

Blame It on Hip-Hop: Anti-Rap Attitudes as a Proxy for Prejudice

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This research investigated the stereotypes associated with rap music and hip-hop culture, and how those stereotypes may influence anti-Black attitudes and justifications for discrimination. In three studies—using a representative sample from America, as well as samples from two different countries—we found that negative stereotypes about rap are pervasive and have powerful consequences. In all three samples, negative attitudes toward rap were associated with various measures of negative stereotypes of Blacks that blamed Blacks for their economic plights (via stereotypes of laziness). Anti-rap attitudes were also associated with discrimination against Blacks, through both personal and political behaviors. In both American samples, the link between anti-rap attitudes and discrimination was partially or fully mediated by stereotypes that convey Blacks' responsibility. This legitimizing pattern was not found in the UK sample, suggesting that anti-rap attitudes are used to reinforce beliefs that Blacks do not deserve social benefits in American society, but may not be used as legitimizing beliefs in other cultures.

KEYWORDS deservingness, legitimacy, prejudice, rap, stereotypes

... they tryin' to blame this rap sh*t for all of our ills
like I can stick you up with a mic
like I can rape you with a verse or use a verb as a
knife.

(Little Brother; Get Back; 2007, © ABB Records)

In the Fall of 2007, controversial rap artist Nas once again made national headlines in America when he announced the title of his new album: *Nigger*.¹ This title sparked debates both within the African-American and Caucasian communities about the value of freedom of speech juxtaposed with the need to take a stand against messages that denigrate African-Americans (see also Lee, 2007). Prominent Black leaders such as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton publicly expressed their dismay with his decision, community

members protested outside of the record label headquarters, and conservative Whites used the controversy as an opportunity to hold rap artists like Nas accountable for inner city violence. For example, John Gibson of the conservative news channel Fox News blamed the lyrics from one of Nas's songs asserting 'There [are] a lot of dead people in Philadelphia who might have gotten shot because somebody got inspired by that kind of song' (Fox News, 2007).

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This is not the first time that rappers and rap music have been accused of fomenting crime, violence, and negative perceptions of African-Americans. Rap music² has been blamed for youth violence, the rise of gangs and gang-related crime, drug use, and violence against women (e.g. BBC News, 2005; Frosch, 2007). Even social scientists have studied rap music and its association with such things as academic and behavior problems (Took & Weiss, 1994), adolescent sexual activity (Muñoz-Laboy, Weinstein, & Parker, 2007), drug and alcohol use (Chen, Miller, Grube, & Waiters, 2006), the acceptance of criminal and violent behavior (Johnson, Jackson, & Gatto, 1995; Took & Weiss, 1994), negative affect (Ballard & Coates, 1995), sexism (Cobb & Boettcher, 2007), and acceptance of violence against women (Johnson, Adams, & Ashburn, 1995).

Those who denounce rap point to the prevalence of rap lyrics that contain messages of violence, misogyny, and the glorification of criminal lifestyles (Dixon & Linz, 1997; McLaren, 2000; Noe, 1995; Parker-Pope, 2007). They assert that rap music and the culture that surrounds it are responsible for the degradation of the African-American community, especially its young men. Indeed, crime, and especially violent crime, is disproportionately high among young African-American males (Mauer, 1999). According to The Sentencing Project (Mauer, 1995), one in three Black men between the ages of 20 and 29 in America was in the criminal justice system (either in jail or prison, or on parole or probation). One explanation for this statistic is that the culture that dominates urban, Black communities is a street culture that values crime as a means for attaining wealth and status (McLaren, 2000)—a culture that is reinforced in some forms of rap music.

Another perspective is that rap music does not glorify the criminal lifestyle, but rather represents the voice of a disenfranchised people who have been excluded from conventional paths to success, and have had to survive in a society where poverty, crime, and systemic discrimination are daily realities (Armstrong, 1993; Lang, 2000; McLaren, 1995). Some see rap as a tool for urban empowerment because it provides an honest look at the realities of

growing up Black in America, and gives young people, who have been historically invisible to a system that disproportionately favors Whites, both an outlet for protest and a means for communicating the positive and negative sides to the Black American experience (Lang, 2000; Mahiri, 2000; see also Perullo, 2005, for similar themes internationally). Because of this, it is important to distinguish the violent content of many rap songs meant to call attention to the sometimes stark and brutal reality of the urban Black experience from songs that glorify this violence. The quote from Little Brother at the beginning of this article challenges the accusations made by various commentators who blame rap music for social ills within the Black community. As the quote suggests, such accusations are viewed by rappers as attempts to scapegoat rap artists by blaming the messenger rather than acknowledging the true underlying causes of violence in these communities.

Critics might also misunderstand what constitutes rap or hip-hop. Those that promote rap and hip-hop as a musical and cultural genre point out that this genre is a complex musical category that takes many forms. Most who disapprove of rap music and its violent content are often referring to a subtype of rap called 'Gangsta Rap' which makes frequent references to the criminal lifestyle. However, there are many other forms of rap that can be empowering and positive. Unfortunately, the very controversial gangsta rap has dominated the media's focus on rap to such a degree that those less familiar with the genre may stereotype all rap as containing violent or criminal references.

Regardless of the ultimate aim of rap music, its definition, or the value that listeners derive from it, one thing is certain: rap music and the culture that surrounds it have become associated with negative stereotypes of Blacks. For example, Rentfrow and Gosling (2007) found that participants associated rap music fans with alcohol and marijuana use, and high athleticism (a Black stereotype). Raters also thought that rap fans placed a higher value on personal respect and recognition and had little regard for values of peace, security, civility, and intellect. Stereotypes associated with rap can also contaminate our perception of anything associated with the

music or its presumed fan base (most notably other Blacks). Several studies have shown that when country music lyrics are identified as 'rap' lyrics, raters perceived the lyrics as much more offensive, hostile, and threatening than when they were identified as country lyrics (Fried, 1996, 1999). Also, incidental exposure to rap music with violent themes increased perceivers' dispositional attributions to violence when judging Black, but not White, targets. Interestingly, exposure to violent rap also activated other stereotypes of Blacks (like lower intelligence), but only when the target of judgment was Black (Johnson, Trawalter, & Dovidio, 2000).

This strong association between stereotypes of rap and stereotypes of Blacks has led several social scientists to speculate that anti-rap attitudes are really anti-Black attitudes in disguise (e.g. Fried, 1999; Noe, 1995). Indeed, attitudes toward rap can provide an ideal cover for less palatable racial animosity. First, rap music, especially 'gangsta rap', overtly portrays images of some of the most potent and negative stereotypes of Black men—namely violent, sexually exploitative, and driven to crime as a means to get ahead. Therefore, it is easy to embed what were originally stereotypes against the larger Black community into the subtype of the 'gangsta' rapper (Dyson, 1996). Second, because Blacks themselves are often the most vocal against the messages and images of this type of rap (Lee, 2007), it is easy for Whites to openly disparage this subculture without much reprisal from Black community members who are also frustrated with these images.

We are taking this perspective one step further. We assert that anti-rap attitudes can be a proxy for anti-Black attitudes, but that the potency of anti-rap attitudes for the disenfranchisement of the Black urban poor lies not simply in prejudice broadly defined, but specifically in the attributional content of the stereotypes associated with rap. This attributional content conveys messages about blameworthiness and deservingness—specifically messages about deserving harsher treatment by the larger society. As a consequence, non-Blacks can use the negative stereotypes associated with the negative rap/hip-hop image to legitimize support for policies that specifically disadvantage Black

urban youth. We test these assertions in three distinct samples by examining the nature of the relationship between attitudes towards rap, social policies, and the attributional content of stereotypes.

Stereotypes of rap as a legitimizing ideology for discrimination

The notion that stereotypes can be used to legitimize prejudice and discrimination has been well established in social psychology (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). For example, Jost and colleagues (Jost, 2001; Jost & Burgess, 2000; Jost & Hunyady, 2002) have shown that people will often endorse stereotypes that justify existing social systems such that those who have status in the system are stereotyped as being more capable and deserving and those without status are stereotyped as being less capable and undeserving (e.g. less intelligent, or not working hard). We are especially interested in the component of stereotypes that conveys deservingness.

When it comes to support for or opposition to group-based policies, one of the most powerful tools for legitimizing discrimination is stereotyping that implies that a group is responsible for their negative life outcomes and is thus less deserving of social rights and benefits (Reyna, 2000; Reyna, 2008). Recent research has shown that these so-called 'responsibility stereotypes' may be the most potent predictors of opposition to group-based policies, especially policies that benefit low-status groups like African Americans, gays, immigrants, and the poor (e.g. Henry, Reyna, & Weiner, 2004; Reyna, Henry, Korfmacher, & Tucker, 2006). For example, although conservatives claim they oppose affirmative action for principled reasons (that the policy is unfair), people are more supportive of affirmative action for women than for Blacks. This relationship is completely mediated by beliefs that Blacks are not working hard to get ahead relative to women (Reyna et al., 2006). Other research shows that people oppose government programs more when they are framed as 'Welfare' programs more than when identical programs are framed as 'assistance to the poor'. The strongest predictor of this paradoxical

finding was that people blamed welfare recipients for their poverty but did not blame the poor (Henry & Reyna, 2007; Henry et al., 2004). More recent data reveal that stereotypes conveying internal, controllable attributions for negative qualities (such as criminal behavior or laziness) are some of the strongest predictors of support for harsh anti-immigration laws (Reyna, Dobria, & Kim, 2008).

When the stereotype is framed as an intentional violation of important societal values (such as independence, hard work, traditionalism, or respect for differences), these intentional violations are associated with negative attitudes toward the stereotyped group and are met with punitive reactions and social sanctions (Henry & Reyna, 2007; Sears & Henry, 2003, 2005; Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997). For example, perceptions that welfare recipients, gays, and Middle East Muslims violate important social values predict strong opposition to policies designed to benefit those groups (Reyna & Henry, 2008), even when controlling for other predictors of prejudice (Henry & Reyna, 2008). When it comes to the common stereotypes associated with rap and hip-hop, value violations abound. For example, the 'get rich quick through crime and violence' stereotype implies that members of this group are violating values of independence and hard work (a.k.a. individualism) as well as violating values of peace and tolerance (a.k.a. universalism—Schwartz, 1992). Thus, these stereotypes imply that they are *responsible* for their poverty and violent life outcomes and therefore deserve punitive reactions from society.

The stereotypes associated with rap and hip-hop are perfect candidates for legitimizing anti-Black attitudes and discrimination. These stereotypes not only overlap with already entrenched stereotypes of Black males as violent and criminal-minded (Devine, 1989; Dyson, 1996; Henderson-King & Nisbett, 1996) but, more important, they suggest that this behavior is completely under the volition of the offender. Stereotypes associated with rap also suggest that black males take pride and glorify their violent behavior. This belief system allows the dominant group in society to disregard accusations of racism, especially with regard to racism

in our criminal justice system. By redirecting the blame onto the Black community, especially the urban, low-income Black community, one is able to claim that zero tolerance laws are justified. Thus, rampant discrepancies between the way Black suspects are treated compared to Whites who commit identical crimes (for review, see Walker, Spohn, & DeLone, 1996) can be explained away as a difference between Blacks who glorify crime and thus deserve more punitive treatment, versus Whites who are not linked to such group-based attributions.

Predictions

This article explores the idea that perceptions of rap music have become a vehicle for reinforcing stereotypes of Blacks, and in particular, stereotypes that suggest that Blacks intentionally violate American values and are to blame for their lower status in society. Because these stereotypes imply that Blacks are to blame for their plight, non-Blacks could use their stereotypes of rap to justify prejudice and discrimination against Blacks—especially the Black urban poor. We propose five hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: We predict that, for non-Black participants, negative attitudes toward rap will be strongly associated with responsibility stereotypes and will significantly predict anti-Black legal policies and behaviors.

Hypothesis 1b: We predict that Black participants will have more positive attitudes toward rap and will be less likely to associate rap with negative stereotypes of Blacks and anti-Black policies and behaviors.

Hypothesis 2a: More importantly, we predict that the relationship between anti-rap attitudes and anti-Black policies and behaviors will be significantly mediated by stereotypes that Blacks are responsible for their poverty.

Hypothesis 2b: We expect that other measures of prejudice, such as old-fashioned racism (e.g. separatism) and anti-equality measures will not account for this relationship to the same degree as responsibility stereotypes.

Hypothesis 3: We also predict that anti-rap attitudes will be associated with greater opposition to pro-Black policies, including policies designed to help Blacks who do *not* fit the stereotype portrayed by rap.

Study 1

In the first study, we were interested in examining Hypotheses 1 and 2a. Using a nationally representative sample, the relationship between negative attitudes towards rap, stereotypes, and opposition to policies that benefit Blacks was examined for Black and White participants. We were also interested in examining the degree to which any relationship between rap attitudes and policy and behaviors was mediated by stereotypes that Blacks are lazy (a responsibility stereotype). We compared this pattern with other stereotypes and beliefs about Blacks, including the belief that Blacks have inferior abilities (an internal, but uncontrollable disposition), and beliefs that Blacks are victims of discrimination (an external and uncontrollable force). In this study we used opposition to policies designed to support Blacks as well as respondents' willingness to send their children to school with children of the opposite race. This allowed us to test our ideas with two divergent outcome variables and hints at the widespread effects of beliefs about rap. To test how widespread and generalizable these beliefs are, we turned to a national dataset of randomly sampled Americans—the General Social Survey (GSS).

Method

Participants

The 1993 General Social Survey (GSS) consisted of 1,606 randomly selected participants. After removing participants who did not answer our key variables, we were left with 968 participants (530 females and 438 males). The participants were identified as 811 White, 107 Black, and 50 other. Participants ranged from 18 to 89 years of age, with a mean age of 44.96. The White portion of the sample consisted of 381 men and 430 women, with a mean age of 45.56. The Black portion of the sample consisted of 39 men and 68 women, with a mean age of 42.85.

Procedures

The 1993 GSS made use of a full probability sample to select participants. Participants were English-speakers and non-institutionalized. Interviews were conducted throughout February,

March, and April of 1993 with a response rate of 82%.³

Measures

Only the 1993 GSS asked respondents about their music preferences. This sample allowed us to test our hypotheses with a broad representation of people, congruent with recent calls in social psychology to use more diverse samples (Henry, 2008). However, it should be cautioned that perceptions of rap music have potentially changed a great deal in the past 15 years, and thus conclusions about our hypotheses would need to include findings from more recent data collections (see Studies 2 and 3). As a part of the 1993 GSS's cultural topics module, participants answered questions pertaining to preferences for styles of music, including one item about rap. Participants were asked to rate their feelings about rap on a 5-point scale ranging from 'like very much' to 'dislike very much', so that higher scores indicated more negative attitudes towards rap.

Several items in the GSS asked about participants' perceptions of Blacks. To measure the three stereotypes relevant to this study, three items were utilized. For each item it was stated: 'On average (Blacks/African-Americans) have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people.' Following this statement explanations for these differences were provided and respondents could answer yes or no. Responses were coded 0 = no and 1 = yes, so that higher scores indicated greater endorsement of the stereotypes. The responsibility stereotype construct was represented by the statement: 'Do you think these differences are because most (Blacks/African-Americans) just don't have the motivation or willpower to pull themselves up out of poverty?' Perceived innate lack of ability was measured with the statement: 'Do you think these differences are because most (Blacks/African-Americans) have less in-born ability to learn?' Beliefs concerning external and uncontrollable attributions or perceptions of discrimination against Blacks were measured with the item: 'Do you think these differences are mainly due to discrimination?'

The GSS contains several items related to governmental policy, including racial policy.

We chose two items that measured opposition to policies designed to specifically support Blacks. These two items were standardized and averaged together to form a Black Opposition Scale ($r(220) = .40, p < .001$). The first item was contained within a series of questions assessing participants' attitudes towards problems facing the United States and participants were asked if they thought that enough money was currently being spent on the problem. One problem was 'improving the conditions of Blacks' (1 = Too Little, 2 = About Right, 3 = Too Much). Another measure of support for government help for Blacks was the item:

Some people think that (Blacks/African-Americans) have been discriminated against for so long that the government has a special obligation to help improve their living standards; they are at point 1. Others believe that the government should not be giving special treatment to (Blacks/African-Americans); they are at point 5. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you made up your mind on this?

This item was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = Government help Blacks, 5 = No special treatment).

Participants' willingness to send their children to a school that mostly consisted of students of another race was assessed in a series of questions that built upon one another. These items were recoded to form a one-item scale. The first item asked 'Would you yourself have any objection to sending your children to a school where a few of the children are [whites/(Blacks/African-Americans)]?' (1 = yes, 2 = no). If participants answered yes, the next question was 'where half of the children are [whites/(Blacks/African-Americans)]?' (1 = yes, 2 = no). If participants answered yes, the next question was 'where more than half of the children are [whites/(Blacks/African-Americans)]?' (1 = yes, 2 = no). The responses from these items were coded into one variable. Participants who answered 'yes' to the first item were coded as a 4, participants who answered 'yes' to the second item were coded as a 3, participants who responded 'yes' to the third item were coded as a 2, and participants who responded 'no' to all three items were coded as a 1. Higher scores indicated that the

participants were opposed to sending their children to a racially diverse school.

Several items were utilized as control variables. Respondents' age, sex, occupational prestige, family income (in constant 1986 dollars), and contact with Blacks were all used as control variables. Contact with Blacks was measured with the item 'Are there any Black families living close to you' (No = 0, Yes = 1). Twenty-five percent of the respondents answered no, while 75% answered yes.

Results

Hypothesis 1b states that the relationships between negative attitudes toward rap, the responsibility stereotype, and anti-Black legal policies will be differentially related for Black participants when compared with non-Black participants. This hypothesis was tested in two ways. First, using a *t*-test, it was found that Blacks ($M = 3.23, SD = 1.23$) have a more positive attitude about rap than Whites ($M = 4.03, SD = 1.08$), $t(916) = 7.08, p = .004$. More support for the prediction that Blacks and Whites have different perceptions of rap come from Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 reports the correlations between variables for Black participants. In Table 1, attitudes about rap are not related to willingness to send children to school with children of the opposite race ($r(105) = -.02, p = .83$), and opposition to Black policy ($r(24) = -.06, p = .77$), nor is it related to any of the stereotype items (all r 's < .09).

Hypothesis 1a specifies that for non-Black participants, negative attitudes toward rap will be strongly associated with responsibility stereotypes and will significantly predict anti-Black legal policies. Table 2 reports the correlations between variables for White participants. This set of correlations tells a different story than the correlations for Black participants and indicates that, for Whites, attitudes about rap are related to stereotypes about Blacks, including the responsibility stereotype, as well as policies related to Blacks. Because of the differential pattern of results for Blacks and Whites the rest of this study and article will focus on the attitudes and opinions of White and non-Black participants.

Table 1. Intercorrelations between variables for Black participants in Study 1

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Neg. rap att.	—	-.04 n = 107	-.07 n = 105	-.09 n = 106	-.02 n = 107	-.06 n = 26
2. R. stereotype		—	.53** n = 105	-.31** n = 106	-.07 n = 107	.14 n = 26
3. Innate ability			—	-.22* n = 105	-.09 n = 105	-.09 n = 26
4. Perc. of disc.				—	-.002 n = 106	.28 n = 26
5. Children school					—	.33 n = 26
6. Black opposition						—

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Note: Neg. Rap Att. = Negative attitudes about rap; R. Stereotype = responsibility stereotype; Innate Ability = perceived lack of innate ability; Perc. of Disc. = perceptions of discrimination; Children School = opposition to sending children to school with mostly the opposite race; Black Opposition = opposition to support for Blacks.

Table 2. Intercorrelations between variables for White participants in Study 1

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Neg. rap att.	—	.15** n = 811	.08* n = 799	-.11** n = 783	.12** n = 770	.21** n = 185
2. R. stereotype		—	.23** n = 799	-.29** n = 783	.29** n = 770	.28** n = 185
3. Innate ability			—	-.07 n = 772	.20** n = 760	.10 n = 182
4. Perc. of disc.				—	-.18** n = 745	-.44** n = 183
5. Children school					—	.20** n = 178
6. Black opposition						—

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Note: Neg. Rap Att. = Negative attitudes about rap; R. Stereotype = responsibility stereotype; Innate Ability = perceived lack of innate ability; Perc. of Disc. = perceptions of discrimination; Children School = opposition to sending children to school with mostly the opposite race; Black Opposition = opposition to support for Blacks.

We are particularly interested in responsibility stereotypes. A strong version of Hypothesis 1a would require that the responsibility stereotype is the only stereotype to be related to negative attitudes about rap. To see how our measures of the responsibility stereotype, as well as the other two stereotypes, were related to perceptions of rap, we used multiple regression analysis, while holding constant all of the control variables. When all of the stereotypes were simultaneously entered into the equation predicting attitudes towards rap, the only stereotype to remain a significant predictor was the responsibility

stereotype, $\beta = .13$, $p = .01$. This indicates that attitudes towards rap especially consist of attitudes about the responsibility of Blacks and supports the strong version of Hypothesis 1a. These results also provide preliminary support for Hypothesis 2b, in that if the other stereotypes are not related to negative attitudes about rap they cannot, therefore, be considered as a mediator variable.

Hypothesis 2a predicts that perceptions of rap would be related to attitudes about Black policy, but that this relationship would be mediated by the responsibility stereotype. To test this

hypothesis we followed the criteria for mediation as outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) while holding all control variables constant. Negative attitudes about rap were significantly positively related to reluctance to send children to school with children of the opposite race ($\beta = .10, p = .04$) as well as opposition to government policies designed to help Blacks ($\beta = .32, p = .002$). Next, negative attitudes about rap were significantly related to the responsibility stereotype ($\beta = .15, p = .003$). Third, the responsibility stereotype was related to both reluctance to send children to school with children of the opposite race ($\beta = .23, p < .001$) as well as opposition to government policies designed to help Blacks ($\beta = .29, p = .008$). Finally, the relationship between negative attitudes towards rap and reluctance to send children to school with children of the opposite race became non-significant ($\beta = .08, p = .14$) after adding the responsibility stereotype ($\beta = .22, p < .001$) to the equation. Further confirmation that the responsibility stereotype mediates this relationship was found in a significant Sobel test = 2.49, $p = .01$. Similarly, the relationship between negative attitudes towards rap and opposition to government policies designed to help Blacks decreased in strength ($\beta = .27, p = .01$; $\Delta\beta = .05$) after adding the responsibility stereotype ($\beta = .22, p = .05$) to the equation. This drop in beta produced a marginally significant Sobel test = 1.68, $p = .09$, suggesting a partial mediation.

Discussion

The General Social Survey (GSS) data supported our prediction that, for White respondents, attitudes toward rap music were associated with negative attitudes and beliefs about Blacks, including stereotypes that convey that Blacks are responsible for negative life outcomes, have lower levels of innate ability, and were negatively associated with perceptions of discrimination (thus implying denial of discrimination). What was additionally interesting is that attitudes toward rap were also associated with anti-Black political policy attitudes, but only for Whites. This relationship was accounted for, most notably, by the responsibility stereotypes. This

suggests that the link between negative attitudes toward rap and opposition to policies that benefit Blacks is determined to a large degree by stereotypes about Blacks' responsibility. If Whites can maintain a belief that Blacks are not trying to succeed (i.e. they are responsible for their plight), then the onus for Blacks' lower status is placed squarely on them. Thus, if Blacks are seen as responsible for negative life outcomes, then they will be seen as less deserving of social benefits. Stereotypes of both rap music and the culture that surrounds it could be vehicles for conveying and transmitting these responsibility beliefs. Because the data were obtained from a large-scale random sample, we can be fairly confident that these stereotypic associations with rap music are fairly widespread in American society, at least among White Americans in the early 1990s.

Despite these compelling findings, there were some shortcomings to these data. First, these data were obtained from a large dataset that was not originally designed to test these hypotheses. Thus, many of the measures were not ideal. Our stereotypes were measured on a binary, yes–no scale. Therefore, we had to dummy code many of these variables in order to test our mediations, so our variance was restricted. Second, we often had to use single items to assess important, complex constructs. For example, our original hypotheses pertained to beliefs about rap, but the only item that assessed attitudes toward rap in the GSS was a single item about preference for the music and not about beliefs or stereotypes of rap, let alone anti-rap attitudes. This is further complicated by the fact that we had no idea what type of rap people had in mind when rating their preference. Their ratings could be of the genre as a whole (which is what is implied by the question), or they may have answered based on a particular style of rap (e.g. gangsta rap). Third, while these data were obtained for a large-scale random sample, they were from 1993. Attitudes towards rap could very well have changed in the past 15 years as perceptions and preferences for the genre have shifted. Finally, we were not really able to fully test measures of racism in this study that might also be playing a role in these patterns (e.g. group-based dominance and separatism).

Study 2

In Study 2, we conducted a more detailed analysis of the patterns of data we found with the GSS including a more in-depth test of Hypothesis 2b and our first test of Hypothesis 3. First, we examined more complex beliefs about rap music, including stereotypes about rap, and perceived social and personal consequences of rap. This new measure allows us to test anti-rap attitudes beyond a simple like–dislike continuum. Although this measure still does not specify rap styles, it does allow us to ascertain if people were thinking about rap as an empowering or anti-social musical expression.

In addition, in our extended test of Hypothesis 2b, we also looked at the roles that different types of racism play in the link between attitudes towards rap and political policy. Specifically, we looked at separatism (a type of old-fashioned racism) and anti-equality attitudes (a type of social dominance belief). We also focused on policies that are more germane to the images often associated with rap, namely policies related to street crime (e.g. policies that apply to drugs, gangs, and violent crime). While these policies are not explicitly about Blacks, many theorists and researchers have noted that even policies that are not explicitly racial often become racialized (Sears, Sidanius, & Bobo, 2000), especially through the media (Gilens, 1999; Valentino, 1999). Finally, we tested our third hypothesis which suggests that anti-rap attitudes will be associated with greater opposition to pro-Black policies, including policies designed to help Blacks who do *not* fit the stereotype portrayed by rap (i.e. affirmative action policies targeting well qualified Blacks). We hope that by further dissecting the rap-policy relationship, we will better understand how rap has become a trigger for anti-Black attitudes and discrimination.

Method

Participants

One hundred participants were recruited from public places in Chicago in December of 2007. Two participants were excluded from analysis, because they did not complete a substantial

portion of the survey. The remaining 98 participants included 39 males, 54 females, and five people that did not indicate gender. The ethnic and racial breakdown included 22 self-identified Black/African-American, 58 Caucasian/White, six Asian/Asian American, seven Latino/Latina/Hispanic, one Middle Eastern, three as other or multiracial identifications, and one who chose not to respond. For the purposes of this study only the responses from non-Black participants were analyzed, for a final sample of 75 participants (27 males, 43 females, and 5 people who chose not to indicate gender).⁴

Procedure

Potential participants were approached in public spaces, cafés, and bus stations and were asked to participate in a written, anonymous survey on attitudes and perceptions towards rap and hip-hop, the African-American community, and race relations in general. It took approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. After completion, the survey was placed in an envelope with other completed surveys; participants were debriefed, and then thanked for their time.

Measures

Participants received a questionnaire that assessed a variety of beliefs about rap and hip-hop as well as beliefs about Blacks, Black culture, crime, and legal policies. Unless otherwise noted, all items were measured on a 7-point scale with 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Tyson's (2006) Rap Attitude and Perception (RAP) scale was used to assess participants' beliefs about the more social and cultural components of rap and hip-hop (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$) rather than like or dislike as was the case with the GSS data. The scale consists of three subscales assessing perceptions of rap as violent/misogynistic, empowering, and art. An example of an item assessing perceptions of violence would be 'Violent rap music videos can lead males to be more violent.' An empowering item is 'Rap music is a healthy resistance against the system' and an art-related item is 'Rappers are not as talented as most musicians and other musical artists.' Items were scored so that higher scores

indicated more negative perceptions of rap. For the purpose of this study, we averaged all of the scale items together to get a comprehensive measure of rap attitudes. According to Tyson (2006), the scale is valid in its omnibus form, and can be used when exploring general attitudes toward rap.

The responsibility stereotype was measured with five items, several of which were derived from the Symbolic Racism 2000 scale (Henry & Sears, 2002). These five items were combined to form the Responsibility Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$). The items read: 'On average, blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than whites because most African-Americans/Blacks just don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves up out of poverty'; 'The Irish, Italians, Jews and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. African-Americans/Blacks should do the same without any special favors'; 'It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if African-Americans/Blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites'; 'Many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. African-Americans/Blacks should do the same without any special favors'; and 'Most African-American/Blacks who receive special treatment from government programs could get by just fine without it if they really tried.'

The stereotype of Blacks as having lower levels of innate ability was assessed with the item, 'On average, blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than whites because most African-Americans/Blacks are not as capable as Whites.' We also measured the degree to which participants perceived greater economic disadvantage for Blacks as the result of discrimination using a single item that read, 'On average, African-American/Blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than whites because of discrimination in our society against African-Americans/Blacks.'

Opposition to equality was measured using three items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$). These items included: 'It is not really that big of a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others'; 'This country would be better off if we worried less about how equal people are';

and 'Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed' (reverse scored). Separatism was assessed with the single item, 'We would have fewer social problems if people of the same ethnic background lived and worked with people like themselves.'

We assessed two kinds of policy: one that disproportionately targets urban Blacks in the context of street crime (the Street Crime Policy scale), and the other assessing attitudes toward affirmative action programs that benefit Blacks. Five items were used to create the Street Crime Policy scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .63$) designed to assess attitudes towards policies that disproportionately target urban Blacks. These items include 'Three strike laws are unfair' (reverse scored); 'Police are tougher on African-American/Black suspects than they are toward White suspects' (reverse scored); 'Drug dealers should receive harsher sentences than they do now'; 'Gang members should receive harsher sentences if they commit a crime in the context of gang activity than if the same crime was committed by an individual not in a gang'; and 'Some states give harsher sentences for the sale, distribution, and use of CRACK cocaine than for powdered cocaine. I think this is a good policy.'⁵

We also assessed attitudes towards affirmative action with two items combined to create an Affirmative Action scale ($r(74) = .93, p < .001$): 'Colleges and universities should go out of their way to recruit well qualified/educated African-American/Black students' and 'Businesses should go out of their way to recruit well qualified/educated African-American/Black job candidates.' Several control variables were assessed and included in the analysis including family income, gender, and education levels.

Results

Similar to Study 1, Hypothesis 1a predicted that the responsibility stereotype would be related to anti-rap attitudes. Regression analysis was used to test this relationship. While holding all of the control variables constant, the responsibility stereotype, stereotype about innate ability, beliefs

about discrimination, opposition to equality, and endorsement of separatism were entered into the equation. The responsibility stereotype ($\beta = .27, p = .07$) and endorsement of separatism ($\beta = -.39, p = .02$) remained significant, indicating that beliefs about the responsibility of Blacks for their situation is related to negative perceptions of rap and hip-hop.

Hypothesis 1b also suggests that anti-rap attitudes would predict legal policies that affect Blacks. Regression analysis was used to test this hypothesis for both the Affirmative Action scale as well as the Street Crime Policy scale. While holding all of the control variables constant, anti-rap attitudes were negatively related to support for Affirmative Action ($\beta = -.26, p = .05$) and positively related to Street Crime policies ($\beta = .25, p = .05$). We used mediation analysis to examine what role the responsibility stereotypes and endorsement of separatism played in this relationship. Again, following the steps outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986), while holding all of the control variables constant, we tested the relationship between the two potential mediators and Black policy. For both the Affirmative Action scale and the Street Crime policy scale the responsibility stereotype remained a significant predictor (Affirmative Action: $\beta = -.50, p < .001$; Street Crime Policy: $\beta = .46, p < .001$) while endorsement of separatism did not (Affirmative Action: $\beta = .04, p = .75$; Street Crime policy: $\beta = -.05, p = .70$). Because endorsement of separatism was not related to the Black policy variables, it was not included in the rest of the mediation analysis. Anti-rap attitudes were related to the responsibility stereotype ($\beta = .33, p = .01$). When the responsibility stereotype was entered into the equation with anti-rap attitudes while predicting the Affirmative Action scale the responsibility stereotype remained significant ($\beta = -.45, p < .001$), but anti-rap attitudes did not ($\beta = -.11, p = .39$), suggesting a full mediation (Sobel test = $-2.18, p = .03$). Similar results were obtained for the Street Crime policy scale. When the responsibility stereotype was entered into the equation with anti-rap attitudes while predicting the Street Crime policy scale, the responsibility stereotype remained significant

($\beta = .40, p = .001$), but anti-rap attitudes did not ($\beta = .11, p = .35$). A significant Sobel test confirmed these results as a full mediation (Sobel test = $2.09, p = .04$).

Discussion

These data provide converging evidence supporting Study 1 that anti-rap attitudes are not only associated with stereotypes and prejudice towards Blacks, but significantly predict policies that negatively target urban Blacks. In this study, we were better able to dissect the meaning of anti-rap attitudes by using a scale that assessed people's beliefs about rap and hip-hop and not simply their preference for the music. We were also better able to understand how beliefs about rap intersect with more elaborate measures of prejudice.

The most provocative finding from a theoretical perspective was the role that responsibility stereotypes played in these associations. In Study 1, responsibility stereotypes mediated the relationship between anti-rap attitudes and anti-Black policies and behaviors. In Study 2, responsibility stereotypes fully accounted for the relationship between anti-rap attitudes and Street Crime policies, as well as anti-rap attitudes and opposition to policies designed to help Blacks that do not fit the stereotype portrayed by rap (affirmative action for qualified Blacks).

This pattern of results suggests that stereotypes of rap may be used to guide attributional judgments when it comes to evaluating the deservingness of Blacks in America. What was even more surprising was that anti-rap attitudes were also associated with opposition to policies that benefit hard-working Blacks (educated, qualified Blacks). While this could be due to anti-Black affect in general (a third variable predicting both beliefs about rap and opposition to affirmative action), the results here suggest that this relationship is a by-product of beliefs that Blacks in general are less deserving. This is congruent with previous research that has associated anti-affirmative action attitudes with responsibility stereotypes of Blacks (Reyna et al., 2006).

Study 3

The results from Studies 1 and 2 suggest that, at least for Whites and non-Blacks in America, rap has become a vehicle for the most damaging stereotypes associated with Blacks. This may be driven in part by shocking rap lyrics and videos that tell tales of brutal violence, valorization of crime, and the exploitation of women. On the other hand, these associations may be rooted more deeply in historical racial antipathy. As proposed earlier, anti-rap attitudes may be a convenient way to legitimize what were already existing stereotypes and systemic intolerance toward Blacks. One way to explore this possibility is to look at the effects of rap and hip-hop in a culture that has a relatively different socio-political history regarding race relations. The music and videos are just as accessible in almost every Western country, so if the media form functions as a proxy for justifying deep-seated anti-Black attitudes in general, then we should see similar patterns of results with regard to rap predicting stereotypes and anti-Black policy in other Western countries. However, if rap has become the scapegoat for deep-seated racial animus in America, we should not see rap playing the same role with regard to policies that impact Blacks to the degree that race relations manifest differently in the target country.

To test this, we used a survey similar to the one in Study 2, but with a British sample. We modified the policies to match local policies regarding drugs, gangs, and crime. Young people in Great Britain are exposed to much of the same rap music and videos that are valid in the United States, so they should see the same imagery associating rap with a criminal subculture (BBC News, 2007). As violent crime has increased among urban youth in the UK, politicians and social activists have started to debate the role of rap music (BBC News, 2007). However, in the context of the UK, it is important to note that rap music may not be as strongly associated with the Black community as other artistic forms of expression such as reggae and calypso. This may be because the majority of Blacks in the UK are of Afro-Caribbean descent. As such, it is also possible that the stereotypic associations found for rap in

the US may not replicate in the UK. The current study was conducted to examine this possibility, by examining Hypotheses 1a, 2, and 3.

Method

Participants

The entire sample consisted of 175 students from the University of Kent (30 male, 145 female). Nine participants identified as African/Black, 150 as Caucasian/White, 9 as Asian, and 7 indicated another ethnicity. For the purposes of this study we chose to only analyze those who identified as non-Black (29 male, 137 female).

Procedure

Participants were asked to participate in the study during an introductory psychology class in a large lecture theater for partial course credit. Surveys were distributed during this class and responses were anonymous.

Measures

Participants received a questionnaire similar to the one used in Study 2. The only difference was that the section on policies was modified. Specifically, one item was removed because the law does not exist in Great Britain (i.e. three strikes laws), and some questions were slightly modified to better match British systems. Unless otherwise noted, all items were measured on a 7-point scale with 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

To assess participants' attitudes towards rap we once again utilized Tyson's (2006) Rap Attitude and Perception (RAP) Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$). The responsibility stereotype (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$), stereotype of lower innate ability, perceptions of discrimination, opposition to equality (Cronbach's $\alpha = .55$), and separatism were all measured with the same items as in Study 2.

Because we used different policy items in a culture with different racial dynamics, some of the items did not scale as well as with the American sample. The Street Crime policy scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .56$) consisted of three items: 'Some countries give harsher sentences for the sale, distribution, and use of crack cocaine than for powdered cocaine. I think this is a

good policy'; 'Gang members should receive harsher sentences if they commit a crime in the context of gang activity than if the same crime was committed by an individual not in a gang'; and 'Drug dealers should receive harsher sentences than they do now.'¹⁶ The item 'Police are tougher on Black suspects than they are toward White suspects' (reverse coded) was analyzed separately, because of extremely low inter-item correlations.

Two items were used to assess attitudes towards programs aimed to benefit well-qualified Blacks. These items were scaled together ($r(166) = .93$, $p < .001$) and included 'Colleges and universities should go out of their way to recruit well qualified/educated Black students' and 'Businesses should go out of their way to recruit well qualified/educated Black job candidates.' Several control variables were included in the analysis including family income, gender, and education levels.

Results

First we tested Hypothesis 1a. We predicted that the responsibility stereotype would be related to anti-rap attitudes. Regression analysis was used to test this relationship. While holding all of the control variables constant, the responsibility stereotype, stereotype about innate ability, beliefs about discrimination, opposition to equality, and endorsement of separatism were entered into the equation. The responsibility stereotype ($\beta = .30$, $p = .002$) and perceptions of discrimination ($\beta = .16$, $p = .05$) remained significant predictors of anti-rap attitudes, suggesting that the responsibility stereotype is also important in the conceptualization of rap in the United Kingdom.

As a part of Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 3 we predicted that in the United Kingdom anti-rap attitudes may also be related to Street Crime policy and policies designed to help Blacks who do *not* fit the stereotype portrayed by rap. While holding all of the control variables constant, anti-rap attitudes were entered into three different regression equations predicting the Street Crime policy scale, the item addressing disproportionate police toughness, and attitudes towards helping qualified Blacks. The anti-rap scale was significantly predictive of Street Crime

policy ($\beta = .23$, $p = .005$), but was not a significant predictor of either of the remaining policy items. This suggests partial support for Hypothesis 1a, but no support for Hypothesis 3.

As a part of Hypothesis 2 we wanted to test the mediational role of the responsibility stereotype between anti-rap attitudes and Street Crime policy. First, we assessed if either of the potential mediators were predictive of Street Crime policy. Both the responsibility stereotype and perceptions of discrimination were entered into a regression equation while holding all of the control variables constant. Perceptions of discrimination ($\beta = .17$, $p = .03$) remained a significant predictor, while the responsibility stereotype did not ($\beta = .13$, $p = .11$), indicating that the responsibility stereotype does not significantly mediate the relationship between anti-rap attitudes and support for policies that target Blacks. In order to test if perceptions of discrimination worked as a mediator instead of the responsibility stereotype, a regression equation was computed predicting Street Crime policy, including all of the control variables, anti-rap attitudes and perceptions of discrimination. Both anti-Rap attitudes ($\beta = .21$, $p = .01$) and perceptions of discrimination ($\beta = .15$, $p = .05$) remained significant predictors. The drop in the anti-rap attitudes' beta was not enough to demonstrate even partial mediation (Sobel test = 1.34, $p = .18$).

Discussion

The results of Study 3 suggest that the link between negative images and beliefs associated with rap have broad, international reach. In the British sample, negative attitudes toward rap and hip-hop were associated with responsibility stereotypes and perceptions of discrimination, which was similar to the association that White Americans made between rap and anti-Black attitudes and beliefs. However, the results also suggest that these negative associations may not serve the same legitimizing function as they do in the United States. In the US, anti-rap stereotypes were associated with support for policies that negatively target urban Blacks. More important, this link was significantly mediated by

attributions that Blacks are responsible for their negative outcomes in society. Thus, the power of anti-rap attitudes with regard to race relations in America is through their propensity to reinforce stereotypes that Blacks are responsible and thus deserve harsher treatment in society.

Although, among British students, beliefs about rap are related to responsibility stereotypes as well as support for policies that target Blacks, the responsibility stereotypes did not seem to explain the link between rap attitudes and policy. Thus, the images conveyed through rap lyrics and displayed in rap videos are equally effective in reinforcing negative Black stereotypes internationally; however, these stereotypes may not be translated into legitimizing tools that guide policy attitudes in the same way they do in America.

General discussion

This research investigated the stereotypes associated with rap music and hip-hop culture, and how those stereotypes may influence anti-Black attitudes and justifications for discrimination. In three studies, using a nationally representative sample as well as samples from two different countries, we found that stereotypes about rap are pervasive and have powerful consequences. In all three samples, negative attitudes toward rap were associated with negative stereotypes of Blacks that blamed Blacks for their economic plights (via stereotypes of laziness and denial of discrimination), and in one sample (Study 2) anti-rap attitudes were related to support for separatism. Anti-rap attitudes were also associated with discrimination against Blacks, through both personal behaviors (e.g. reluctance to send one's children to a mixed-race school) and political behaviors (supporting policies that negatively target low-income Black communities; and opposing policies that benefit Blacks).

One explanation for this association is that prejudice against Blacks makes anything associated with Black culture aversive, and these associations are by-products of anti-Black attitudes producing both prejudice/discrimination and a distaste for rap music (Bryson, 1996). Although this 'third variable' explanation is possible and

likely accounts for some of the variance in these findings, it cannot explain the whole story. First, prior research has shown that rap is particularly aversive to Whites, and that other forms of Black music (jazz, gospel) do not elicit the same strong reactions (McCrary, 1993), so the explanation that anti-rap attitudes simply reflect a distaste for anything 'Black' is an oversimplification. There seems to be something particularly potent about rap music and the images associated with it.

Studies 2 and 3 allowed us to gain a better understanding of the stereotypes associated with rap and how they function. First, in these two studies we were able to use a detailed measure of beliefs about rap and hip-hop. Higher scores on this scale indicated that participants perceived rap as a musical genre that glorifies crime and violence, degrades women, and does little to benefit or empower the Black community. To the degree that one endorses these negative beliefs about rap, people were more likely to perceive Blacks as responsible for their lower status in society, and more likely to endorse policies that discriminate against the Black community. Thus, more than any other quintessential 'Black' expression, some forms of rap music (at least in the eyes of many Whites) reinforce prevalent stereotypes of Blacks as angry, violent, disrespectful, and unwilling to do the hard work to succeed in our society using legal means. What is especially powerful about this association is that many who oppose rap believe that these stereotypes are being actively reinforced by Blacks themselves (e.g. 'gangsta' rappers whose 'identities' are rooted in criminal or gang culture), which only further reifies these stereotypes for Whites. If Blacks are seen as intentionally supporting an antisocial lifestyle, then rap becomes associated with symbolic threats to the values held most dear to Western cultures. These value violations, in turn, make it easy to justify denying Blacks social benefits such as financial assistance (Study 1), Affirmative Action (Study 2), and legitimizes negative treatment of Blacks, especially Blacks who are economically disadvantaged (Studies 1–3).

To further explore the legitimizing function of these associations, we turned to our markers of deservingness—responsibility stereotypes.

Anti-rap attitudes were related to stereotypes that Blacks are less motivated to work (Studies 1–3) and to the denial of discrimination as an explanation for Blacks' disadvantage (Study 3). This attributional pattern puts the blame squarely on Blacks for their lower status in society. Attribution research has long established that inferences of responsibility are often the strongest predictors of punishment and denial of assistance (Weiner, 1993, 1995). Indeed, these responsibility stereotypes partially or completely mediated many of the relationships between anti-rap attitudes and anti-Black policies and behaviors. Because of this association, the negative images associated with rap become easy scapegoats through which to validate stereotypes that Blacks are to blame, and thus they do not deserve the benefits that society has to offer.

The negative images associated with rap also seem to have a contaminating effect on the Black community in that even Blacks who are successful and are working hard receive less support. In Study 2, anti-rap attitudes were associated with opposition to affirmative action efforts even when it comes to recruiting Blacks who were described as educated and qualified. This finding supports prior research that demonstrates that negative images associated with rap can influence judgments of incidental targets if the targets are Black (Johnson et al., 2000).

As demonstrated in previous research on legitimizing ideologies, concepts of deservingness can function in service of existing social systems (Jost, 2001; Jost & Burgess, 2000; Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Reyna et al., 2006). The current research not only demonstrates that stereotypes conveying deservingness play a role in legitimizing disparate racial status, but goes one step further in that it identifies one of the sources of those stereotypes—rap/hip-hop culture. By identifying the legitimizing mechanism (i.e. deservingness) as well as one of the contexts of that mechanism (i.e. perceptions of rap music), it is possible to more fully understand how culture can reinforce the legitimizing nature of stereotypes. Recently, system justification researchers have suggested that a person's ideological leanings can influence their music preference (among other things; Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008). While the research

presented here provides support for that notion, it also goes one step further and demonstrates that music, specifically stereotypes of rap and hip-hop, can serve to reinforce the current state of affairs. Future research would do well to examine the notion that stereotypes of rap and hip-hop serve to justify the status quo more broadly by using developed measures of system justification (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Kay & Jost, 2003).

Also, future research should examine the possibility that some cultural expressions might be seen as more symbolically threatening than others. For example, we know that many of the stereotypes associated with rap music do not seem to apply to other quintessentially Black musical forms like jazz and blues (McCrary, 1993). It would be interesting to see if these other musical genres serve the same legitimizing function as rap. Researchers should also analyze the content of stereotypes associated with these musical genres for cues that indicate symbolic threat (Henry & Reyna, 2007; Reyna, 2008).

The legitimizing function of anti-rap attitudes does not appear to be cross-cultural. In the British sample, participants did make similar stereotypical associations with rap, and attitudes toward rap were associated with anti-Black policies, but was only associated with one policy measure. This policy item was not related to attributions of deservingness. As such, the anti-rap attitudes in the UK may not serve the same legitimizing function that they serve in the United States. It is important to note that rap music may also be viewed as a distinctly African-American form of music. Blacks in the UK are mostly Afro-Caribbean, and thus it is possible that their associated forms of artistic expression (e.g. reggae and calypso) may play the same role that rap music plays in the United States. However, further research is needed to explore this hypothesis.

It is also interesting to note that the effects obtained for White participants do not appear to occur for Black participants. In fact, our research shows that Black participants like rap music more than White participants. However, it appears that Blacks are better able to distinguish rap and its images as simply an art form from their larger socio-cultural experience. It is important

to note that there is ambivalence within the Black community about rap music. On one level, people are quite critical of the negative imagery that appears in some rap music (Mahiri & Conner, 2003; Trapp, 2005). On another level, rap music is also viewed as the voice of a disenfranchised people (Armstrong, 1993; Lang, 2000; McLaren, 1995). As such, although there are debates and concerns about the content of rap lyrics within the Black community, these concerns do not appear to guide political decision-making or serve to legitimize the status quo. Indeed, rap music may actually provide a distinct form of cultural expression that can motivate and inspire poor urban communities to rise above their difficulties (Trapp, 2005). Some authors have recommended the use of hip-hop in therapeutic and education contexts among the Black urban community (Kobin & Tyson, 2006; Stovall, 2006). Further research is needed to explore the social identity functions of rap music and hip-hop culture.

Limitations and future directions

It is important to note that this research is based on survey methodology, so firm conclusions about the causal nature of the relationships we report cannot be reached. Similarly the ordering of our survey may have been responsible for some of the results, such that asking participants about rap in the beginning of the survey could have influenced later attitudes. This seems more likely in Study 2, but because of the divergent findings in Study 3 it seems unlikely that ordering effects were solely responsible for the observed relationships. Furthermore order-effects are less of a concern in the GSS where target items were located in different parts of the survey, and thus were encountered in different contexts over the course of the interview that lasted several hours. However, further experimental research is needed to demonstrate that exposure to rap music primes the salience of responsibility stereotypes. Despite any shortcomings in the survey instrument, the results we report were consistent across a national, random sample of adults as well as with more specifically designed research studies across two countries. As such, we are relatively confident of the pattern of results we obtained in the current research.

These studies demonstrate that rap music is culturally symbolic not just for the Black community, but for society in general (both American and British). Given its potential to reach large audiences and convey complex messages, rap artists, social scientists, and members of the community should continue to examine not only the meaning of rap and the culture that surrounds it, but investigate methods to channel this powerful art form in positive ways. Although rap seems to be symbolic of anti-Black attitudes, one could potentially use the same vehicle to promote positive images of Black culture. To some degree perceptions are already shifting. Marketing gurus have caught on to the power of rap to draw in audiences. These days, rap is used to sell products, usher in celebrities and sports teams, and provide a catchy backdrop to television shows. Rap has also been used as an educational tool in many urban schools, and is highly respected. Whites are publicly associating themselves with rap. For example, the Olympic phenomenon, Michael Phelps has discussed in length his reliance on rap music to motivate him before competitions.

As the variety of rap sub-genres become more ubiquitous Whites, like Blacks in our studies, will be more likely to see rap for what it is: a musical style. And as with many musical movements that preceded rap (such as jazz and rock and roll), whether it is viewed positively or negatively will have more to do with the individual artists than with the culture from which the art form originated. However, until this cultural shift occurs, rap will likely continue to serve as a proxy for anti-Black attitudes and as a vehicle with which to transmit stereotypes about Blacks as responsible for their negative outcomes in society. As suggested in this research, such stereotypes may be effective tools to perpetuate and justify discrimination and blame.

Notes

1. Nas recently announced that, because of pressure from the record label and fans, he has opted to release the album without a title, but with a prominent letter N on the cover (Fox News, May 2008).

2. Rap music is a diverse musical genre. It is important to note that most anti-rap backlash is directed at the most violent, explicit form of rap often referred to as 'gangsta rap' (gangster rap). Most (but not all) of the articles and research cited here refer to music from this sub-genre.
3. More information on the General Social Survey is available from the National Opinion Research Center. It can be found at <http://www.norc.org/GSS+Website>.
4. A convenience sample was used, and there were no formal records of attrition. However, we estimate that the majority of people approached complied.
5. Although this reliability is modest, given the very diverse issues these policy items capture we believe this reliability to be adequate.
6. The alpha for the Street Crime policy scale in this sample is low. We felt that in order to better compare Study 2 and Study 3 it was necessary to keep all scales intact as much as possible. Furthermore, exploratory factor analysis on the three items included in the scale revealed a single factor that accounted for more than 53% of the variance.

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