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### How Rap is Helpful and Harmful for Kids

Rap once started out as music that had to do with having fun and had a positive message. However, much of the rap music today is far from what rap was in the beginning. Most of the rap, today, gives off negative messages that have to do with violence or drugs. Even though rap music can be seen as having a negative impact on children, it also has the potential to have a positive effect on their lives. One on hand it encourages negative stereotypes about women, promotes alcohol and drug abuse, but on the other hand it gives young children an outlet to express themselves and makes education fun and easier for kids to participate in subjects that might seem hard or not interesting.

Rap music's main audience is not only adults, it is the adults' children. Many kids have access to rap music by radio or their phones or they have friends with access. When these kids do not have someone telling them what to listen to and what not to listen to, it makes it easy for rappers to get their attention. The lyrics that are in rap music today are appalling when it comes to women. According to Bianca Wade's article, "Women's portrayal in Hip Hop music videos," "These perceptions misrepresent women in music videos and portray them as sex symbols or material objects which suggest they are powerless and submissive." The music videos that include women are extremely graphic and demonstrate why women are put down and degraded. Women are wearing skimpy and provocative clothing, or sometimes just a bra and underwear. A

perfect example of how women are wearing little to no clothes is “Tip Drill” by Nelly. In this video there are women walking and dancing around just wearing bathing suits and dancing provocative. There are also three women in a bathtub with only underwear dancing and rubbing on each other. When young boys see these type of videos they see that women are attracted to money. Thinking that women will do almost anything for money can lead to young boys aspiring to getting money so that they could have women. According to Brandon Albert, “When children watch television and see someone throw money in the air, with lots of cars and women, that image is stored in their minds as the definition of success.” Kids that have little to no parental guidance will often times look up to these rappers. These rappers are often times not aware of the effects it has on young children because they are only worried about sales.

Furthermore, rap music promotes drug and alcohol use among young people. With its lyrics glorifying drug and alcohol use and young children are lead into thinking that doing drugs is cool. According to Dr. Boyce Watkins’s article, “Commercialized Rappers Have Become Modern Day Drug Dealers.” According to Sid, studies have shown that kids who listen to rap, after a year study, 522 black girls between the ages of 14 and 18 were 1.5 times more likely to get a sexually transmitted disease, use drugs, or drink alcohol (Kircheimer). An example of how rappers are glorifying rap through their lyrics is Wiz Khalifa and his song “French Inhale,”

And you don't gotta roll one cuz it's already rolled  
 Check out my technique, just weed let it fold  
 Shit I've been smokin' since I was 14 years old  
 I had a dime who never smoked blunts just bowls  
 Taught me how to blow O's, inhale through my nose  
 So if you see me smoking blow my high  
 Uh, so I roll one and we both gonna fly  
 You smell it all in my clothes

This song shows how people are proud of doing drugs at a young age. When kids have access to these type of lyrics, it shows kids that this type of thing is cool and acceptable.

However, rap music does have the potential to give kids a positive message. For many young kids, rappers are idols because they grew up in similar situations and in neighborhoods that were hard to live in. The young kids see that it is possible to get out of their situation and make something of themselves. Rap music gives young adults an outlet to express their pain while trying to uplift people. There are several programs out there that actually help teens with the power of rap. According to "Rap as a Positive Influence," there is a program that is called Project Spitfire. "This organization was founded by Henry Mann and aims to pair young musicians with professional producers who help them record songs and videos. "I found this project to be inspiring because they are looking for teens that have only positive messages and that are trying to make change happen in their communities by telling the youth in their communities about how there are alternative lifestyles. I believe that there should be more programs like this because it is helping kids see that they are capable of many things, and that living in crime-ridden neighborhoods is not the only way to live. If there were more programs like this, then people would slowly change their opinions about how rap is harmful to today's youth.

Furthermore, Rap music is beneficial to education. From personal experience, I have had teachers, especially in math and physics that have assigned projects where we had to make up a song or a rap about either explaining how to solve equations or naming all the muscles in our body. According to Laura Lewis Brown, "Research has found that learning music facilitates learning other subjects and enhances skills that children inevitably use in other areas." Music like rap is beneficial because the lyrics are going to a rhythm and they often times rhyme. If you are

faced with a difficult subject like math, a way you can make it fun is by putting a beat and some words that rhyme, incorporate it with what you learned in math, and you have yourself a beautifully composed rap about factoring. There are many examples of students doing this and it looks like they are having fun. An example is the video “Teach Me How to Factor (WSHS Math Rap Song),” here you have a student remixing a popular song with his own lyrics that have to do with math. If kids, especially kids who have trouble in these classes, can benefit the most because it is involving something that they love with something that they do not really like. Because they are given the opportunity to express themselves, they are more likely to put a great amount of effort into their assignment.

Finally, Rap music ultimately does have an impact on children. It can either be beneficial or harmful. Even though rap music has mostly received negative attention, mostly because of the lyrics and the message it is giving, it does have the potential to change and to help kids. There are rappers out there that have songs that are positive and that they are concerned with today’s youth. Rap music’s future lyrics shape much of today’s kids’ futures.