

Analyzing the Relationship Between Live Music Performances and Violence in Madison

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Abstract

This project tested the dominant cultural belief that Hip-Hop music is a more violent form of music. We collaborated with Dr. Karen Reece, president of the Urban Community Arts Network (UCAN), which confronts the racialized barriers local Hip-Hop artists face and builds sustainable and safe performance opportunities for all local Hip-Hop artists. Our research compared music genres and indicators of violence. Using data from the Madison Police Department (2008-2016), we coded and analyzed 4,624 police calls made from bars, clubs and venues licensed to host live musical performances in Madison. We then determined whether there was a live music performance during the time of a police call by using archives from local publications, venue websites, and direct correspondence with venues. When compared with all other genres, our analysis does not confirm the popular belief that live Hip-Hop performances have higher instances of violence in Madison, WI. 3

Why do This Study

Hip-Hop is an underrepresented music genre in the city of Madison, Wisconsin. The stigma that Hip-Hop is a music genre associated with violence, especially weapons violence, is one that criminalizes the genre as a whole and hurts local artists through their complete lack of access to performance space. The news media perpetuates the stigma, making isolated incidents sound commonplace with comments such as “The, ahem, rap against Hip-Hop shows in Madison has long been that they attract violent crowds — and sometimes they do, including ones with guns.”

The UW Madison Department of Community and Environmental Sociology’s partnership with the Urban Community Arts Network has helped bridge knowledge about the music scene and social research methods to study the question of whether Hip-Hop is a more violent music genre. We know that other genres of music in Madison have developed networks of artists, booking agents, and venue owners. These connections and straightforward avenues to performance opportunities are not present for Hip-Hop artists to establish themselves in the local music scene. Many problems with venue space for local Hip-Hop artists have arisen in the past in Madison. The Frequency, a downtown music venue, put a complete ban on the genre after a weapons incident outside the venue after a Hip-Hop show. Many local bars have filtered Hip-Hop out of their jukeboxes, even though currently about 40 of the top Billboard 100 songs are in the Hip-Hop genre. The exclusion of Hip-Hop from professional performance spaces sends the genre underground to places such as house parties, thus risking further criminalization.

But is the dominant cultural fear of Hip-Hop deserved? We have seen in our data that weapons incidents have occurred during a wide variety of genres of live performances in Madison, and the highest incidence by genre was not live Hip-Hop shows. But weapons incidents related with the Hip-Hop genre seem to generate wider media attention than other genres, and add to the stigma associated with violence. Because of the poor relationship the city of Madison has with Hip-Hop as a whole, and the lack of performance space for so many talented artists, we have taken on this research project that looks at the relationship between music genre and violence, as seen through police calls for service.

Summary of Major Findings

- Live Hip-Hop shows do not show up as associated with the highest proportions of police calls, offenses, or violence using any analysis.
- A standardized measure of police calls for service across venues by genre shows that mixed DJ sets that may or may not include Hip-Hop, Country music, and EDM showed higher call numbers than live Hip-Hop
- The proportion of police calls for service that result in charged offenses shows that Hip-Hop ends up slightly below Country music and electronic dance music, and very close to Caribbean Mix and Karaoke/Open Mic.
- Ratios of the proportion of service calls coded as violent using a less restrictive method showed that DJ sets, Karaoke/Open Mic, Punk Mix, and Country music had higher proportions of violent calls for service than live Hip-Hop.
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- Ratios of the proportion of charged offenses coded as violent using a less restrictive method shows that live Hip-Hop comes in below Hard Rock/Heavy Metal, World Mix, DJ sets, Latin, Jazz, Performance Arts, and Karaoke/Open Mic.
- Ratios of the proportion of charged offenses coded as violent using a more restrictive method shows that live Hip-Hop comes in below Hard Rock and Heavy Metal, World Mix, DJ sets, Jazz, Latin, Country, American/Classic Rock, Caribbean, Folk, and Karaoke/Open Mic.
- The data set included 11 calls for service coded as a weapons violation, and 13 offense charges coded as a weapons violation. None of these cases were associated with a live Hip-Hop performance or DJ set that was exclusively Hip-Hop music.