



Background

Substance use is a particular behavior that has been associated with rebellious music choices. The content of popular music often includes references to substance use, which may have influenced the listeners’ decisions regarding substance use. Studies have analyzed the content of drug references in popular music for trends in substance use portrayals in songs. Additionally, researchers have found correlations between music choices and rate of substance use among adolescents and various youth cultures.

As music itself has changed in form over the last decades, so has its content. A review of the top billboard songs over the course of four decades showed substantial increases in references to substance use. However, drug references in music are not always positive.

Music preference often plays a role in forming friendships in adolescence, with mutual friends having a high similarity in overall and specific music preferences. Adolescents whose peers participated in substance use were more likely to participate in substance use themselves. When adolescents listened to music related to higher substance use they tend to seek friends who listen to similar music.

Substance use may be viewed differently by different ethnic groups. Researchers have studied differences in substance use among African American and Caucasian adolescents. Caucasian adolescents reported higher rates of tobacco, alcohol, and inhalant use compared to African Americans. No significant difference in use of marijuana, cocaine, hallucinogen or ecstasy use was found. However, African Americans perceived tobacco use to be more wrong than Caucasians perceived it to be. Substance use is counter to the stereotype of Asians being the model minority, with even Asians believing that most Asians do not use drugs.

The current study hypothesized that differences between perceived substance use risk and recent substance use would differ based on participant ethnicity. It was also hypothesized that music exposures to substance use content would mediate the relationship between ethnicity and substance use.

Table 1. Perception Drug Use Risk

| Ethnicity | M | SD |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|
| African American ^a | 63.67 | 6.26 |
| Caucasian ^b | 59.55 | 7.59 |
| Asian | 60.37 | 8.53 |
| Hispanic | 61.37 | 7.98 |

Table 2. Recent Substance Use by Ethnicity

| Ethnicity | M | SD |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|
| African American ^a | 12.47 | 2.77 |
| Caucasian ^b | 14.03 | 4.41 |
| Asian | 12.55 | 3.44 |
| Hispanic | 13.42 | 3.62 |

Music Preference as a Mediator between Ethnicity and Perceptions of Acceptability and Harm with Substance Use

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Methodology

Participants

Participants identified their race as 64.8% Caucasian, 14.5% Hispanic, 12.5% African American, and 8.2% Asian. Age of participants ranged from 18 to 59 years, with the majority being 18 to 21 years. Three hundred and twenty one participants were female (69.3%) and 142 participants were male (30.7%).

Measures

Participants answered four questionnaires which gathered demographic information, artist preference, perception of risk from substance use and recent substance use information. The five songs from the top ten artists selected as most listened to by participants were coded for substance use references. The lyrics and videos from each of these songs were coded separately by two raters. Inter-rater reliability for the current study was significant, $r(162) = .82, p < .001$.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from psychology classes from a diverse university to complete the online survey. Participants received research credit or extra credit for their participation. IRB approval for surveys, sample size and collection was obtained prior to data collection and was approved exempt.

Results

ANOVA's were conducted to compare perceived risk of substance use and recent substance use between ethnicities. ANOVA between race and perceived risk associated with substance use indicated statistically significant difference between groups, $F(3, 459) = 5.22, p < .001$ (See Table 1.). A Tukey post hoc test revealed statistical significance differences for substance use risk between African American and Caucasian groups. A second ANOVA was conducted between race and frequency of recent substance use. Results indicated statistically significant differences between groups, $F(3, 459) = 3.51, p = .02$. (See Table 2). Post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences for substance use totals for African American and Caucasian groups.

To test the hypothesis that music drug use exposures via lyrics and videos mediate the relationship between ethnicity and drug use habits, a Test of Joint Significance (TJS) involving regression analyses were performed. The first analysis regressed ethnicity on drug use references in music lyrics. Results were not significant. The second analysis regressed ethnicity on drug use references in music videos. Results were significant, confirming that participant ethnicity influences the amount of drug use references participants are exposed to via music videos. When exposure to drug related references in music lyrics and music videos were used as predictors for perception of risk associated with substance use, TJS analysis indicated significant results. Likewise, exposure to drug related references in music lyrics and music videos significantly predicted frequency of recent substance use. Results can be found in Figure 1.

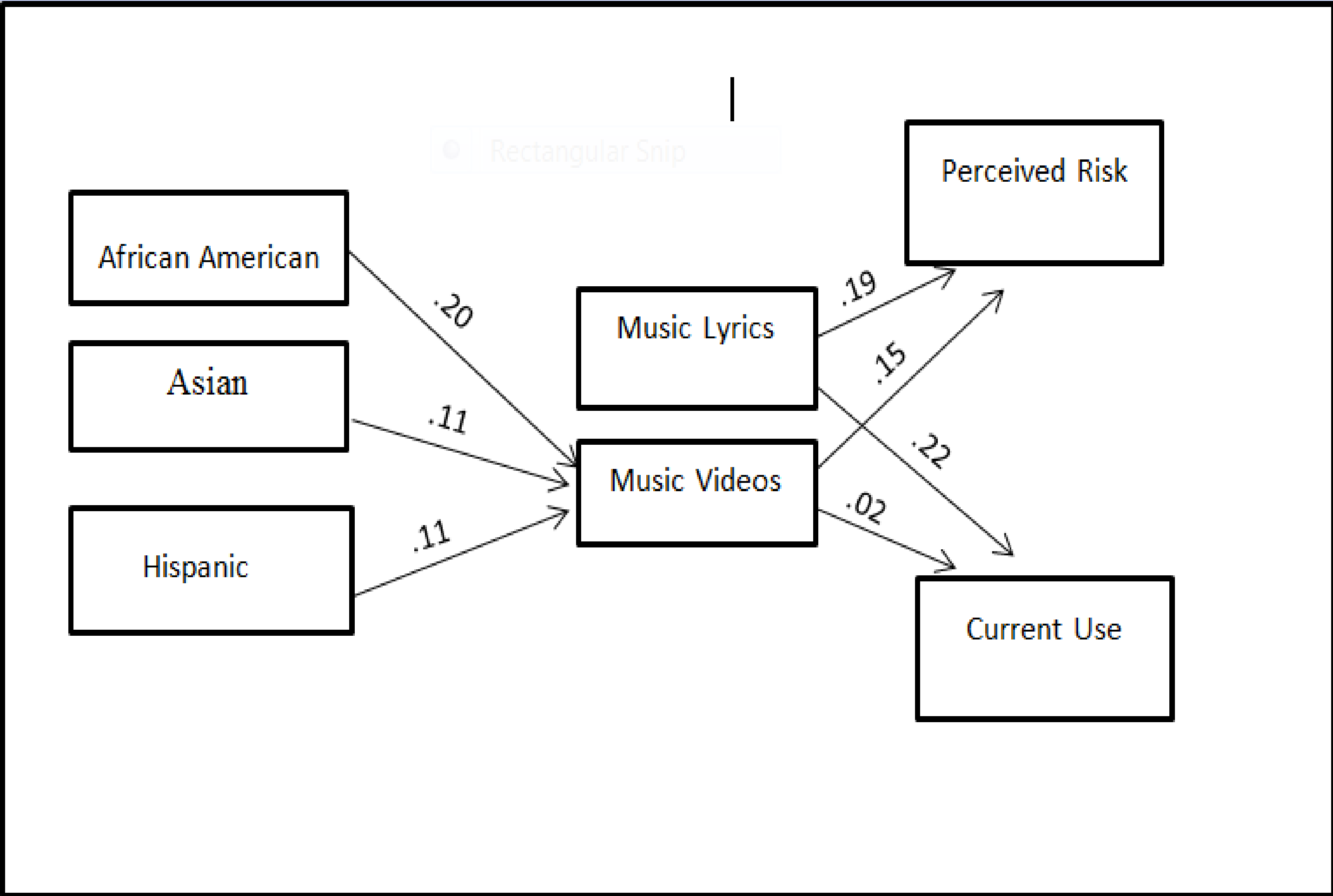


Figure 1. Regression Model



Discussion

Results supported the hypothesis that substance use references in music lyrics and videos would act as a mediator between ethnicity and current drug use and perception of risk of drug use. Differences were noted between African American and Caucasian ethnic groups in regards to perceived risk of substance use and current substance use. Not surprisingly, perceived risk of substance use and frequency of current substance use appear to have an inverse relationship. African Americans reported higher perceived risk and less frequency of current use. Conversely, Caucasians reported lower perceived risk and greater frequency of current use. Exposure to substance use references in music lyrics and videos predicted the frequency of recent substance use. Additionally, ethnicity influenced the amount of exposure to substance use in music videos. While race did not predict exposure to substance use references in music lyrics, it did predict exposure to references in music videos.

These results indicate that targeting substance use interventions using music media specific to ethnicity may be valuable. Considering that the Caucasian group reported less exposure, less perceived risk, and higher current use, this group would be an appropriate target for a music media based substance use prevention program.