

THE PORTRAYAL AND FREQUENCY OF RELIGION IN SECULAR RAP MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

Secular rap has arguably become one of the most influential and popular genres in music, and its effects on aspects of American culture, like sexuality (Ward, Hansbrough, & Walker, 2005) and violence (Jones, 1997), have been measured. The way rap music may have potentially influenced the religiosity of its listeners has yet to be explored. This study starts that line of research by measuring the amount of religious references in secular rap songs and examining any possible relationships between the amounts of religious references and how religion is portrayed in those songs. The researcher conducted a content analysis of lyrics from twenty influential rappers. The researcher then compared the portrayal of religion in rap songs released before the death of rapper Tupac Shakur to the songs released after that date. The results indicated a significant relationship between the amount of religious references and the framing of religion, while the researcher found significant negative relationships in how religion was framed after the death of Shakur. The results indicate a need for media effects research on the lyrics of Tupac Shakur to further examine the influence the lyrics have on listeners.