Moral Themes in Lyrics of Popular Rap Songs in Comparison to Other Music Genres

Sungbin Youk, Haochuan Wang, Musa Malik, & René Weber

Media Neuroscience Lab, University of California Santa Barbara

Background

- Rap, heavy metal, and rock are genres that have been criticized for their lyrical contents.
- Although previous research on these genres has identified various antisocial topics, such as misogyny, violence, homocide, suicide, sexual promiscuity, and Satanism, it tends to be 'one-off' as it lacks a coherent theoretical framework.
- The two studies examined the lyrical content by considering the five moral foundations outlined in Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), sentiment, and use of profanity.
- Theoretical Framework of this project: Model of intuitive morality and exemplars (MIME) describes a reciprocal process in which media representation and audience moral intuitions are continuously influencing each other.

Study 1: Rap vs. Others

- Billboard
  - overall end-of the year top albums
  - end-of the year rap albums
- n = 8313 songs
- Computational analysis of lyrics
  - Moral foundations: eMFD score
  - Sentiment: NRC Emotion Lexicon
  - Profanity: 1616 words

- Rap > Others
  - Authority (upholding)
  - Negative sentiment
  - Profanity

Study 2: Rap, Heavy Metal, Rock

- iTunes Top 100 Songs
  - Overall, Pop, Rap, Heavy Metal, and Rock
  - Others (n = 55), Pop (n = 93), Rap (n = 92), Heavy Metal (n = 88), and Rock (n = 99)

- Amazon Reviews
  - Text
  - Ratings

Lyrical Content
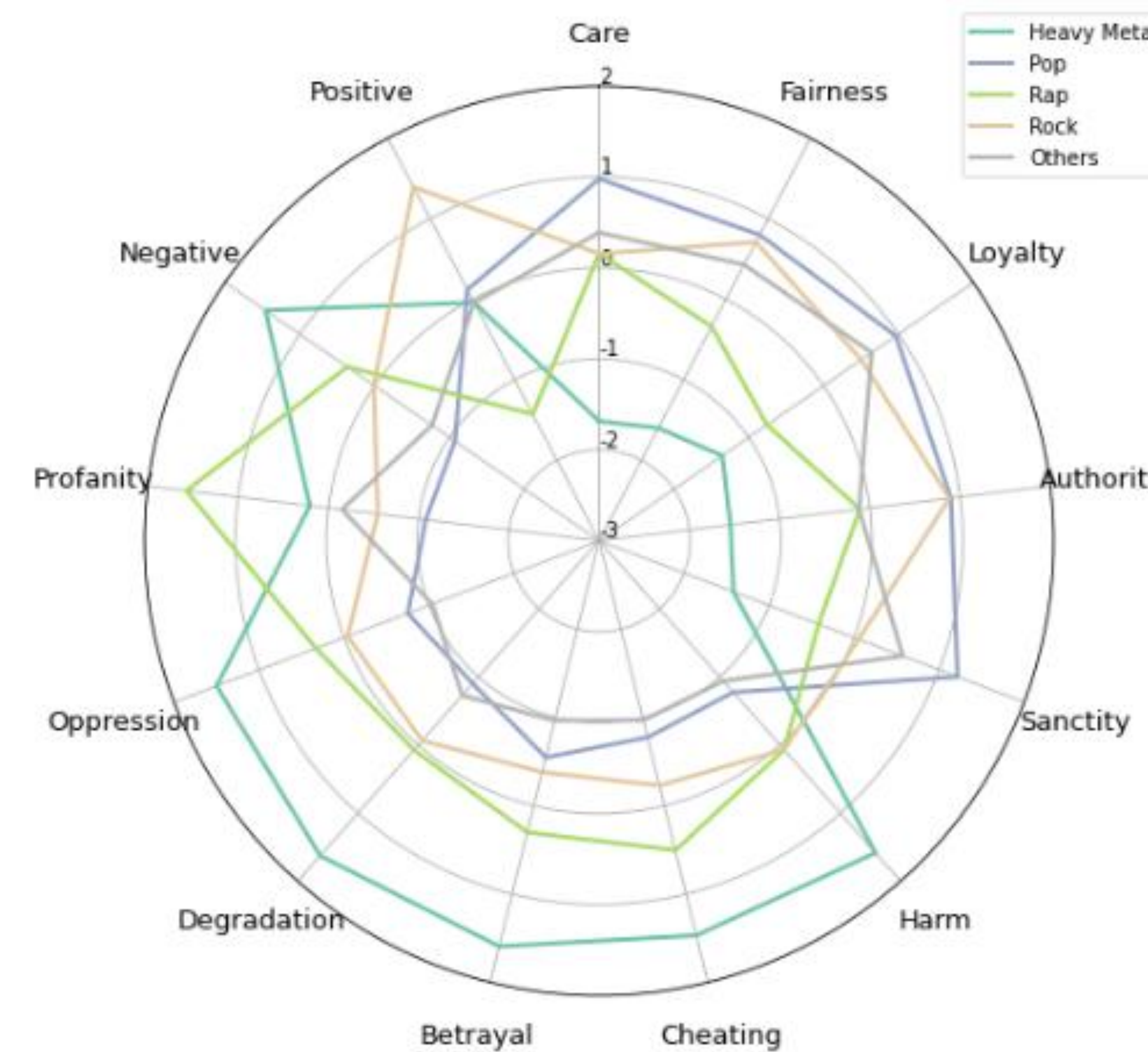
Amazon Reviews
- Reference Group = Other

$\chi^2 (45) = 1222.45, p < .001$, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = .39$	Dummy Coded Average Review Rating (1 = All 5 Star)			
	B	SE	Z	Odd Ratio
Intercept	-9.11	5.46	-1.67	< .001
Profanity	19.20	7.90	2.43*	> 100
Virtue Care × Heavy Metal	102.70	48.03	2.14*	> 100
Virtue Fairness × Heavy Metal	-116.70	58.71	-1.99*	< .001
Virtue Loyalty × Rap	-194.60	97.54	-2.00*	< .001

$F (34, 273) = 1.97, p = .002$, adjusted $R^2 = .10$		Moralized Language in Reviews			
		β	B	SE	t
Intercept		0.00	2.09	0.57	3.65***
Virtue Care		0.85	17.08	8.23	2.08*
Virtue Sanctity		-0.88	-24.09	10.74	-2.24*
Positive		-0.43	-6.78	2.01	-3.38***
Virtue Care	× Heavy Metal	-0.67	-19.88	9.37	-2.12*
	× Pop	-1.92	-40.44	9.53	-4.24***
	× Rap	-0.84	-20.68	9.70	-2.13*
	× Rock	-1.14	-21.90	8.94	-2.45*
Virtue Sanctity	× Heavy Metal	0.88	28.39	11.85	2.40*
	× Pop	2.21	51.92	12.52	4.15***
	× Rock	1.25	28.44	11.94	2.38*
Vice Care	× Heavy Metal	-1.52	-23.67	9.18	-2.58*
	× Pop	1.74	35.74	12.25	2.92**
Positive	× Pop	0.47	10.37	2.93	3.54***
	× Rap	0.30	7.73	3.15	2.45*
	× Rock	0.48	8.69	2.72	3.20*

Results

- Rap songs, along with other controversial genres (i.e. rock and heavy metal), are lyrically different from other songs (including pop songs).
  - Heavy metal songs differed the most
- Amazon Reviews (more moralized language)
  - Rap songs that features less care and more positive sentiment
  - Rock songs that features less of care, more harm, and more sanctity
  - Heavy metal songs that features less care and harm but more sanctity
- Amazon Ratings (more likely to receive a perfect score)
  - Songs that include profanity
  - Rap songs that does not feature loyalty
  - Heavy metal songs that features care but not fairness

Discussion

- Controversial genres tend to include violation of moral foundations.
- Some writers may adhere to certain moral themes due to the recursive interaction between the content creator and the audience (MIME).
- The product features (lyrics of the songs) are used to predict audience appraisal (expressed through moralized language in reviews and product ratings).
  - Moralized language reflect moralized attitudes. Moralized attitudes indicates a strong personal connection to product

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