. The frequency of youth’s rap media usage was not consistently related to youth’s SPD. However, youth’s perceptions of rap (e.g., rap is empowering or misogynistic) were found to be directly associated with indicators of SPD. These findings provide insight into the potential influence of hip-hop culture beyond music on youth’s racial-justice beliefs and actions.

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“ . . . Slavemaster take our names, 5-0 take the shot, and young souls take the blame, man, but they can’t take away the light.”

Big Sean—The Light

Grounded in the principles of peace, love, unity, and fun, hip-hop emerged in the 1970s in the Bronx, New York, as a cultural phenomenon that gave rise to rap music, breakdancing, and other forms of artistic expression. In the context of economic deprivation and racism, Black youth have used and continue to use hip-hop as a tool for racial resistance and resilience that allows them to express themselves authentically, promote cultural pride, and critique the social ramifications of structural inequity (e.g., addiction, police brutality, violence) (Akom, 2009; Dyson, 2004; Rose, 1994). As hip-hop has grown from a local movement to a global phenomenon, many hip-hop figures remain connected to the culture’s roots and use their music and platform to advocate for racial justice. Rapper Kendrick Lamar’s song “Alright” became an unofficial anthem for the Black Lives Matter movement that activists chanted as they protested police harassment and brutality (Limbong, 2019). Hip-hop radio shows are a quintessential space for political candidates to discuss their racial platforms relevant to Black communities (Radford & Franco, 2019). Yet, despite hip-hop’s social justice roots, limited empirical work has comprehensively examined hip-hop’s sociopolitical influence on its creators and some of its biggest consumers—Black youth.

The present study uses a strength-based approach to examine how Black youth’s engagement with and perceptions of hip-hop relate to their racial resistance, defined in this study as youth’s social awareness and actions to contest racism. We contextualize racial resistance in critical sociopolitical development theory (SPD), which describes the process by which individuals become aware of and respond to sociopolitical systems that shape privilege and marginalization.

Sociopolitical Development

Critical SPD includes the development of *critical social analysis* (the ability to analyze social systems that produce inequality), *critical agency* (motivation and belief in one’s ability to make change), and *critical sociopolitical*

action (behaviors aimed at transforming biased social structures and promoting justice) (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016; Watts et al., 2003). Racially marginalized youth's sociopolitical action can take many forms, including conventional participation geared toward social influence (e.g., joining political parties, voting) and activism geared toward social transformation (e.g., protesting, community organizing) (Anyiwo et al., 2020). In this study, we focus on examining Black youth's activism as an indicator of their sociopolitical action.

SPD is informed by ecological contexts (Watts et al., 2003) with parents, peers, and adult community members as important socialization agents for youth (Diemer, 2012; Ginwright, 2007). However, adolescents engage with mass media for more extended periods than they spend with their parents and in school (Steele & Brown, 1995). Thus, adolescents may be increasingly likely to draw from media and popular culture to support the development of their cultural, ideological, and societal beliefs (Miranda et al., 2015). Studies have shown that youth media use is associated with higher political awareness and activism (Lee et al., 2013; Pasek et al., 2006). This study investigates the relations between youth's engagement with hip-hop culture and their SPD.

Hip-Hop Culture and Empowering Themes

Hip-hop culture is a "way of life" that includes music, dress, aesthetics, and language (Alridge & Stewart, 2005; Bridges, 2011; Prier & Beachum, 2008). Rap music is the most mainstream element of the culture (Alridge & Stewart, 2005; Bridges, 2011; Prier & Beachum, 2008; Rose, 1994). Hereinafter, we use *rap media* to describe the music products of hip-hop culture (e.g., rap music and rap music videos), *hip-hop media* to discuss other elements of hip-hop culture reflected in media (e.g., blogs, social media, radio shows), and *hip-hop culture* as an umbrella term for both rap and hip-hop media.

Hip-hop culture can be highly influential in informing youth's worldviews and behaviors (Alridge & Stewart, 2005; Bridges, 2011). Rap is the most popular music genre among Black adolescents, with high school youth reporting consuming 27 hours of rap media weekly and showing higher identification with rap artists than with artists of other genres (Greenberg & Mastro, 2008; Tyson et al., 2012; Ward et al., 2010). In the Individual and Collective Empowerment (ICE) framework, Travis (2013) argues that rap music contains themes that can promote youth's *collective empowerment* (cultural pride and behaviors to improve conditions in their communities). Hence, educators and scholars have developed pedagogies and interventions that use hip-hop music to promote youth's cultural knowledge, raise their

awareness about racism, and teach them strategies for social justice (Akom, 2009; Graves et al., 2020; Prier & Beachum, 2008; Rashid, 2016; Stovall, 2006). Other than interventions, there are few empirical investigations of the empowering impact of hip-hop. However, one study found a positive association between rap music video consumption and collective racial self-esteem among Black college youth (Dixon et al., 2009).

Youth as Critical Consumers of Hip-Hop Culture

Empowerment themes do not reflect the entirety of hip-hop culture. Some rappers remain silent about sociopolitical issues or show opposition to participating in social justice movements (Pearce, 2016). Content analyses of rap media have identified themes that promote misogyny (e.g., shaming and assault of women) (Armstrong, 2001; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009), violence (Jones, 1997; Kubrin, 2005), and sexual objectification (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011). Such illicit content is related to maladaptive outcomes for Black youth (e.g., Peterson et al., 2007). Rap is complex and can simultaneously include messages that promote empowerment (e.g., contains a social analysis of conditions that impact the Black community and strategies for youth to overcome oppression) and illicit content (e.g., promote violence and misogyny) (Travis, 2013; Tyson, 2005). However, most studies that examine Black youth's rap media consumption outside of interventions, examine the negative impact of overtly violent or misogynistic rap media.

The Adolescent Media Practice Model describes the process by which youth interact with media in their everyday lives (Steele & Brown, 1995). Core to this theory is that youth's lived experiences—described as their cultural background, ideological beliefs, and life experiences—shape how they select, interact with, and apply content in media to their identities and beliefs. Given that young people are exposed to rap that can have both empowering and illicit content, the way they perceive and make meaning of the content in hip-hop may have a bearing on the impact that hip-hop has on their beliefs and behaviors.

The Present Study

This study aims to examine whether Black youth's consumption of hip-hop culture is associated with their SPD. Although hip-hop is multifaceted, most empirical work focuses on one domain—rap media. Our study employs a multimodal approach in examining the impact of hip-hop on Black youth's SPD by assessing hip-hop culture as reflected in rap (e.g., music and music videos) and hip-hop media (blogs, social media, radio shows) (e.g., Turner, 2012). Consistent with the ICE framework (Travis, 2013) and applied work

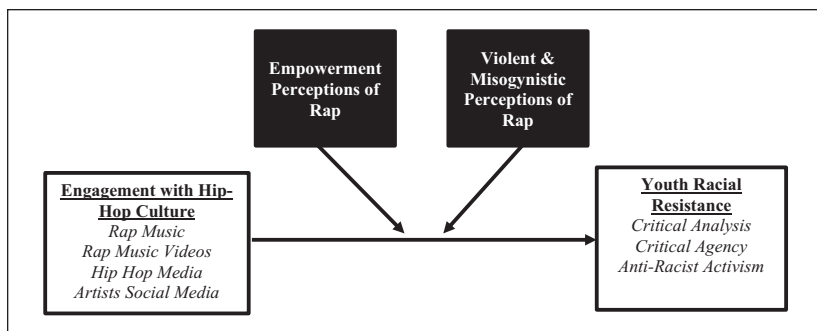


Figure 1. Conceptual model of hypothesized relations between hip hop culture, perceptions of hip hop, and youth racial resistance.

that uses hip-hop to facilitate the SPD of Black youth, we anticipate Black youth's engagement with hip-hop culture will be positively associated with each aspect of SPD.

The second aim of the study is to examine whether youth's perceptions of rap music moderates the associations between rap media consumption and SPD (see Figure 1). In line with the Adolescent Media Practice Model (Steele & Brown, 1995), youth's beliefs that rap music is empowering are likely central to their ability to extract empowering messages that promote their SPD. For that reason, we expect that the associations between the consumption of rap media and SPD will be stronger for youth who believe rap is empowering. As an exploratory question, we also examine whether youth's perceptions that rap is primarily violent and misogynistic acts as a moderator in the associations between rap media and SPD. The moderation effect of violent-misogynistic perceptions might go in either direction. Youth who believe that rap is violent-misogynistic may listen to or focus on illicit content in rap and, thus, be less likely to extract empowering themes that could facilitate their SPD. However, violent-misogynistic perceptions may also reflect youth's ability to critique illicit content in hip-hop and may enhance their SPD by increasing their awareness that such content reflects the oppressive conditions that impact Black communities.

Methods

Participants

Participants included 500 adolescents in the United States, ages 13 to 17 ($M = 14.97$, $SD = 1.46$) who self-identified as Black. Most participants identified as female (61.6%) or male (37.2%). A minority of participants identified

as transgender, non-binary, or other (0.8%) or did not report their gender (0.4%). Nearly all youth identified as African American (88.0%), followed by Caribbean American (3.4%), Afro-Latino (2.8%), Multicultural (2.8%), African (2.2%), and other (0.8%). Adolescents were recruited from across the United States, with a majority from the South (52%), followed by the Midwest (15.4%), Northeast (14.2%), West (7.2%), and unreported (11.2%). A little over a third of participants described living in an urban context (37.0%), another third lived in suburbs (34.8%), and the final third lived in rural context (27.4%); a minority of participants did not report their locale (0.8%). Given that our participants were youth under 18 and were not socially or economically independent, we used guardian education as a proxy for SES (Diemer et al., 2019). On average, youth reported their guardian(s) had attended “some college.” We excluded one participant from analysis because of out-of-bounds data. The final sample included 499 participants.

Data Collection

Adolescents were recruited in 2018 through Qualtrics Panels for a broader study examining Black youth’s sociopolitical beliefs and behaviors. Qualtrics recruits participants using multiple methods, including market research panels, social media, and campaigns. Parents received an invitation for their child’s participation and provided parental consent. Adolescents who provided assent were permitted to complete the survey and were compensated through Qualtrics using awards like cash or gift cards. Data collection occurred over 2 months. The survey took about 30 minutes to complete, and items were randomized to prevent any bias associated with the survey question order. Three attention checks were added to the survey to ensure data quality. Participants were dropped from the survey if they answered two or more attention checks incorrectly.

Measures

Rap media consumption. Four items assessed participants’ rap media consumption. Participants reported the number of hours they listen to music and watch music videos on weekdays and weekends. A variable for rap music consumption and a variable for rap music video consumption was computed using a composite of their weekday and weekend scores.

Hip-hop media consumption. Two approaches were used to assess participants’ consumption of hip-hop media. First, four items assessed how frequently participants watch or listen to popular hip-hop shows (e.g., The Breakfast Club,

Sway in the Morning, DJ Vlad) and visit hip-hop blogs and websites (e.g., XXLmag.com, thesource.com, allhiphop.com). Second, participants responded to six items assessing how frequently they engage with hip-hop artists through social media. For example, “How often do you visit hip-hop artist’s social media profiles (e.g., Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook)?” Each hip-hop media consumption assessment used a 6-point scale ranging from Never (1) to Daily (6).

Perceptions of rap music. We used two subscales to examine youth perceptions of rap music (Empowerment and Violent-Misogynistic) from the Rap Music Attitude and Perception Scale (RAP; Tyson, 2005). Participants rated statements about rap using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The Empowerment subscale has 11 items that measure perceptions that rap music critiques and motivates people to counteract oppression (e.g., “Rap music expresses legitimate frustration with social conditions”). The Violent-Misogynistic subscale has nine items that measure perceptions that rap is dominated by violence and misogyny (e.g., “Most rap music glorifies drugs and violence”). Items worded negatively were reverse coded such that higher scores indicated a stronger endorsement of empowerment or violent-misogynistic themes. The RAP scale was developed and validated in a college student sample (64.5% Caucasian, 31.5% Black, 4% other). Items loaded onto three factors: Empowerment ($\alpha = .90$), Violent-Misogynistic ($\alpha = .89$), and Artistic-Esthetic ($\alpha = .87$) (Tyson, 2005). Only the empowerment and violent-misogynistic subscales were used for this study. In a study with Black and Latino adolescents, the Empowerment ($\alpha = .84$) and Violent-Misogynistic ($\alpha = .87$) subscales had good reliability (Tyson et al., 2012). In this study, both Empowerment ($\alpha = .91$) and Violent-Misogynistic ($\alpha = .90$) subscales showed evidence of good internal consistency.

Critical social analysis. Three items from the 8-item Critical Reflection: Perceived Inequality subscale from the Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS) were used to assess critical analysis of racial inequality (e.g., “Certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get a good education.”) (Diemer et al., 2017). The full scale includes items related to gender and poverty, but we used only the three items that focused on race. Participants reported their beliefs about inequity on a 6-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The CCS was initially assessed in a sample of 326 youth (average age 15.5), a majority of whom identified as Black/African American and demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .89$). In the present study, this measure showed evidence of good internal consistency ($\alpha = .85$).

Critical agency. The critical agency subscale from the Measure of Adolescent Critical Consciousness (MAAC; McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016) was used to measure critical agency. This scale (six items) measures adolescents' belief that they can make a difference in their community and their motivation to do so using a 4-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree). A sample item is "I am motivated to try to end racism and discrimination." The MAAC was developed in a sample of Latino youth to examine race-related critical consciousness. In the initial study (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016), the scale had good reliability ($\alpha = .80$). Similarly, in this study, the scale showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = .89$).

Anti-racist activism. Activism was assessed through the Political Change Action subscale from the Anti-Racist Social Action Scale (ARSAS) (Aldana et al., 2019). The ARSAS, originally consisting of 22 items, was developed in partnership with youth to examine the behaviors that youth engage in to address racism in their daily lives. The scale's factor structure was assessed in a racially diverse sample of 384 youth (average age 17) (Aldana et al., 2019). The Political Change Action subscale had moderate internal consistency ($\alpha = .66$). In the original study, youth indicated yes or no to whether they participated in behaviors such as, "Attended a protest on an issue related to race, ethnicity, discrimination and/or segregation," in the last year. In the present study, we sought to assess the frequency of youth's activism. Thus, youth used a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from never to very frequently) with good internal consistency ($\alpha = .94$).

Data Analysis

We conducted three multiple linear regression analyses in SPSS v25 to examine the relations between hip-hop culture, rap perceptions, and SPD indicators. The first step included control variables (gender, parent's education, social media usage). We had a small population of transgender, non-binary, or other gender identification youth in our sample ($n=6$) and consequently could not account for these youth in our gender variable due to insufficient power; thus, gender was coded as 1 for female and 0 for male. The second step added main effects (rap music, rap music videos, hip-hop media, interaction with hip-hop artists). In the third step, the moderators (empowerment perceptions, violent-misogynistic perceptions) were added. The final step included the interactions between rap music and music videos and rap perceptions. We used listwise deletion, as missing data was minimal (0%–2.2%) and unlikely to bias the analyses (Bennett, 2001). To assess for multicollinearity, we calculated variance inflation factors (VIF). All of the

VIFs were under 10 indicating no evidence of severe multicollinearity (Midi & Bagheri, 2010).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Participants reported listening to about 4.91 hours of rap music and watching about 3.53 hours of rap music videos daily. Most youth (87.9%) reported reading, watching, or listening to hip-hop media. On average, participants described using these forms of media “a few times a year.” Most participants (85.5%) also reported following and/or interacting with hip-hop artists on social media accounts and interacting with these artists “a few times a year” (see Table 1 for descriptive findings). A paired sample *t*-test analysis revealed youth were more likely to view rap as empowering ($M=3.47$, $SD=0.80$) rather than violent-misogynistic ($M=3.25$, $SD=0.83$); $t(489)=5.03$, $p<.001$. In general, youth in this study “slightly agreed” with statements assessing their critical analysis of racial inequity and “agreed” with statements assessing their critical agency toward racial injustice. Most youth (75.3%) reported engaging in anti-racist activism in the last year. However, on average, they reported “rarely” engaging in activism.

Table 2 includes the results of the correlation analysis across key study variables. All indicators of youth’s rap/hip-hop media consumption were moderately positively correlated ($r=.32-.38$). Listening to rap music and watching rap music videos was positively associated with empowering perceptions of rap but unrelated to violent-misogynistic perceptions. Consuming hip-hop media and interacting with hip-hop artists on social media were positively associated with violent-misogynistic perceptions. Empowering perceptions were positively correlated with violent-misogynistic perceptions.

Regression Analyses

Critical social analysis. Model one in the regression predicting critical social analysis was significant ($F(3, 457)=3.50$, $p<.05$). Social media usage, but not gender or guardian education, was positively associated with critical social analysis. In model two, hip-hop media was positively associated with Black youth’s critical social analysis of racial inequity. However, none of the other hip-hop culture variables were significantly associated with youth’s critical social analysis. The addition of rap perceptions in model three contributed to a significant increase of 6% in the variation explained in critical social analysis. Both violent-misogynistic and empowering perceptions were

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Key Study Variables ($n = 499$).

Measure	Mean	SD	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Kurtosis	Alpha
Rap music	4.91	5.02	3.50	0	24	1.79	3.33	—
Rap music video	3.53	4.52	2.00	0	24	2.25	5.86	—
Hip-hop artists social media	3.06	1.52	3.00	1	6	0.24	-1.01	.92
Hip-hop media	2.99	1.44	3.00	1	6	0.37	-0.77	.85
Empowering rap perceptions	3.46	0.80	3.45	1	5	-0.49	0.92	.91
Violent-misogynistic rap perceptions	3.25	0.83	3.22	1	5	-0.40	0.54	.90
Critical social analysis	3.68	1.50	4.00	1	6	-0.26	-0.83	.85
Critical agency	3.12	0.67	3.14	1	4	-0.90	1.20	.89
Anti-racist activism	2.06	1.10	1.69	1	5	0.86	-0.36	.94
Daily social media usage	6.74	5.49	5.00	0	24	1.12	0.79	—

Table 2. Pearson Correlations Across Key Study Variables and Control Variables.

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Rap music	—											
2. Rap music video	.77***	—										
3. Hip-hop artists social media	.32***	.34***	—									
4. Hip-hop media	.34***	.38***	.79***	—								
5. Empowering perceptions	.11*	.12**	.49***	.48***	—							
6. Violent-misogynistic perceptions	.03	.01	.23***	.22***	.34***	—						
7. Critical agency	-.04	-.06	.21***	.20***	.41***	.21***	—					
8. Anti-racist activism	.22***	.30***	.46***	.45***	.29***	.26***	.10*	—				
9. Critical social analysis	-.03	-.04	.19***	.20***	.28***	.26***	.19***	.15***	—			
10. Daily social media usage	.47***	.38***	.20***	.18***	.13**	.07	.01	.12**	.13**	—		
11. Guardians' education	-.12**	-.13**	-.07	-.06	.03	-.01	.16***	-.05	.06	-.01	—	
12. Gender	.03	-.01	-.04	-.04	-.03	.08	.00	-.02	-.07	.12*	-.03	—

Note. Gender was coded as 1 for female and 0 for male. Bolded correlations are significant.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

positively associated with critical social analysis. The addition of interactions between rap and rap perceptions in model 4 did not increase the variance explained in critical social analysis. None of the interactions between rap and rap perceptions were significant (see Table 3 for all regression results).

Critical agency. Model one, which included the control variables, was statistically significant ($F(3,458)=3.37, p<.05$). Youth who had guardians with higher education had higher critical agency. Gender and social media usage were not associated with critical agency. The addition of the hip-hop variables in model two contributed to a significant increase of 8% in variance explained in critical agency. Rap media variables were not associated with critical agency. However, hip-hop media and hip-hop artists' social media were positively associated with critical agency. Model three, which included rap music perceptions, contributed to a significant increase of 13% of the variance explained in critical agency. Youth who had more empowering perceptions had higher critical agency. However, violent-misogynistic perceptions were not significantly related to critical agency. The interactions between rap and rap perceptions in model four did not increase the variance explained in critical agency; none of the interaction effects were significant.

Anti-racist activism. Model one in the regression predicting activism was statistically significant ($F(3, 455)=3.04, p<.05$). Social media usage was positively associated with youth activism. However, gender and guardian's education were not associated. The addition of the hip-hop variables in model two contributed to a significant increase of 25% in variation explained in activism. Rap music video consumption was positively associated with activism. However, rap music was not associated. Participants' usage of hip-hop media and hip-hop artists' interactions on social media were positively associated with activism. Model three, which included rap music perceptions, contributed to 3% of the variance explained in activism. Violent-misogynistic perceptions were positively associated with activism, but empowering perceptions were not. The addition of interactions between rap and rap perceptions in model 4 did not increase the variance explained in traditional action. None of the interactions between rap and rap perceptions were statistically significant.

Discussion

This study investigated the association between Black youth's consumption of and perceptions toward hip-hop culture and their racial resistance as indicated by their SPD. We anticipated that youth who consumed more rap media

Table 3. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Hip-Hop Predicting Sociopolitical Development.

Variable	Critical social analysis				Critical agency				Anti-racist activism			
	β	B	SE	95% CI	β	B	SE	95% CI	β	B	SE	95% CI
Step 1												
Gender	-.08	-.023	0.14	[-0.51, 0.05]	-.01	-.002	0.06	[-.14, .11]	-.05	-.010	0.11	[-0.31, 0.11]
Guardians' education	.05	0.05	0.05	[-0.04, 0.14]	.15***	0.06	0.02	[.02, .10]	-.05	-.004	0.04	[-0.11, 0.03]
Social media	.13**	0.04	0.01	[0.01, 0.06]	.02	0.00	0.01	[-.01, .01]	.13**	0.03	0.01	[0.01, 0.04]
R ²	.02*				.02*				.02*			
Step 2												
Rap music	-.09	-.03	0.02	[-0.07, 0.02]	-.03	0.00	0.01	[-.02, .02]	-.08	-.002	0.02	[-0.05, 0.01]
Rap music videos	-.11	-.04	0.03	[-0.09, 0.01]	-.12	-.002	0.01	[-.04, .00]	.23***	0.06	0.02	[0.02, 0.09]
Hip-hop artists social media	.09	0.09	0.07	[-0.06, 0.23]	.18*	0.08	0.03	[.02, .14]	.29***	0.22	0.05	[0.12, 0.31]
Hip-hop media	.17*	0.18	0.08	[0.03, 0.33]	.15*	0.07	0.03	[.00, .13]	.17**	0.13	0.05	[0.03, 0.23]
R ²	.08***				.10***				.27***			
R ² Δ	.06***				.08***				.25***			

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Variable	Critical social analysis				Critical agency				Anti-racist activism			
	β	B	SE	95% CI	β	B	SE	95% CI	β	B	SE	95% CI
Step 3												
Violent-misogynistic perception (VM)	.17***	0.32	0.09	[0.15, 0.49]	.08	0.06	0.04	[-0.1, .13]	.17***	0.23	0.06	[0.11, 0.34]
Empowering perceptions (EMP)	.15**	0.29	0.10	[0.09, 0.49]	.39***	0.32	0.04	[.24, .40]	.02	0.02	0.07	[-0.11, 0.15]
R ²	.14***				.23***				.29***			
R ² Δ	.06**				.13***				.03***			
Step 4												
Rap music $\times$ EMP	-.12	-0.04	0.03	[-0.11, 0.02]	.00	0.00	0.01	[-0.03, .03]	-.13	-0.04	0.02	[-0.08, 0.01]
Rap music $\times$ VMP	.06	0.02	0.04	[-0.05, 0.09]	.01	0.00	0.01	[-0.03, .03]	.07	0.02	0.02	[-0.03, 0.07]
Rap music videos $\times$ EMP	-.06	-0.02	0.04	[-0.09, 0.05]	.07	0.01	0.02	[-0.02, .04]	.07	0.02	0.03	[-0.03, 0.07]
Rap music videos $\times$ VMP	.12	0.04	0.04	[-0.03, 0.12]	-.13	-0.02	0.02	[-0.05, .01]	-.03	-0.01	0.03	[-0.06, 0.04]
R ²	.16***				.24***				.30***			
R ² Δ	.02				.01				.01			

Note. Gender was coded as 1 for female and 0 for male. Predictor variables were centered on the mean. Values in bold were statistically significant.
 * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

(rap music and rap music videos) would have more advanced SPD (e.g., higher analysis, agency, and activism). These hypotheses were partially supported. Rap music was not associated with youth's SPD. Rap music video usage was also not associated with youth's critical social analysis or agency but was positively associated with activism. These findings suggest rap music video content may not relate to youth's cognitions about injustice (e.g., social analysis and agency). Still, youth may be inspired by such content to engage in activism to promote social change in their communities. This finding is consistent with a recent study that found music videos were more influential than music in promoting socially-conscious themes (Bowman et al., 2018).

Hip-hop is a cultural form that extends beyond rap music, yet limited work examines the impact of hip-hop outside of music. We examined the relations between hip-hop culture and youth's SPD. We examined hip hop culture as reflected in hip-hop websites, podcasts, radio/video shows, and hip-hop artists' social media accounts. Our hypothesis was supported. Youth consuming more hip-hop media had a higher awareness of racial inequity, a greater sense of agency in their ability to address racism and engaged in more anti-racist activism. Immersion in hip-hop through media outlets likely increases youth's exposure to hip-hop artists' sociopolitical beliefs and actions. Hip-hop artists and media figures use their social standing to discuss critical issues that impact Black communities and promote Black engagement in the broader political process (Poston et al., 2016). Hip-hop radio/video show hosts have been intentional about interviewing political candidates, such as Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and more recently Kamala Harris and Corey Booker, to inform their audience about candidates' political platforms and to interrogate candidates' intentions for advancing the needs of the Black community (Radford & Franco, 2019). Research indicates that political socialization plays a significant role in youth's sociopolitical awareness and activism (e.g., Diemer, 2012). Youth's consumption of political content in hip-hop media likely serves as a form of political and racial socialization that motivates youth to engage in action to dismantle racism (Anyiwo et al., 2018a).

Our study also found that youth's interaction with hip-hop artists' social media was positively associated with critical agency and activism. Hip-hop artists use social media as a tool to promote social justice (Porfilio et al., 2013). Many hip-hop artists have been particularly vocal about injustice in policing (e.g., racial profiling and police shootings) and about disparities in incarceration. For example, rap mogul Jay Z and superstar Meek Mill recently helped launch a criminal justice reform organization focused on reducing bias in parole and probation sentences (France, 2019). Since Black youth show strong identification with hip-hop artists, such artists may serve as role

models who can motivate youth to engage in action to address racial issues in their communities and broader society (Ward et al., 2010).

Contrary to our hypothesis, interaction with hip-hop artists on social media was not associated with critical social analysis. However, youth who more frequently used social media generally reported higher critical social analysis than youth who used social media less. These findings provoke a need to investigate the types of sociopolitical messages hip-hop artists post on social media to understand their potential impact on Black youth. For example, suppose artists discuss their participation in activism or send messages to promote activism. Those messages may fuel the motivation and confidence for youth to resist injustice. However, they may not support youth's ability to deeply analyze and understand the structural factors that shape inequity.

Another goal of this study was to examine the impact of youth's perceptions about rap music on their SPD. In line with the Adolescent Media Practice Model (Steele & Brown, 1995), which suggests youth's ideologies can influence how they interpret media, we anticipated that youth who perceive rap as empowering would have more advanced SPD. Our hypothesis was partially supported. Youth's perception of hip-hop as empowering was positively associated with critical social analysis and agency but was not associated with their actual participation in activism. Empowering perceptions were not a significant moderator between rap music media and SPD. Hip hop interventions often use empowering content to facilitate youth's critical analysis and agency (e.g., Akom, 2009; Rashid, 2016; Stovall, 2006). However, youth often need mentorship and supportive opportunities to engage in action (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Thus, while viewing rap as empowering may support their ability to identify racial inequality and motivation to address social issues, youth may need support in translating that motivation into action.

In addition to empowering themes, rap music contains violent and misogynistic content that reflects the ramifications of intersecting systems of oppression (Prier & Beachum, 2008). As an exploratory question, we examined whether youth's perceptions of rap as violent and misogynistic were associated with their SPD. We found that violent/misogynistic perceptions were positively associated with multiple indicators of youth's SPD. Youth who perceived rap as primarily violent and misogynistic had higher critical analysis of race, and engaged in more anti-racist activism. Youth's violent/misogynistic perceptions of rap may reinforce their alertness to how rap reflects challenging social conditions in Black communities, thereby facilitating their activism. Youth with violent/misogynistic perceptions of rap were also more likely to hold empowering perceptions. These findings reinforce

the idea that youth can simultaneously extract empowering and violent/misogynistic themes from rap that may promote critical agency and engagement in actions aimed toward community and social transformation (Travis, 2013).

Limitations

Our measurement of hip-hop culture focused on the frequency of youth's consumption of rap and hip-hop media but did not assess whether the content in these media reflected sociopolitical and empowering themes. This study also did not assess youth's intentions in their consumption of hip-hop culture. Youth may use media with the intention of self-socialization (Arnett, 1995) or may use media for leisure. Based on the measurements used in this study, it is unclear whether youth actively sought out hip-hop to become socially aware and empowered or if these outcomes are unintended byproducts of their hip-hop usage. Qualitative inquiry can elucidate the intentions behind youth's engagement with hip-hop culture, provide context to youth's perceptions of rap, and clarify how they negotiate the complex content in hip-hop to inform their worldviews and behaviors.

Although this study's findings establish associations between hip-hop culture and youth's SPD, given the cross-sectional design, the findings do not provide clarity on the directionality of association. In line with hip-hop pedagogical theories (Akom, 2009; Prier & Beachum, 2008; Stovall, 2006) and ICE Framework (Travis, 2013), we hypothesized that hip-hop culture promotes youth's SPD. However, youth with a more advanced SPD may also be more likely to seek out hip-hop media with sociopolitical themes that resonate with their identities. Similarly, youths' SPD may inform how they perceive the content in rap music. A longitudinal design would elucidate the temporal relations between youth's consumption of hip-hop culture and their SPD and allow for the investigation of bidirectional associations.

Implications and Future Directions

This work's findings underpin the importance of taking a holistic approach in examining the impact of hip-hop on youth. Hip-hop surpasses music's boundaries (Alridge & Stewart, 2005; Bridges, 2011; Prier & Beachum, 2008; Travis, 2013). However, most studies examining the influence of hip-hop focus solely on rap music or music videos. In this study, youth's engagement with hip-hop culture outside of music had stronger implications for their SPD than music alone. The majority of youth in this study (85.5%) reported using hip-hop media and following, reposting, or contacting hip-hop artists on

social media. More empirical work should examine the implications of Black youth's engagement in broader hip-hop culture. Though many hip-hop interventions focus on the analysis or creation of music, this study's findings suggest hip hop artists' social media usage and media coverage outside of their music may have a stronger effect on youth's SPD than rap media. Thus, clinicians and interventionists who use hip-hop in therapy or who facilitate hip-hop pedagogy should consider integrating content outside of the music (e.g., radio shows, hip-hop talk shows, websites, podcasts) into their curriculum and/or interventions.

Findings also reinforce the idea that youth are critical listeners of rap music. Youth in this study were able to identify both the empowering and violent/misogynistic themes in rap music, which had implications for their SPD. While much scholarly attention has been given to analyzing violent/misogynistic themes in rap music, limited work has examined empowering themes (Travis, 2013). A necessary future direction of this work would be to systematically examine the prevalence of themes in rap music and hip-hop media that promotes social awareness about racism and activism. Such analysis can provide insight into how much exposure youth get to sociopolitical themes via their hip-hop culture engagement.

We examined the direct associations between youth perceptions and their outcomes, but future work would benefit from a person-centered approach to examining rap perceptions. Person-centered approaches, which allow for the analysis of the patterns of variables across individuals, have been identified as an impactful quantitative tool to identify the processes that allow youth to overcome and dismantle racism (Neblett et al., 2016). Examining youth's rap perceptions concurrently may elucidate the collective impact of perceptions on youth's SPD and other outcomes. For example, youth who strongly believe rap is both empowering and violent/misogynistic may have different outcomes than youth who believe rap is violent/misogynistic but not empowering or that rap is empowering but not violent/misogynistic. A person-centered approach can provide a holistic understanding of youth's SPD, which could shape the goals of media literacy and hip-hop interventions.

Youth's lived experiences can shape how they select, interpret, and integrate content from media (Steele & Brown, 1995). While we did not find differences in youth's violent/misogynistic perceptions by gender in our study, future work can use qualitative inquiry to elucidate how youth who identify as girls, gender-nonconforming, or LGBTQ interpret and negotiate misogyny and homophobia in rap media. Context is also likely to shape Black youth's sociopolitical experiences and how they engage with hip-hop, particularly because regional affiliation has played a historically role in shaping musical style and allegiance in hip-hop (Perry, 2004). Future work should

examine whether youth who live in different regions or types of communities (e.g., rural, urban, suburban) are influenced differently by hip-hop culture.

Another future direction would be an examination of the impact of Black popular cultural figures and Black-oriented media outside of hip hop in promoting youth's SPD. There is evidence that Black youth draw on Black-oriented television, athletes, and artists to inform their racial-gendered beliefs about Black women (Anyiwo et al., 2018b) and their critical social analysis of how Black masculinity tropes shape Black men's marginalization (Goodwill et al., 2019). Thus, youth's analysis of the behaviors and treatment of prominent social figures may inform their perspectives of social inequity in society and may bolster them into action. Work in this area can be useful in expanding the scope of interventions used to promote Black youth's SPD.

Conclusion

Despite hip-hop's roots in political and cultural resistance, limited work outside of interventions has examined the adaptive outcomes associated with youth's consumption of hip-hop (Tyson et al., 2012). This study highlights the significance of hip-hop culture as a context for Black youth's SPD. The findings demonstrate that hip-hop popular culture figures and media content can play a significant role in youth's beliefs that they can make change and their participation in behaviors to dismantle racism. Hip-hop culture should serve as a rich context for future investigations of Black youth SPD as these youth strive to transform their communities and promote racial justice.

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