Female and Male Objectification Effects within Popular Music
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Female objectification within the media has been well studied; however, there is little research on male objectification. The current study aimed to expand upon this by measuring the effects of both female and male objectification from exposure to popular music. Participants listened to a popular song that either objectified females or males. We compared rape myth acceptance, self-esteem, beliefs about sex, and sexism scores before and after exposure to the songs. As hypothesized, exposure to objectifying music increased self-objectification and rape myth acceptance, but not gender role stereotypes. The data also showed an effect on the emotional appeal of sex for males exposed to the female objectification condition, but not for females.

Introduction

Media & Music

- Media cultivates our societal norms by representing what is mainstream or normal (Lowery & DeFlour, 1995).
- The Council on Communications and Media (2010) has expressed heightened concern about the affects of sexual content in modern, popular music lyrics.
- 37% of popular music lyrics consisted of sexually explicit lyrics, and of those, 65% were associated with degrading sex (Primack, Gold, Schwartz, & Dalton, 2008).

Objectification

- Objectification theory - individuals evaluate themselves based on their appearance in comparison to the ideals displayed in the media (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).
- Objectifying songs - Male: Talking Body to Loy Female: Post To Be by Omarion
- “A lot of women lead a man on and then cry rape”
- Gender Stereotypes – PAQ (Hittner & Daniels, 2002)
- “Dominant” “Interested in sex” “Emotional”-characteristic of male or female
- Sexism – MOS (Swim, Aiken, & Hunter, 1995)
- “It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television”
- After the study, participants completed a structured interview in order to assess their thoughts and reactions about the song they were exposed to.

Method

- 135 students (18-25 years old)
- First-year students (69.6%), female (61.5%)
- 6 participants were not able to listen to the song and were excluded from data analysis (N = 129)

- Independent
- Male Participants
- Female Participants

- Objectifying songs
- Male: Talking Body to Loy
- Female: Post To Be by Omarion

- Pre-Post Questionnaires

- Self-Esteem – MSEI (O’Brien & Epstein, 1988)

- “I sometimes have a poor opinion of myself”

- Objectification – SATAP 4 (Dakanalis, Carra, & Calogero, 2013)

- “I feel pressure from the media to improve my appearance”

- Beliefs about Sex – APS (Goldenberg, Pyszczynski, McCoy, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999)

- “Feeling close with my partner”

- Rape Myth Acceptance – IRMA (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999)

- “A lot of women lead a man on and then cry rape”

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- “Dominant” “Interested in sex” “Emotional”-characteristic of male or female

- Sexism – MOS (Swim, Aiken, & Hunter, 1995)

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- After the study, participants completed a structured interview in order to assess their thoughts and reactions about the song they were exposed to.

Results

- Sexism scores significantly increased after exposure to either condition: F(1, 123) = 108.072, p < .000
- Media pressure towards appearance significantly increased after exposure to either condition: F(1, 125) = 4.70, p = .032

Figure 1. Interaction of Internalization of Thin Ideal mean score differences before and after exposure by participant gender, F(1, 124) = 6.771, p = .010. Internalization of thin ideal significantly decreased in both males (r(48) = 5.09, p = .000) and females (r(78) = 2.55, p = .015) after exposure to objectification in both conditions.

Discussion

- Confirming Hypothesis 1, sexist beliefs increased after exposure to objectifying media and greater pressure from the media on appearance after listening to both songs.

- As explained by social learning theory, participants may have aligned their beliefs to match the themes in the songs (highly sexual and focused on appearance), which are common themes in popular music (Myers, 2000).

- Self-objectification regarding the internalization of the thin ideal, or wanting to be thin, decreased after exposure to the objectifying media. However, this does not support hypothesis 2.

Rationale and Hypotheses

The effects of objectification of females within the media has been well studied, however, there is little research on male objectification. The current study aimed to fill this gap by including music that objectifies men. The current study aimed to compare effects of female and male objectification from exposure to popular music.

1. Gender stereotypes, sexist beliefs, rape myth acceptance and self-objectification will increase after exposure to objectifying music.
2. Exposure to the song that objectifies participants’ own gender will lead to a greater degree than lyrics that objectify the opposite gender.

Figure 2. Interaction between Rape Myth Acceptance- She Wanted it scores and type of objectification. F(1, 117) = 3.287, p = .041. After listening to the female objectifying song, participants “belief” that a female rape victim “wanted it” increased significantly, (r(66) = .33, p < .002) but were not affected by listening to the male objectifying song (r(58) = .061, p = .54).

Figure 3. Percentages of participants’ reactions to the themes within both the male objectifying song (Talking Body) and the female objectifying song (Post To Be).

Figure 4. Internalization of Thin Ideal: Mean Scores and Type of Objectification. Male Participants: F(1, 125) = 4.70, p = .032 Female Participants: F(1, 123) = 108.072, p < .000.