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'Degrading' Lyrics Linked to Teen Sex But music doesn't necessary *cause* promiscuity, experts stress

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TUESDAY, Feb. 24 (HealthDay News) -- There's still no firm proof that raunchy music makes kids have sex, but a new study provides another suggestion that there's at least some kind of link between "degrading" songs and teenage sexual activity.

 The findings indicate that "people who are exposed to certain messages in music are more likely to copy or emulate what they hear," said Dr. Brian A. Primack, a pediatrician and lead author of the study released Tuesday.

In other words, teens who hear about degrading sexual practices in their favorite songs might decide to try them out themselves. However, it's also possible that the reverse is true: Kids who have sex just happen to like raunchy music.

Expanding on previous research that linked sexually charged songs to sex itself, the researchers surveyed 711 Pittsburgh-area ninth-grade students in 2006 and 2007 about their sexuality activity and the songs they liked to listen to.

The researchers then determined how many of the 279 most popular songs in 2005 were "degrading" because they referred to sex that's "based only on physical characteristics" and features a "power differential" instead of being mutually consensual.

For example, "Wait (The Whisper Song)" by the rap group known as Ying Yang Twins was deemed degrading, apparently because it included a reference to rough intercourse.

By contrast, the lyrics of the rap song "Baby I'm Back" by Baby Bash, including the lines "I wanna be stronger than we've ever been/I'm here to cater to you," was said to be not

degrading.

The researchers looked for links between the listening habits of the students and their sexual activity. Their findings are scheduled to be published in the April issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

After adjusting the statistics in their findings to account for the possible influence of such factors as race and age, the researchers found that youths who listened most to "degrading" songs were more than twice as likely to have had intercourse.

But the findings don't prove that the music caused kids to have sex, acknowledged Primack, who's an assistant professor of medicine and pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

"The opposite could be true -- that people who have more sex then go out and seek music with degrading sexual messages," he said.

Other researchers have linked music to sexual activity, but evidence of a direct cause-and-effect relationship remains elusive.

In the current study and an earlier one based on the same analysis of 279 songs from 2005, the researchers did not identify any degrading songs by title and disclosed lyrics from only a handful of them.

They said that 64 percent of rap songs analyzed were sexually degrading, compared with 7 percent of country songs and 3 percent of pop songs.

What to do? Laura Lindberg, senior research associate at the Guttmacher Institute in New York City, said that teens need to learn how to interpret and analyze the messages they see in the world around them.

But, "there's no silver bullet," she said. "If you get all teenagers to turn in their iPods, the teen pregnancy rate is not going to automatically decline."

More information:

The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States has an online booklet for teenagers on [talking about sex](#).

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