

CHAPTER 20

*Multiculturalism and Music Videos**Effects on the Socioemotional
Development of Children and Adolescents*

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An entertainment favorite among adolescents and young adults, music videos became interwoven into the thread of American youth culture with the launching of MTV in 1981 (Aufderheide, 1986; Sun & Lull, 1986). The sheer popularity of the channel, which prominently featured music videos as well as entertainment news and other musically oriented programming, spawned several cable networks, including VH1, Black Entertainment Television (BET), Country Music Television (CMT), and MTV2. Over 25 years later, the mass appeal of music videos remains strong, as networks continue to proliferate and music videos become more easily accessible to the viewing public.

Given the rapid spread of music videos as a relatively newer form of media and their distinct influence on popular youth culture, questions arise concerning their role in

teaching young people about culture, race, and ethnicity. To what extent are members of diverse ethnic and cultural groups represented? Perhaps more importantly, for those who are represented, what types of portrayals and messages are provided? Although created to promote songs, music videos are likely to do much more than that. Through their dynamic visual imagery, storytelling features, and appealing artists, they also provide messages about the roles and characteristics of individual peoples, ethnic groups, and cultures. Because American popular music stretches across demographic groups and across nations, parents and researchers are concerned with their racial/ethnic socialization function. Accordingly, in this chapter, we first review empirical analyses addressing the content of music videos, summarizing what little is known about the racial and ethnic makeup of music video

characters and artists, and also considering the intersections of race/ethnicity and gender. We continue by discussing literature concerning effects of music video viewing on American youth of color. In our third section, we summarize existing literature on how music video viewing shapes White students' conceptions of race and ethnicity. We conclude with a discussion of future research directions.

BACKGROUND: YOUTH EXPOSURE LEVELS AND VIDEO VIEWING HABITS

Data indicate that music video networks find their primary audience within children, adolescent, and young adult demographic groups. The target audience for music videos is between the ages of 12 and 24, with a median age of 23 (Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994). Substantiating its popularity with this demographic, findings indicate that over 70% of the MTV audience is under 24 years old (Englis et al., 1994). The majority of viewers watch between 30 minutes to 2 hours of music videos per day (Sun & Lull, 1986), with many reporting watching frequently to stay abreast of current trends, fashions, and dances (Brown, Campbell, & Fisher, 1986).

Although little comparative data exist, findings across several studies suggest that usage levels are particularly high among Black and Latino youth. For example, African American high school students surveyed by Ward, Hansbrough, and Walker (2005) reported watching an average of 3.33 hours of music videos per day. Similarly, Rivadeneyra, Ward, and Gordon (in press) examined media habits among Latino high school students. Here, students reported watching music videos an average of 20.5 hours per week, which is nearly 3 hours per day. And the 176 African American high

school girls surveyed by Gordon (2004) reported watching music videos for approximately 75 hours per month, which is 2.5 hours per day. These numbers greatly exceed the levels of 39.65 hours per month (or 1.2 hours/day) reported among White high school students in comparable data (Ward & Friedman, 2006). Thus, with higher exposure levels, Black and Latino youth are likely to be even more susceptible to any potential music video effects.

One unique feature of music videos is their fusion of song lyrics and visual storytelling imagery. With this combination, some researchers have questioned the relevance or salience of one aspect over the other, asking, "Aren't they just songs with pictures?" Recent research indicates that song lyrics are subordinate to the musical soundtrack and visual imagery in music videos (Vernallis, 2002). It appears as if the lyrics only intermittently occupy viewers' attention in comparison to the images and storylines contained within music videos. As a result, a strong argument can be made that visual imagery may play the most important role in the socialization function of music videos. Indeed, adolescents cite using the imagery to gain meaning or a different perspective on song lyrics (Sun & Lull, 1986). One of the implications of this study is that adolescents, as a whole, believe there is "one authentic meaning" to song lyrics, as shown through the visual imagery (Sun & Lull, 1986). This finding suggests an internalization process whereby adolescents are chiefly in tune to the images contained in music videos and that they accept, without challenge or alternative explanation, the visual representations of these images for their own judgment. Given the prominence of music videos in young people's lives, and their attention to the visual images and stories, the question then becomes, What kinds of messages and themes are conveyed about race and ethnicity (and gender)?

SECTION 1: MULTICULTURAL REPRESENTATION IN MUSIC VIDEOS

Level of Representation

Much like other forms of the entertainment media, the world of music videos appears to be sharply divided by race/ethnicity. Early research indicated that characters from diverse backgrounds were in the minority on mainstream musical programming (Brown & Campbell, 1986), which instead featured mostly European American performers and characters. Of the 102 videos played per week on mainstream music networks, only 5.5% featured African American artists (Brown & Campbell, 1986). A decade later, content analyses revealed that roughly 11% of popular music videos on MTV contained non-White characters (Seidman, 1992). As the type of music featured on these channels has changed from solely pop and rock, analyses comparing racial/ethnic representation across music video genres revealed that Black males and females were significantly more likely to appear in rap and R&B/soul music videos compared to other music genres (Tapper, Thorson, & Black, 1994). These same characters appeared much less frequently in pop music videos (approximately 18%), and at that time, Latina females appeared in only 3% of popular music videos and 1% of music videos overall (Tapper et al., 1994).

In contrast, music videos shown on ethnically oriented networks, such as BET, almost exclusively show minority characters, and if characters from the dominant ethnic group appear, they typically occupy minor roles (Brown & Campbell, 1986; Emerson, 2002). These figures may have changed somewhat in recent years, as mainstream music networks, such as MTV, broadcast videos from “crossover artists” from other ethnic backgrounds with widespread mass appeal and popularity (Peterson-Lewis &

Chennault, 1986). Many of these crossover artists represent the growing popularity of musical genres such as Latin music, hip-hop, and R&B among American youth in general (Cobo, 2006; del Rio, 2007; Hughes, 2002; Moran, 2007; Sullivan, 2003). Many of these artists are lesser known within mainstream popular music, after having appeared in heavy rotation on ethnically oriented programming (Cobo, 2006; Finn, 2006).

Several premium networks have become available in recent years to fulfill the entertainment media needs of ethnically diverse Americans, such as MTV Tr3s (Latina Americans), MTV Chi (Chinese Americans), MTV K (Korean Americans), and MTV Desi (South Asian Americans) (Cobo, 2006; Finn, 2006). These networks are attempting to bridge the gap between mainstream and ethnically oriented programming for these groups of Americans, presenting videos that feature musical artists of diverse backgrounds, and music videos that are relevant to the cultural background and experiences of these ethnic groups. At this point in time, research is unavailable on how often these ethnically oriented music networks, featuring videos from artists of diverse backgrounds, are viewed by mainstream youth. However, it appears reasonable to assume that, for White youth, crossover artists that appear on mainstream music networks may represent their sole source of media exposure to people of color.

Nature of Music Video Portrayals: A Focus on African Americans

Visual representations contained throughout music videos offer viewers of all backgrounds a glimpse into how people look, act, behave, and live. The videos presented are frequently stylized, however, often depicting more of a fantasy world of the producers, directors, and artists than a snapshot of reality. Within this realm, what

are some of the common themes of how people of multicultural backgrounds are represented within music videos? Surprisingly, relatively few studies exist on the content of portrayals of multicultural people within music videos. The majority of these articles describe portrayals of African Americans in music videos, with few studies focusing specifically on Latinos/as, Asian Americans, or Native Americans.

One of the few existing studies with an in-depth racial analysis is Brown and Campbell's 1986 study of early music videos. Their analysis compared Whites on 75 MTV videos to Blacks on 37 videos from BET's Video Soul. As noted earlier, they found few depictions of people of various ethnic backgrounds in mainstream videos. However, there were similar themes that appeared as far as how people of color behaved in music videos (analyses only provided for Black vs. White character depictions). They found that Blacks were more likely than Whites to be shown engaged in domestic activities (i.e., housework, yard work, child care, service work, custodial work) than in professional work. Although Black males were just as likely to hold professional jobs as White characters, Black females were most likely to be shown performing domestic work. Many of these domestic work roles appearing within music videos are stereotypically associated with Black women, such as cooking, cleaning house, and waitressing (Peterson-Lewis & Chennault, 1986). And the Black women were shown dancing more frequently than the White women (50% vs. 3%).

Indirect information about racial differences can be drawn from work comparing different genres of music videos. Coding 203 videos drawn from BET, MTV, VH1, and TNN, Jones (1997) analyzed the prevalence of violent and sexual imagery in videos of specific genres. Although information about the racial background of the artists featured

was *not* provided, it is likely that the majority of artists in the country and rock videos were White whereas the majority of artists in the rap and hip-hop videos were Black. Based on these assumptions, it appears that levels of violence and sex are particularly high in video formats likely to feature Black artists. More specifically, Jones reported significant genre differences in portrayals of violence, with gun talk, drug talk, grabbing/clutching, and bleeping (over obscenities) appearing with the greatest frequency in rap videos. Alcohol use and gambling were also featured significantly more frequently in rap videos than in videos of other genres. Significant genre differences were also found across the 11 sexual behaviors coded. For 8 of the 11 behaviors (fondling, simulated intercourse, simulated masturbation, simulated oral sex, sex talk, "hot" pants, male sex dance, and female sex dance), levels were highest in the hip-hop or rap videos. For only one behavior (heavy cleavage) was the prevalence highest in the country and western videos. Similar findings were reported by Hansen and Hansen (2000) in their genre analysis of videos from MTV, CMT, VH1, and BET. Here, BET surpassed other channels in the percentage of videos containing visual images of scantily clad women (about 77%), and also led in the frequency with which both women and men were portrayed as sexually aggressive. Thus, although music videos, in general, tend to focus on sexuality, toughness, and social vices (e.g., alcohol use, gambling, cursing), videos featuring African Americans tend to do this even more, thereby creating a very skewed portrait of a people who may receive little other media coverage.

Nature of the Portrayals: African American Women

Others have studied Black videos exclusively, and have attempted to describe the

dominant themes and messages conveyed about African American women and men. Emerson (2002) conducted a content analysis of 56 popular music videos featuring Black female musical artists from MTV, BET, and VH1. Using a more focused approach, Shaviro (2005) offered an in-depth analysis of the themes and symbolism in two individual music videos by Black female artists. Finally, Stephens (2003) has analyzed sexual scripts for women that dominate hip-hop culture, in general. One of the dominant themes emerging from these pieces is that music videos heavily emphasize Black women's bodies and sexual appeal over other talents and abilities (e.g., intellect, personality). The Black women that dominate music videos are generally young, thin, physically attractive, and scantily clad, with little variation in body size and type (Emerson, 2002). Because music videos tend to mimic mainstream beauty standards, even when female characters of color are shown, the majority of Black women appearing have light complexions and long, straight hair (Shaviro, 2005). Most recently, music videos featuring Black performers have "expanded" these definitions of beauty to encompass ethnic women who appear as close to White as possible, by including more multiracial, exotic-looking women (Englis et al., 1994; Shaviro, 2005). Yet nearly all women in the videos would be considered thin by mainstream standards (Emerson, 2002; Shaviro, 2005), effectively contradicting notions that the Black community allows for greater acceptance of larger body types, and conforming to the thin ideals indicative throughout television in general.

A second characteristic of African American women noted from these music video analyses is the heavy emphasis on style and materialism. The Black women appearing in music videos are often very stylized and glamorous, wearing the latest designer fashions, expensive jewelry, and elaborate hairstyles, adding to the emphasis

on physical attractiveness above all other qualities (Emerson, 2002; Roberts, 1994; Shelton, 1997; Stephens, 2003). These images serve to bolster the idea of these women as objects to be adored and worshipped (Stephens, 2003). Even more so, the "gold digger" image of Black women is prevalent, as they are often depicted as prioritizing financial gain above all other pursuits in life, and as desirous of money, trinkets, and financial rewards from men (Stephens, 2003).

In contrast, music videos rarely offer images of pregnant women, mothers, older women, or women with larger body types (Emerson, 2002). Instead, music videos reflect an overall image of Black women as "decorative eye candy" rather than multidimensional beings, and emphasize the availability of these women's bodies for men's sexual desires (Emerson, 2002; Stephens, 2003). Again, we see conformity to mainstream music video standards of presenting women in highly traditional, stereotyped roles (e.g., Gow, 1996; Seidman, 1992).

A third prominent theme emerging from the existing music video analyses is the notion that these visual images confirm stereotypes of wanton sexual appetite and promiscuity of African American women. Within the context of American society, Black women actively confront stereotypes about their sexuality, from the "Mammy's" celibacy to "Jezebel's" hypersexuality (Collins, 2000; Roberts, 1994; Stephens, 2003). Music videos commonly feature an almost excessive showing of sexuality. African American women are typically highly sexualized (Emerson, 2002; Roberts; Shaviro, 2005; Stephens, 2003), their bodies objectified by the camera's gaze on their breasts, crotch, and behind. Often the gaze of the camera projects from the floor angle to maximize the view of women's bodies, shows close-ups of women's body parts rather than displaying the whole woman, or films in slow

motion to emphasize the gyrating body parts of female dancers. These objectified close-ups of women's bodies are a hallmark of hip-hop videos, appearing more frequently there than in other musical video genres (Englis et al., 1994). Indeed, in her analysis of the eight types of Black women appearing in music videos, Stephens notes the prevalence of "the freak," a woman who is sexually insatiable, with little sexual inhibition. Corroborating this impression, Brown and Campbell (1986) found that Black women were more likely than Black males, White males, or White females to participate in sexual behavior in music videos.

Others note, however, that these highly sexualized images of Black women often co-occur with themes of strength, independence, streetwise nature, and toughness (Emerson, 2002). Accordingly, some speculate that perhaps these images function as a form of resistance and "reappropriation" of female sexuality in response to exploitation (Emerson, 2002; Roberts, 1994). These videos often typically stress women's sexual agency and female sexual desire, sending the message that Black women are in control of their own bodies (Emerson, 2002). As Emerson conducted analyses of videos only featuring Black female performers, one has to question whether these images of African American women are indicative of videos starring male performers as well. One also has to question whether reappropriation of female sexuality is the most common message expressed from these highly sexualized performances, especially considering the fact that hip-hop videos heavily identify with masculinity and male sexual pleasure (Emerson, 2002; Shelton, 1997). Certainly, a female music artist may intend to make a political statement through visual imagery in a particular music video, but how often do many female artists' videos indeed enact this intent? These types of resistance videos appear to be in the minority, existing among a majority that feature models, dancers, and

female music artists engaged in sexually suggestive dances and provocative situations.

Although feminist portrayals of African American women are difficult to find within the music video world, these Afrocentric portrayals of Black womanhood find a small but important space within ethnically oriented musical programming. Within these contexts, Black women exemplify values such as promoting women's importance, demanding equal treatment, and demonstrating the need for women to support one another (Emerson, 2002; Roberts, 1994). However, these messages rarely stand alone within a single music video, and underlie other worrisome images of sexual suggestion and unidimensional depictions of women (Roberts, 1994). These types of music videos that deviate (or attempt to) from the predominant script of Black female sexuality are found almost exclusively on ethnically oriented networks (Brown & Campbell, 1986; Emerson, 2002).

Nature of the Portrayals: African American Men

There are few published studies of common themes and images of African American men relative to the literature on African American women's representations. African American men have been portrayed throughout the entertainment media according to stereotypes of violence, aggressiveness, and potent sexual appetite (Hall, 1993; Page, 1997). As much as Black women are portrayed with a bold, in-your-face hypersexuality, Black male sexuality is often portrayed along similar lines (Saucier, 2006). Black men are almost always portrayed as heterosexual, aggressively in pursuit of women's affections at one end of the continuum, and in pursuit of as many female sexual partners as possible at the other extreme (Powell Hammond, 2002; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 2002). Powell Hammond's content analysis of manhood portrayals in

popular hip-hop videos found that 75% of the nonverbal behaviors displayed by Black male characters were related to *profiling*, emphasizing maleness as being the center of attention with females playing subordinate roles, and *pimping*, emphasizing sexual prowess, promiscuity, or objectification of women. Appearing as frequently as profiling and pimping behaviors were *bonding/backing*, or nonverbal behaviors that suggested emotional connectedness toward men as brothers, without the influence or interference of women (Powell Hammond, 2002).

A growing number of music videos appear to “flip the script” on the camera’s objectifying gaze by focusing on the bodies of Black men (Emerson, 2002; Harris, 1999). This trend is perhaps best exemplified by D’Angelo’s “Untitled,” where the male artist appears to be nude and sings directly into the camera, with the gaze of the camera focusing on his chiseled musculature. Music videos of this nature focus on a more sensual view of Black men’s bodies, usually within the confines of the hip-hop aesthetic, channeling an image of Black men that is unflinchingly heterosexual yet sensual (Harris, 1999), and available for female sexual pleasure.

In addition to being sexual, Black men are also featured as tough and aggressive. Many videos rely on hip-hop style fashions, such as multilayered, oversized shirts, sagging jeans that partially expose boxer shorts, prison-inspired uniforms, tattoos, and bandanas, in order to evoke images of “controlled aggressiveness” of Black men, and concealing men’s bodies from view (Harris, 1999). Often Black men appearing in music videos are shown in prison scenes, hanging out on street corners, or emerging from jail. Similarly, research has found that approximately 38% of hip-hop videos reflect nonverbal behaviors that reinforce the message of overall resistance to authority or requiring restraint (Powell Hammond, 2002). As an overall “take-home message,” Powell Hammond (2002) proposes that music videos reflect the message, “A

Black man backs his brothers, has wealth, power, women, and commands respect with his physical presence” (p. 1).

Nature of the Portrayals: Latinos and Asian Americans

No published studies were found on content analyses of how Latinos or Asian Americans are portrayed within music video imagery. However, research does indicate several themes in how Latinos are depicted within the entertainment media in general. Largely underrepresented in mainstream television, Latinos most often appear in roles that are consistent with negative racial stereotypes, such as villains and other criminalized characters, sexualized lovers, and domestic workers (del Rio, 2007). Asians and Asian American women’s character representations are marked with cultural stereotypes as well, such as hyperfeminine, exotic, submissive, and docile, whereas men of Asian descent are rarely represented as objects of physical attraction or sexual desire (Lee & Vaught, 2003). However, in recent years, more representation and positive images of Latinos have emerged within the media, in celebration of rich cultural, historical, and music traditions (Cobo, 2006; del Rio, 2007). Similar to the representation patterns found with African Americans, niche musical programming has emerged, for Latinos and Asian Americans alike, which may eventually offer a wider array of visual imagery and character depictions than those indicative within mainstream programming.

SECTION 2: IMPACT OF MUSIC VIDEO VIEWING ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTHS OF COLOR

Given the limited scope of adolescents’ cognitive development and real-world experiences paired with their high levels of music

video viewing, to what extent are they prepared to judge the realism of the media content presented? Are they equipped to understand that the images are not an accurate representation of *all* Black people, all White people, or all men and women? These questions underscore the importance of understanding the role that these inaccurate but pervasive images may play in shaping young people's developing worldviews. We argue that the images seen in music videos are likely to play an important role in youths' perceptions of themselves and others. In this section, we explore findings concerning how music videos affect Black adolescents' self-perceptions and beliefs about men, women, and sexual relationships. In the next section, we summarize findings linking music video exposure to White students' perceptions of African Americans as a whole.

Self-Perceptions/Appraisal

One area of importance is the role of viewing on individuals' beliefs about themselves. It has been suggested that the media may act in similar ways as peers in shaping youths' self-conceptions (Farrar et al., 2003). In the same way that an adolescent male might base his beliefs about his body on his perceptions of his friends' bodies, so might he turn to the media for insight into the body type that is most valued and sought after. However, basing one's self-perceptions on media characters is likely to produce some negative consequences, because TV characters and magazine photographs are perfected images, do not typically feature "average" bodies, and are mostly Eurocentric in appearance. What might the implications be of repeated exposure to this content on adolescents' assessments of the self, including body image, self-concept, and beliefs about intelligence? Will comparing themselves to an ideal that is nearly impossible to achieve or to people who do not look like

them lead to lowered self-esteem, racial self-esteem, and body image? Studies directly investigating associations between music video viewing and self-concept among youth of color have found many interesting, but rather alarming, trends.

For example, Ward (2004) tested whether diverse forms of media use contribute to African American adolescents' racial self-esteem and three dimensions of their self-esteem. Here, findings indicated that more frequent viewing of music videos predicted lower performance, social, and appearance self-esteem, as well as lower racial self-esteem. In addition, when further investigations were conducted of other aspects of the viewers' backgrounds, it was found that these associations were mainly relevant for youth who report low levels of religiosity. These findings suggest that Black youth who may be less strongly tied to the Black community or Black culture (via the Church), may be especially vulnerable to buying into media images, comparing themselves unfavorably, and feeling worse about themselves as a consequence.

In a similar study, Gordon (2004) examined associations between music video exposure and self-esteem among Black high school girls. Her results indicated that students who reported a higher percentage of Black music and music videos in their media diets also expressed higher appearance self-esteem. Again, however, closer examination of specific subpopulations revealed that Black music video exposure was especially beneficial to youth who may have felt less connected with their racial identity or community. More specifically, for those low in racial centrality, having a higher percentage of Black music and music videos in their diet was associated with higher appearance and performance self-esteem yet held no connection for those higher in racial centrality. Similarly, for those low in religiosity, having a higher percentage of Black music and music videos in their diet was associated with

higher appearance and social self-esteem, yet held no connection for those higher in religiosity. Together, the findings from Ward (2004) and Gordon illustrate the complex relations between types of Black viewers and media effects, highlighting the impact of pre-existing racial support and identity.

In one of the few existing studies testing effects of music video viewing among Latino youth, Rivadeneyra et al. (in press) examined media habits among 40 Latino high school students ages 14 to 17. Analyses linked music video viewing to poor self-conceptions, such that frequent exposure was associated with notably lower levels of social self-esteem and with a desire to change more aspects of one's own body ($p < .09$). These findings suggest that frequent consumption of idealized images that do not include people like oneself may lead to a diminished self-esteem among Latino adolescents, but more work is needed.

Behavioral Consequences

The field has also focused its attention on the effects of music video viewing on adolescent behavior. For example, Klein et al. (1993) investigated the adverse behavior outcomes of music video viewing among African American early adolescents. Participants were asked to provide their level of media use and experience with several adverse behaviors, such as stealing, drinking alcohol, and sexual activity. Findings indicated that the adolescents with higher levels of music video viewing were more likely to exhibit risky behavior, such as stealing, cigarette use, and sexual intercourse. These results, even though preliminary, suggest that music video consumption is an important predictor of behavioral outcomes. In a related study that examined sexual behavior directly, Wingood et al. (2003) found that higher levels of music video viewing among Black female adolescents predicted

an increased likelihood of engaging in risky sexual intercourse and higher incidences of sexually transmitted diseases, although these conclusions remain tentative due to concerns about the limited sample used.

In addition to being linked with students' actual behavior, music video viewing has also been associated with adolescents' endorsement of the violent behavior of others. Specifically, Johnson, Jackson, and Gatto (1995) examined African American boys' (ages 11–16) perceptions of violence after exposure to violent music videos. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (control, nonviolent, violent) and then asked to indicate their attitudes toward the use of violence and their own probability of engaging in violent behavior. The study found that those viewing a series of violent music videos demonstrated a higher endorsement of violent behavior than those exposed to nonviolent music videos. In addition, illustrating the connection between endorsement and enactment, participants in the experimental group were more likely to report a high probability of committing similar acts of violence. Therefore, music video viewing may contribute not only to the way in which minority adolescents perceive themselves, but also to their acceptance of and participation in certain negative behaviors.

Beliefs About Men, Women, and Sexual Relationships

Music videos send very specific messages about masculinity, femininity, and how the sexes relate to each other. As outlined in the previous section, these portrayals are often very narrow and conform to many existing stereotypes about Black women and men. Given this imagery, many have questioned whether Black adolescents viewing the videos are subject to an internalization of the images, and to developing beliefs about gender roles,

sexual roles, and sexuality that conform to the images presented. In one investigation of these notions, Bryant and Bowman (2002) tested associations between time spent watching rap music videos and Black girls' perceptions of women shown in video imagery. For this study, 53 African American female adolescents were shown 10 minutes of music videos and were asked about their regular music video consumption. Preliminary results showed that participants who watched more than 2 hours of videos per week were more likely to accept the negative images of women shown in the music videos. These results may suggest that African American women may become desensitized to negative images of women due to high levels of exposure to these images.

A more recent study, conducted by Ward et al. (2005), provides experimental evidence for the effect of music video viewing on perceptions and stereotypes of men and women. In this study, 152 African American high school students participated in an experiment to delineate the role of music video viewing on gender role beliefs. Participants in the experimental group were asked to view four videos representing the following stereotypical notions: women are sex objects, sexual relationships are adversarial, material wealth is important, men are emotionally and physically hard, and men are "players." Participants in the control condition were asked to view four videos that did not portray these stereotypes. Gender role beliefs were assessed using three measures that examined students' endorsement of traditional gender stereotypes, their acceptance of stereotypical beliefs about sexual roles and relationships, and their ideals about masculinity and femininity. As expected, participants in the experimental condition (stereotype) were more accepting of stereotypical beliefs about sexual relationships, and attributed more importance to external qualities (e.g., beauty, sexiness) in their

gender ideals. At the same time, those who more frequently watch music videos, in general, also reported greater acceptance of these gender and sexual stereotypes.

These perceptions of relationship roles also extend to perceptions of dating violence, an important adverse outcome that may be associated with more stereotypical gender role attitudes. Johnson, Adams, Ashburn, and Reed (1995) conducted a study with 60 African American youth (30 male, 30 female) ages 11–16 years to investigate the role of music video viewing on attitudes toward men and women in relationships. Female participants assigned to the experimental (video viewing) condition were more likely than those in the control (no video) condition to report acceptance of a vignette featuring violence perpetrated by a male on a female victim while the two were on a date.

Combining evidence from these correlational and experimental studies, we see significant and consistent relations between Black students' consumption of music videos and their endorsement of the gender and sexual stereotypes that dominate them. These results suggest that media, and music videos in particular, are indeed a powerful force in the gender and sexual socialization of African American youth. It appears, then, that Black adolescents may be receiving messages from music videos that in romantic relationships, men should be dominant and, when needed, violent. Meanwhile, women are expected to be submissive and accepting of any violence perpetrated against them in the context of a relationship. Adolescents' acceptance of these notions may be damaging to their own expectations of their roles in a relationship.

Conclusion

Considering the total effects of music video consumption on Black adolescents, it appears that there are several perceptual,

behavioral, and attitudinal outcomes. Specifically, it can be concluded that in viewing music videos, Black adolescents are more likely to endorse and exhibit violent behavior, risky sexual behavior, and stereotypical beliefs about Black women and men. Although research in this area is beginning to tease apart the negative effects of music video viewing on the cognitive and social development of adolescents of color, much more needs to be done to understand the exact mechanisms by which these effects operate.

SECTION 3: EFFECTS OF MUSIC VIDEO VIEWING ON WHITE ADOLESCENTS

The content of music videos, and particularly their portrayal of individuals of color, can have an effect not only on the adolescents of color who view them, but also on White adolescents. The images are often stereotypical, and can serve to reinforce existing stereotypes about people from other cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In terms of the mechanism at work, it is argued that media images both trigger certain existing cognitive structures and help create new schemas. Johnson, Trawalter, and Dovidio (2000) investigated this phenomenon in the context of music videos and found that the images portrayed of Blacks activate previously stored information about racial groups. Often these beliefs take the form of stereotypes, and this process is known as *stereotype activation*. After these stereotypes have been activated, or accessed as a result of video viewing, then individuals can use this information to apply attributes to a certain racial group, a process known as *stereotype application*. According to Johnson et al., the outcome of this application is clear; adolescents both within and outside of the observed racial group will apply this information when making decisions about that group. This process can have an effect on

general perceptions of persons of color, which can, in turn, have an effect on expectations of others and behavior toward others. For adolescents, this process can impact peer group selection, as well as intergroup interactions. Perhaps more importantly, however, it serves to reinforce those stereotypes that have perpetually disadvantaged certain racial groups.

The central question pursued in this line of research is whether music videos lead White viewers to adopt limited conceptions of youth of color, based on the limited images and stereotypes presented. In one of the few studies to pursue this question, Gan, Zillman, and Mitrook (1997) explored stereotyping effects as a result of viewing music videos laden with sexual imagery. After being assigned to one of three conditions (control/no videos, devoted love, and sexual enticement), 55 White men and women evaluated six photographs of Black and White women and rated the models according to a set of positive and negative qualities. Results showed significant effects of video exposure on the evaluation of Black women, but not of White women. Specifically, exposure to the sexual videos fostered distinctly unfavorable evaluations of Black women. Following exposure to sexual rap, as compared to exposure to romantic videos or no videos, Black women received lower scores on positive traits (such as attractive, beautiful, caring, considerate, faithful, intelligent, romantic, sensual, sexy, and trustworthy) and higher scores on negative traits (such as bad, cheap, cold, crude, easy, exploitative, indecent, irresponsible, obscene, promiscuous, reckless, sleazy, sluttish, and vulgar). Researchers concluded that, for White men and women, exposure to sexually enticing rap music imagery may activate perceptual primes that are generalized to other members of the same ethnic or racial group, resulting in unfavorable evaluations.

SECTION 4: IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Music videos reflect the heart of American youth culture, readily influencing what is cool, fashionable, and important to an entire generation of young adults. At the same time, however, their lyrical and visual content also convey powerful messages about culture, gender, ethnicity, and race. At this point, most research on the cultural messages conveyed has focused on portrayals of African Americans, particularly in hip-hop music. Emerging from these analyses is a portrait of African Americans as a people whose men are dangerous and aggressive “players” and whose women are sexually promiscuous and materialistic. The potential power of these images comes not only from their presence, but also from their prevalence. When few alternative images exist, more weight is given to those that remain, and this allows them to define, for the world, who these people are. Youth of *all* cultural backgrounds may then come to adopt these images as an “authentic” representation of what it means to be a member of this community, leading Black youth to behave consistently with these images, and confirming for non-Black youth pervasive racial stereotypes that abound throughout society. Thus, content that was intended mainly to sell songs and records carries great power to shape how young viewers of diverse cultural backgrounds come to perceive themselves and each other.

Evidence, as summarized here, is slowly emerging to indicate that this dynamic is indeed the case. Findings from both surveys and experiments indicate that adolescents' behavioral, attitudinal, and perceptual outcomes can be affected by the limited and frequently stereotypical images they consume in music videos. It has been suggested that these media effects are detrimental to the developing adolescent in very specific and concrete ways. It appears that both physical behavior

(e.g., engaging in violent behavior and risky sexual behavior) as well as beliefs about the world (e.g., beliefs that men and women should conform to more traditional gender roles) are affected by music video viewing.

One of the more obvious messages emerging from this study is the need for more research in this area. We see that even some of the most basic questions remain unanswered. First, systematic analysis is needed exploring the prevalence and nature of portrayals of youth of color, other than African Americans. These analyses should cover both minority-oriented and mainstream music videos, as well as videos produced in other countries and languages. Second, additional research is needed about the implications of this content on social relations and interactions. One line of research is needed addressing basic questions about how exposure to music videos affects the racial attitudes and stereotypes of youth around the world. How does this exposure shape how non-Americans view Americans? How does music video content affect how Whites view Blacks and Latinos? To what extent does music genre matter? A second line of research is needed that focuses on the effects on social relations and interactions. When considering the role of music video consumption, it is essential to include the effects of the images on stereotype activation and application, as these processes set the stage for the expectations and beliefs made about members of various racial and ethnic groups. Future research must also examine further the role of age in viewers' processing of this content. Because adolescents are susceptible to the socializing effects of the media in a unique way, their developing cognitive structures are likely to be especially affected by the narrow images that they view. In addition, as these cognitive structures are created and reinforced, adolescents may be more likely to include stereotypes in their decision making about their peers. How might this affect intergroup relations among adolescents

and their ability to become open-minded, adult members of society?

In considering these and other issues, we also need to keep in mind that music videos themselves are diverse, and may serve a range of functions for youth of color. First, ethnically oriented music networks fill a niche within the market by providing representation to the diverse points of view and perspectives of people of color. Indeed, for some, they may be one of the only sources of *positive* visual content of people of color, offering a wider variety of visual representations of multicultural individuals than those shown on mainstream music programming. For many of the lesser known artists, music videos function as a “synthesis of soundtrack and visual narrative” that mediates their experiences in America, which may not be adequately represented on mainstream music programming channels (Roberts, 1994). Second, some artists use music videos as a platform for cultural expression, and resistance of racism, sexism, and classism, regardless of ethnic background (Emerson, 2002; Roberts, 1994). For those music videos that display these messages of resistance, music videos may serve as a positive socialization influence on youth of color and White youth alike.

However, perhaps the majority of artists use music videos solely as a platform to establish an image, promote celebrity, and appeal to a wider demographic group in the marketplace (Aufderheide, 1986). What are the connections between motivations behind the videos, their content, and their effects? It is troubling to many that a majority of videos reflect some of the most insidious and stereotyped characterizations of

multicultural people and disseminate these messages to yet another generation of young people. One has to question why music videos that reflect negative and stereotyped images are so popular among White and ethnic minority youth alike. And when more varied or nonstereotypical images are used, they frequently appear on networks that are watched almost exclusively by ethnic minority youth. Does this trend indicate that these more positive representations in music videos are simply more appealing to ethnic minority youth? Accordingly, what does this imply for White youth whose music video diet may be composed solely of racially stereotyped images of people of color?

However, work can be done to diversify the racial, ethnic, and gender representations portrayed in music videos. There has been much debate over identifying those responsible for enacting a change in these portrayals. However, rather than assign blame for the limited and often negative portrayals found in popular music videos, what may be needed is an empirical investigation into the effect of a diverse set of representations on adolescents’ beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. Might it be that having multiple images upon which to draw comparisons could make it easier for adolescents to identify potential role models? Could this broader field lead to a rejection of the negative images and more critical viewing habits? If research can demonstrate that having a wide variety of portrayals upon which to base their decisions aids in adolescents’ more positive and less stereotypical schemas about race, ethnicity, and gender, then *perhaps* industry leaders may begin to advocate for an overhaul to the current state of music videos today.

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