

# Is Hip-Hop Violent? Analyzing the Relationship Between Live Music Performances and Violence

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## Abstract

This project tested the dominant cultural belief that Hip-Hop music is a more violent form of music. Our research compared music genres and indicators of violence. Using data from the Madison Police Department, we coded and analyzed 4,624 police calls made from bars, clubs, and venues licensed to host live musical performances in Madison from 2008 to 2016. 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, Wisconsin.

## Keywords

Hip-Hop, race, violence, music

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The concern over whether Hip-Hop is a violence-promoting medium has been part of mainstream popular culture discussion since the genre's inception, and grew more intense as mainstream media picked up on "gangsta rap" and totalized it to characterize all of Hip-Hop. But the genre of Hip-Hop is actually diverse and multifaceted, with global variation (Bennett, 1999; Solomon, 2009; Watkins, 2001; Wilson, 2011). Hip-Hop has been integrated into cultures ranging from Jewish (Margolis, 2011) to Muslim (Nasir, 2013). In the United States, while the genre is identified as an African American culture, it has a diverse audience and even performer base (Kwame, 2009; Rodriquez, 2006). Even the misogyny attributed to Hip-Hop is balanced by artists who address diverse gender and sexual identity themes (Balaji, 2008; Martin, 1997; Smalls, 2010). Because Hip-Hop draws so much on life experience, it is also fundamentally local (Bennett, 1999) and, thus, its diversity can vary from place to place.

With so much diversity, any attempt to study the dominant cultural hypothesis that Hip-Hop promotes violence is bound to be difficult. Some research looks at the violent content of Hip-Hop. Herd (2009), for example, showed that violent imagery in rap music increased from 1978 to 1997, but did not study how that may affect the behavior of listeners. Other research suggests a link between Hip-Hop and violent or other problematic behavior. Patton, Eschmann, and Butler (2013) suggested an association between Hip-Hop and gang-related attempts to incite violence via social media known as "Internet banging," but with only anecdotes to support the connection. Wingood, DiClemente, and Bernhardt (2003) found that exposure to rap music videos was positively associated with aggressive behaviors and negative health outcomes at a 12-month follow-up for Black girls aged 14 to 18. Jeffries (2011) concluded that Hip-Hop consumers interpreted the misogynistic depictions of women and violence in Hip-Hop lyrics as applying only to specific individuals, in specific circumstances, but did not attempt to connect these interpretations to subsequent violent behavior.

Another question is whether any association between Hip-Hop and problematic behavior is unique to Hip-Hop. Selfhout, Delsing, ter Bogt, and Meeus (2007), in a quantitative study of Dutch adolescents, found some statistical association between preferences for Hip-Hop or heavy metal music and later problem behavior. Chen, Miller, Grube, and Waiters (2006) found that several genres of music, including Hip-Hop, metal, and techno, were associated with increased tendencies for alcohol use and aggressive behavior within a sample of young people. They also found that listening preferences could reflect personal predispositions or lifestyle preferences. Armstrong (2007) examined the lyrical content of rap and country music through quantitative analyses and could not provide significant evidence that distinguished the two genres in relation to violent content.

Other writers address Hip-Hop's perceived reputation for promoting violence, misogyny, and other negative social behavior, arguing for an ethnographic approach that considers Hip-Hop lyrics from the social experiential standpoint of the performer, not the critic (Dimitriadis, 2014; Kruse, 2016). Relatedly, Rose (2008) deconstructed the perception of Hip-Hop's association with violence by showing the lack of data to substantiate the belief and by arguing that the violence depicted in Hip-Hop is accentuated in dominant culture because of its association with Blackness. The politics of resistance in Hip-Hop (Diaz, 2015; Vito, 2014), including negative portrayals of law enforcement (Steinmetz & Henderson, 2012), adds to the fire of racially motivated critique. Queeley (2003) and Kelley (1998) also questioned the race and class biases that inform perceptions of aggression, threat, and criminality in Hip-Hop.

Other analysts, conversely, suggest actually using Hip-Hop to help youth deconstruct their definitions of and attitudes toward violence (Bruce & Davis, 2000; Hernández, Weinstein, & Muñoz-Laboy, 2011). In Central America, culturally specific ideologies of nonviolence are woven into Hip-Hop lyrics and performance spaces (Sepúlveda, 2014). There is a growing literature on using Hip-Hop in school and other settings with youth (Abe, 2009; Cermak, 2012; Karvelis, 2016; Kruse, 2014; Petchauer, 2017). Community organizations are integrating Hip-Hop and performance space cultivation as a viable tool for leadership and career development (Lee, 2009).

Research on the question of Hip-Hop and violence has neglected one important piece of the question. Is live Hip-Hop more violence-prone? We could only find one study focusing on violence and live performances. In this study, Mattern and Roberts (2014) found that live music performers could use their command of the venue to mitigate confrontation and fighting among their audiences. The question of whether live Hip-Hop causes violence is an important one. In Madison, Wisconsin, and we imagine in many other places, Hip-Hop artists are blackballed from performance spaces because of a perception that live Hip-Hop is more violence-prone than other music genres. In Madison, a downtown music venue put a complete ban on the genre after a weapons incident outside the venue following a Hip-Hop show (Downing, 2013). Local bars filter Hip-Hop out of their jukeboxes (Heeb, 2017), even though Hip-Hop occupied about 40 of the top Billboard ("The Hot 100," 2017) 100 spots. The perceptions of Hip-Hop have been also used to close down music establishments in Madison, and create and enforce dress codes focused on racialized attire associated with Hip-Hop (such as banning du rags and grillz; "Some University Of Wisconsin Students Critical of State Street Bar Dress Code," 2017). The local 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” (Rickert, 2017). Madison also has groups challenging the criminalization and stigmatization of Hip-Hop culture(s), performance artists, and communities of color. Organizations such as the Urban Community Arts Network, First Wave under the University Of Wisconsin-Madison Office of Multicultural Arts Initiative (OMAI), and the John “Vietnam” Nguyen Project’s One Life Program engage Hip-Hop for community-based empowerment, creative justice, and collective liberation. This research project was undertaken to address the question of whether live Hip-Hop shows in Madison were more prone to violence. What we found, we believe, is relevant far beyond our city.

## Methods of This Study

Our study tests the dominant cultural perspective that Hip-Hop music is a more violent music genre. We treat this belief as a testable hypothesis. The hypothesis (H1) is that live Hip-Hop shows are more violent than other music genres. In classic scientific research, the main hypothesis is accompanied by a “null hypothesis” stating that there is “no difference,” and the task is to *disprove* the null hypothesis rather than *prove* the main hypothesis. In this case, the null hypothesis (H0) is that Hip-Hop is not more violence-prone than any other genre of music. In our case, then, that means *disproving* that there is *no difference* between Hip-Hop and other genres when it comes to their association with violence.

The next step was to find good data with which to conduct the research. Our concern was on the issue of Hip-Hop artists not having access to performance space. So our study focused on data related to violence during live performances.

### *How Did We Construct the Data Set?*

We started with a data set from the Madison Police Department (MPD) of 10,214 calls for service to 63 Madison bars with both alcohol and entertainment licenses between 2008 and 2016. This was a comprehensive list of calls for service at these live music venues in Madison over the time period. Not all bars had calls. The data included only calls and their service codes. They did not contain any details about the call or information about individuals.

MPD helped us interpret call descriptions and determine which calls we should keep and delete. We excluded police calls for service made between

the hours of 4:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., two hours after bar closing and two hours before most live performances begin. We also excluded calls that were not made in response to chargeable offenses such as “silent 911 call” (typically a pocket dial), that did not involve behavior at the venue (such as liquor license reviews), or that were descriptions such as “traffic incident,” where the call was not clearly tied to the venue.

We also eliminated some of the venues in the initial data set. We did not include hotels with live music within their bars or restaurants as there was no way to tell whether the police calls for service were related to the bar or the hotel functions at the address. We did not include venues on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus for the same reason. We excluded venues with fewer than five calls for service and were not primarily live music venues. Many venues were not in operation for the entirety of the 2008 to 2016 period. We addressed this by either deleting calls outside of the time frame in which a venue was operational or, if the venue changed names to another licensed live performance/DJ venue within our study period, we listed the new name in the data set and analyzed it as a separate venue. We also limited our research to the Madison city limits. The final data set included 46 venues and 4,625 calls for service.

MPD provided a second data set on the offenses (charges) made from the calls for service at the same venue addresses over our study period (2008–2016). This data set contained 1,661 cases, which we were able to match with the original calls for service through the call code. This data set also did not contain any details about the call or information about individuals.

These two initial data sets also did not include any information about whether there was live music during the time of the call, so we had to add that data. Our goal was for a complete data point to include the police call information, along with the performer, genre, and set time of a live performance/DJ set, or a designation of no music, on the date of the call. We associated police calls for service that were made between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 3:59 a.m. with live music events listed on the preceding date. We found live music event information using primarily *The Isthmus* online calendar archives and past event database, *Maximum Ink*, venue websites, WORT-FM radio’s website, and Facebook event pages. Other live music data sources included Madison Public Library newspaper archives (*The Wisconsin State Journal*, *The Cap Times*), *Songkick*, *Bandsintown*, *archive.org* (*The WayBack Machine*), *Eventbrite*, *Eventful*, *Thrillcall*, and webpages for individual artists. We supplemented these sources with our own knowledge of local venues and with information provided by venue owners in select cases.

Determining whether a police call for service during a specific time had “no live music” was difficult. After we checked all possible sources and could not find live music event data, we used the codes “no live music” or “unknown” to say whether we were sure there was no show, or whether we did not have enough information to tell, respectively. We focused on the “unknown” code by looking for patterns of live music at a venue to determine whether we could confidently say if there was music or not. When we saw a pattern of live music on certain days of the week at the same bar, but could not find show-specific data, we used the code “probably live music” in the data set. We also used these patterns to say “probably no music” on nights the venue did not usually host a live music performer/DJ.

## How Did We Determine the Genre Codes?

It was common to find only the performer and set time, and not genres, for live music event listings. We determined genres from performers’ Facebook pages, *YouTube*, *SoundCloud*, *Mixcloud*, venue Facebook pages, Google searches, performer webpages, *Songkick*, *archive.org (The WayBack Machine)*, and *JamBase*. When multiple genres were listed for a performer, all were included, and then recoded and simplified for the final data sets.

Music genres can be dynamic and subjective, especially for musicians with a unique, hybrid sound or a niche audience. And artists’ self-described genres do not always conform to a venue’s genre reputation or definitions. Every live music event that occurred during one of our police calls received two genre codes: a detailed genre and a simplified genre. We applied a detailed genre code to each live music performance in the data set that displays the performers’ self-identified genres. We determined show genres using the artist’s Facebook and website pages, *Songkick*, *ReverbNation*, and Wikipedia. For multiartist shows where the performance genres vary (Opera/Comedy; Samba/Electro), the detailed genre code reflects the performance that occurred closest to the time of the police call. For artists who typically performed a wide range of genres, such as DJs, we drew upon the musical reputations of venues.

A simplified genre code streamlined the analysis process. We condensed hundreds of artist-identified genres down into 23 categories by considering genre influences, fusion and parent genres, and popularity. Local music experts then reviewed our codes to ensure accuracy.

Hip-hop music received three codes (discussed below) because live music events that showcase exclusively Hip-Hop are rare in Madison. We wanted to highlight the potential difference between events that are exclusively

Hip-Hop and events that are influenced by Hip-Hop, as well as potential differences between performances by rappers and performances by DJs.

## Our Analyses

Finding reliable data on live music events was challenging. In some cases, we had to rely on our knowledge of venues and our judgment to decide whether there were reliable patterns of performances that we could add to the data set. In some cases, we simply could not say for sure whether there was a performance at a given venue at a given time. Also, an ideal approach would be to compare the number of calls for service per genre and compare that number with the total number of live music events for all venues in Madison, coded by genre, during our study period. However, due to limitations in available records and in our time resources, doing so was wholly impractical. Consequently, we used a triangulation method of multiple analyses, each based on different assumptions and angles of analysis. We present the analyses here.

### *Genre Call Ratios Analysis*

One way to approach our hypothesis is to investigate whether Hip-Hop generates more calls for service. But “more” is difficult to determine when we do not know the total number of shows but only those that generated calls for service. Instead, in this analysis, we looked at the ratio of calls by months in operation for each venue for each genre. Doing so helps us control for the difference in numbers of performances of different genres.

*Methods for genre call ratios analysis.* To compare the frequency of police calls across music genres, we tallied the number of police calls and months of operation for each venue and noted whether calls corresponded to a particular genre of music frequently, infrequently, or not at all. The genres included Hip-Hop All, Live Hip-Hop, Hip-Hop All No Live, Jazz, Country, Latin, Bluegrass, Blues, Rock, Folk, Electronic Dance Music (EDM), and Karaoke.

We divided Hip-Hop into three different categories: “Hip-Hop All,” “Mixed With Hip-Hop/DJs” (All Hip-Hop including mixed genres and DJs who sometimes play Hip-Hop, excluding live, true Hip-Hop performances), and “Live Hip-Hop” to determine the number of police calls with only true, live Hip-Hop separately from Hip-Hop Mixes/DJs. The simplified genre category, “Hip-Hop Mix” includes many different genres including Rhythm and Blues (R&B), Reggae, Jazz, Rock, House, Latin, Salsa, Reggaeton,

Dance, Soul, Club Music, Funk, Electronic, Techno, EDM, Trance, Pop, Drum and Bass, and Hip-Hop DJs. A popular way to play Hip-Hop in Madison is through DJs. DJs often play many different genres of music either over the course of an evening or at different venues. Venue patrons for DJ sets typically have more party-oriented crowds that are not necessarily coming to experience strictly live Hip-Hop performances. Thus, we analyzed shows with DJs separately from shows with live Hip-Hop artist performances. "Live Hip-Hop" is intended to be the category of reference for Hip-Hop in Madison.

Using live music event data, we noted how often a call for service for a certain genre of music arose at a particular venue and compared this with the total number of calls for service at that venue. We coded each venue as "Mixed w/ Genre X" and then "Frequently," "Infrequently," or "None." These are mixed because many venues play a large selection of music, and rarely just one genre. The distinction between "frequently," "infrequently," and "none" was determined by counting the number of times a genre was noted in police calls during shows at a particular venue. From there, we were able to base the "frequently," "infrequently," and "none" codes on the ratios of calls. This involved some individual judgment for each venue. For example, a venue where two of 10 calls were Hip-Hop might be coded as "frequent" whereas another venue where four of 50 calls were Hip-Hop might be coded as "infrequent." We considered both the number of calls and the proportion, relying more on the number for venues that had more calls.

Some venues were treated specially in the analysis due to too few calls or too many calls. Three venues were excluded due to their short list of calls. In contrast, two venues, R Place on Park and Whiskey Jack's, had well over the average amount of calls per month. We ran two analyses to compare Hip-Hop calls per month per genre with and without R Place on Park. Two analyses were also run to compare Country calls per month with and without Whiskey Jack's. All of these venues are still included in the rest of our analysis and data sets.

To determine the calls per month per genre, we tallied the number of calls per genre at each venue. Using 12 genre categories, we have 12 different tallies for each venue. Then, we tallied the months of operation for each venue, accounting for months in which we could confirm venues were closed temporarily. Then, we divided the "calls per venue" tally by the "months of operation" tally. The interpretation of each numbered result would be the average number of calls per month that genre frequency received.

*Discussion of genre call ratios analysis.* The first thing to note from Table 1 is that the differences are small. In the "frequently" column, which is the best



**Table 1.** Frequency of Police Calls per Month per Genre (2008-2016).

Genre <sup>a</sup>	Frequently	Infrequently	None
Bluegrass	0.76	1.28	1.41
Blues	0.78	1.55	1.27
Country <sup>b</sup>	2.90	0.91	1.10
EDM	2.04	0.97	1.10
Folk	0.75	1.41	0.92
Hip-Hop All <sup>b</sup>	2.39	0.97	1.03
Mixed With Hip-Hop/DJs <sup>b</sup>	3.00	1.22	1.03
Live Hip-Hop <sup>b</sup>	1.53	2.08	1.20
Jazz	1.00	0.99	1.49
Karaoke	0.64	1.04	1.42
Latin	1.25	2.21	1.12
Rock	1.02	0.72	2.26

Note. EDM = Electronic Dance Music.

<sup>a</sup>All categories use the “mixed” coding scheme.

<sup>b</sup>These analyses include R Place on Park as well as Whiskey Jack’s, respectively.

column to judge the ratio of police calls for a genre, the results range from a low of 0.76 calls per month per venue for bluegrass to a high of 3 calls per month per venue for mixed with Hip-Hop/DJs

The genres with the highest calls per month per genre include (in order from highest to lowest) Mixed With Hip-Hop/DJs, Country, Hip-Hop All, and EDM at venues that booked each of these genres frequently. Other genre categories that received comparably high calls per month were (from highest to lowest) Rock None, Latin Infrequently, and Live Hip-Hop Infrequently. This does not show that these genres had high ratios of police calls per month, but that they are mixed with genres/venues that have higher averages of police calls per month.

The three categories of Hip-Hop All, Mixed With Hip-Hop/DJs, and Live Hip-Hop showed differences. The highest of these categories was Mixed With Hip-Hop/DJs Frequently with an average of 3.00 police calls per month. But remember that we cannot be certain how much Hip-Hop is actually played in this category. The Live Hip-Hop Frequently category has 1.53 calls per month, which is fifth highest in the “Frequently” category.

It is unclear whether these differences are large enough to warrant explanation (this is a population, not a sample, so significance tests are irrelevant). For our purposes, they do not clearly support the dominant cultural hypothesis that live Hip-Hop performances are more dangerous as measured by the overall number of police calls for service. We also cannot say with any

**Table 2.** Frequency of Police Calls per Month per Genre (2008-2016) With and Without Outliers.

Genre	Frequently	Infrequently	None
Country	2.90	0.91	1.10
Country (excluding Whiskey Jack's)	1.95	0.91	1.10
Hip-Hop All	2.39	0.97	1.03
Hip-Hop All (excluding R Place)	2.19	0.97	1.03
Mixed With Hip-Hop/DJs	3.00	1.22	1.03
Mixed With Hip-Hop/DJs (excluding R Place)	2.68	1.22	1.03
Live Hip-Hop	1.53	2.08	1.20
Live Hip-Hop (excluding R Place)	1.53	2.08	1.28

certainty what might explain the differences. It may be interesting to study whether live Hip-Hop shows use security practices that are different than other genres, reducing the number of police calls.

Table 1 includes two potential outlier venues, R Place on Park and Whiskey Jack's. R Place on Park had 255 calls, and we could only find advertised performances for five of those calls. It was also difficult to find people knowledgeable enough about the venue to provide information about live music events, and we heard stories of overpolicing of the venue. Whiskey Jack's had 769 calls, and we could only find six advertised performances for the venue, but knowledgeable parties helped us learn of patterns for regular live performances and their typical genres. We then extrapolated performance patterns and genres for the data set. Given their weight in the data set, we conducted an analysis excluding both venues to see how much error we might introduce if our extrapolations were wrong.

Table 2 shows that removing Whiskey Jack's showed declines in the call ratios for the Country Frequently category. However, Country Frequently still had a higher ratio than Live Hip-Hop Frequently. The removal of R Place on Park did not seem to have much effect except on the Mixed With Hip-Hop/DJs category. Our subsequent analyses will include both venues, but the reader should keep in mind our findings here.

Based on this analysis, we cannot conclude that Hip-Hop, particularly live Hip-Hop, is a genre that is clearly more associated with danger. But this analysis only looks at the number of overall police calls, which includes a wide variety of incidents, most of which are not related to violence. In addition, our method imperfectly standardizes the data. We have to assume that the proportions of calls for each genre in each venue are relatively equal, which requires Madison bars to have somewhat stable groups of patrons even if the

genre varies at a bar. And we do not have data beyond anecdotal experience to verify this assumption. To deal with some of these challenges, we turn next to the genre analyses.

### *Comparing Calls and Offenses for Genres*

It is important to understand that calls for service are coded by dispatchers. Once an officer arrives on the scene, they may find circumstances different than the call code. Sometimes, they do not find anything that needs an intervention. So analyses that focus only on calls for service may be biased by “false positives.” Because we have both a calls for service data set and an offenses data set with codes that allow us to merge them, we can see whether calls for service for different genres produce different proportions of charged offenses.

*Methods for the calls versus offenses analysis.* To determine the proportion of calls for service that resulted in offenses, we combined the calls and offenses data sets by matching the call codes and times and dates of service. We then totaled the calls for service for each genre, and found the proportion of those calls that resulted in offense charges by dividing the total number of offenses per simplified genre code by the total number of calls for service per simplified genre code.

*Discussion of calls versus offenses analysis.* Table 3 shows that there is not a lot of variation in the proportions of calls that result in offenses, from .21 for American and Classic Rock, Bluegrass, and Blues to .47 for Jam Band Mix. Live Hip-Hop ends up slightly below Country and EDM, and very close to Caribbean Mix and Karaoke and Open Mic. Part of our concern in this analysis was whether there is any support for the belief that Hip-Hop requires extra security and policing compared with other genres. If that was the case, we would expect to see higher proportions of charges for Hip-Hop than other genres. That does not appear to be true for either Live Hip-Hop or Hip-Hop All, as their ratios are roughly comparable with those for Jam Band Mix, Country Mix, and EDM.

This analysis still uses a broad brush to test the dominant cultural hypothesis that Hip-Hop is associated with more violence. So far, our analyses have only looked generally at police calls for service and charged offenses. Even charged offenses can range from nonviolent offenses like trying to skip out on a bill to the most violent acts, and it is important to remember that a charged offense does not necessarily result in a conviction. To get to a more

**Table 3.** Proportion of Calls That End in Offenses per Simplified Genre Category.

Genre	Total calls	Total offenses	Proportion of calls that end in offenses
American and Classic Rock	24	5	0.21
Bluegrass Mix	71	15	0.21
Blues Mix	94	20	0.21
Country	274	109	0.40
Caribbean Mix	27	10	0.37
EDM Mix	314	120	0.38
Folk Mix <sup>a</sup>	46	24	0.31
Funk Mix	21	4	0.19
Hard Rock and Heavy Metal	47	13	0.28
Live Hip-Hop	104	39	0.38
Hip-Hop All	260	81	0.31
Jam Band Mix	34	16	0.47
Jazz Mix	116	37	0.32
Karaoke/Open Mic	57	19	0.33
Latin Mix	251	79	0.32
Performing Arts	83	20	0.24
Rock Mix <sup>b</sup>	209	70	0.29
World Mix	80	20	0.25

Note. EDM = Electronic Dance Music.

<sup>a</sup>Singer-songwriter combined with folk music because of small numbers.

<sup>b</sup>Punk combined with Rock because of small numbers.

fine-grained level and fully test whether Hip-Hop attracts more violence, we performed further analyses.

### *Studying violence in police calls and offenses*

To study the relationship between violence and different genres of music, we developed and conducted violence ratio analyses to compare the rates of violence across all simplified genre categories. Each analysis compared a count for the total number of police calls for service with a count for the total number of calls for potentially violent incidents within each genre.

*Methods for violence ratio analyses.* Referencing the 2017 *Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Definition Glossary for Summary Reporting*, we coded descriptions for service calls within the calls for service data set as either

violent or nonviolent. We also conducted a violence ratio analysis using the offenses data set. To determine counts within both of these data sets, we gave a value of 1 to violent service calls/offense charges and gave a value of 0 to nonviolent service calls/offense charges.

Because this study addresses perceptions of violence associated with music genres, we conducted the analyses using two distinct violence coding methods. The first method, *UCR exact coding*, only codes service call and offense charge descriptions that have been identified as violent by the UCR. The second method, *perceived violence coding*, starts from the UCR definitions of violent offenses, and then adds codes that are not recognized as violent by the UCR, but could be recognized as violent by venue management/staff, patrons, and artists.

For example, the UCR defines a *weapons violation* as a nonviolent offense. In our *perceived violence coding* method, we coded *weapons violation* as violent. The perceived violence coding reflects dominant cultural perspectives of weapons/guns being associated with Hip-Hop music and culture(s). In addition, in our perceived violence coding, we identified service calls coded as *disturbance* as violent, even though UCR defines *disturbance* as nonviolent. It is important to note, however, that the vast majority of *disturbance* service calls within our full data set resulted in offense charges that UCR codes as nonviolent. Because of the high frequency and potentially skewing influence of *disturbance* service calls within our data set, we believed that it was relevant to conduct violent ratio analyses that compared *disturbance* service calls and associated offense charges when coded as both violent and nonviolent.

We computed the total number of calls for service and the total number of violent calls for each simplified genre category. To compute a violence ratio, we divided the total number of violence-coded service calls by the total number of service calls for each of the simplified genre categories and for both the *UCR exact coding* scheme and the *perceived violence coding* scheme. We used the same method for the offenses data set.

*Discussion of violence ratio analyses.* Table 4 shows the analysis using the two coding schemes for the calls for service data. In this analysis, “Live Hip-Hop” refers to live Hip-Hop shows, and “Hip-Hop All” includes DJ sets that may include a wide variety of genres depending on the venue.

Looking at Table 4, note that the UCR exact coding scheme has lower ratios simply because fewer calls are coded as violent overall. In the UCR exact coding, Hip-Hop All (which includes DJs), Karaoke/Open Mic, and Punk Mix have the highest violence ratios. The more restrictive Live Hip-Hop category ends up sixth in the list. When we switch to the perceived

**Table 4.** Total Calls and Violent Calls for Service Call Data (received violence and UCR Exact).

Perceived violence coding scheme				UCR exact coding scheme			
Simplified genre	Total calls	Violent calls	Violence ratio	Simplified genre	Total calls	Violent calls	Violence ratio
American and Classic Rock	24	4	0.16	American and Classic Rock	24	2	0.08
Bluegrass Mix	71	9	0.13	Bluegrass Mix	71	4	0.06
Blues Mix	94	20	0.21	Blues Mix	94	4	0.04
Country	274	83	0.30	Country	274	24	0.09
Caribbean Mix	27	7	0.26	Caribbean Mix	27	2	0.07
EDM Mix	314	91	0.29	EDM Mix	314	27	0.09
Folk Mix	46	8	0.17	Folk Mix	46	0	0.00
Funk Mix	21	4	0.19	Funk Mix	21	1	0.05
Hard Rock and Heavy Metal	47	13	0.28	Hard Rock and Heavy Metal	47	5	0.11
Live Hip-Hop	104	30	0.29	Live Hip-Hop	104	11	0.11
Hip-Hop All	260	107	0.41	Hip-Hop All	260	38	0.15
Jam Band Mix	34	5	0.15	Jam Band Mix	34	1	0.03
Jazz Mix <sup>a</sup>	116	28	0.24	Jazz Mix <sup>a</sup>	116	9	0.08
Karaoke/Open Mic	57	27	0.47	Karaoke/Open Mic	57	8	0.14
Latin Mix	251	100	0.40	Latin Mix	251	27	0.11
Performing Arts	83	13	0.16	Performing Arts	83	3	0.04
Punk Mix	36	12	0.33	Punk Mix	36	5	0.14
Rock Mix	209	57	0.27	Rock Mix	209	17	0.08
Singer-Songwriter	32	7	0.22	Singer-Songwriter	32	2	0.06
World Mix <sup>b</sup>	80	20	0.25	World Mix <sup>b</sup>	80	6	0.08

Note. UCR = Uniform Crime Reporting; EDM = Electronic Dance Music.

<sup>a</sup>Jazz Mix is Jazz Mix and Piano.

<sup>b</sup>World Mix consists of World Mix and West African Mix.

violence coding, Karaoke/Open Mic, Hip-Hop All, Latin Mix, Punk Mix, and Country have the highest ratios. Live Hip-Hop ends up in a middle group with a similar violence ratio to the simplified genre categories of Country, Heavy Metal and Hard Rock, Latin Mix, Punk Mix, Rock Mix, EDM Mix, and Jazz Mix. It is important to remember here that the Hip-Hop All simplified genre category, with a violence ratio of 0.41 for the perceived violence coding scheme, is largely composed of DJ performance sets that included but were not limited to Hip-Hop. So once again, we are unable to rule out the null hypothesis that Hip-Hop is no more violence-prone than other genres.

It is important to remember that calls for service are coded by dispatchers. Service calls coded as violent could result in nonviolent offense charges or no charges at all. We can compensate for this potential bias by looking at the offenses data set in Table 5.

The first thing to note from Table 5 is the relatively small numbers, so we need to exert caution to not overinterpret any differences. It is also important to note that a higher number of offenses does not mean that a genre has more incidents. It may simply have more live music events, and we do not have data on the total number of performances with and without incidents. In addition, the drop in numbers of violent offenses from the perceived violence coding to the UCR exact coding is primarily due to the exclusion of the *disorderly conduct* offense charge being considered nonviolent within the UCR exact coding.

The results of this analysis are similar to those from the service call data. Using the UCR exact coding scheme, the Live Hip-Hop ratio is less than Hard Rock and Heavy Metal, World Mix, Hip-Hop All, Jazz Mix, Latin Mix, Country Mix, American and Classic Rock, Caribbean Mix, Folk Mix, and Karaoke/Open Mic. Live Hip-Hop performances have violence ratios closest to simplified genre categories of EDM Mix and Karaoke/Open Mic, along with the same ratios as Blues Mix and Performing Arts. The Hip-Hop All category has a higher violence ratio of 0.30 for the perceived violence coding scheme. Again, this simplified genre category is largely composed of DJ performance sets that included but were not limited to Hip-Hop. Using the perceived violence coding scheme, the Live Hip-Hop violence ratio is less than the simplified genre categories of Hard Rock and Heavy Metal, World Mix, Hip-Hop Mix, Latin Mix, Jazz Mix, Performance Arts, and Karaoke/Open Mic.

From the offense data analyses, we cannot conclude that live Hip-Hop performances are more violence-prone. Thus, we cannot reject our null hypothesis that Hip-Hop is no more violence-prone than other genres.

Finally, we looked closely at the 11 calls for service described as a *weapons violation* in the data set. None of these cases were associated with a live Hip-Hop performance, or a DJ set that was exclusively Hip-Hop music. There were 13 charged offenses described as *weapons violation*, only one of which was associated with Hip-Hop through a DJ set spinning both EDM and Hip-Hop.

**Table 5.** Total Calls Versus Violent Calls for Offense Data (Perceived Violence and UCR Exact).

Perceived violence coding scheme				UCR exact coding scheme			
Simplified genre	Violent offense count	Total offense count	Violent offense ratio	Simplified genre	Violent offense count	Total offense count	Violent offense ratio
American and Classic Rock	2	5	0.40	American and Classic Rock	1	5	0.20
Bluegrass Mix	1	15	0.07	Bluegrass Mix	1	15	0.07
Blues Mix	6	20	0.30	Blues Mix	3	20	0.15
Caribbean Mix	2	10	0.20	Caribbean Mix	2	10	0.20
Country Mix	40	109	0.37	Country Mix	28	109	0.26
EDM Mix	47	120	0.39	EDM Mix	16	120	0.13
Folk Mix <sup>a</sup>	7	24	0.18	Folk Mix <sup>a</sup>	5	24	0.20
Funk Mix	1	4	0.25	Funk Mix	0	4	0.00
Hard Rock and Heavy Metal	8	13	0.62	Hard Rock and Heavy Metal	5	13	0.38
Live Hip-Hop	16	39	0.41	Live Hip-Hop	6	39	0.15
Hip-Hop All	42	81	0.52	Hip-Hop All	24	81	0.30
Jam Band Mix	4	16	0.25	Jam Band Mix	0	16	0.00
Jazz Mix	17	37	0.46	Jazz Mix	8	37	0.27
Karaoke/Open Mic	8	19	0.42	Karaoke/Open Mic	3	19	0.16
Latin Mix	38	79	0.48	Latin Mix	20	79	0.25
Performing Arts	9	20	0.45	Performing Arts	3	20	0.15
Rock Mix <sup>b</sup>	33	70	0.47	Rock Mix <sup>b</sup>	13	70	0.19
World Mix	11	20	0.58	World Mix	7	20	0.35

Note. UCR = Uniform Crime Reporting; EDM = Electronic Dance Music.

<sup>a</sup>Folk Mix contains Folk Mix and Singer-Songwriter.

<sup>b</sup>Rock Mix contains Rock Mix and Punk Mix.



## Conclusion

This study attempted to test the mainstream cultural hypothesis that Hip-Hop is a music genre more associated with violence. Using a triangulation approach to test that hypothesis, we cannot find enough empirical support to reject the “null hypothesis” that Hip-Hop is no more associated with violence than other music genres in Madison. Our data show that there is generally little difference in indicators of violence across a wide range of music genres.

It is important to understand that we are not asserting that Hip-Hop is “safer” than any other genre. Our data are incomplete for some venues, and we have had to make assumptions about patterns of performances for other venues when we could not find advertised performances dating back reliably to 2008. In addition, we cannot speak to what effects a live Hip-Hop show may have on audience members after they leave the venue. Our data are limited to police calls for service at the venues themselves, and we had to add in the information about live performances. There are no data that we know of that track patrons after they leave a show. Certainly, the literature we reviewed suggests that there might be an association between general site, nonspecific problematic behavior and Hip-Hop, but recall that the literature also suggests that other genres may produce similar effects. Furthermore, teasing out the effects of a live show versus listening to tunes in the car after the show could be fraught indeed. This might be an opportunity for future research.

What we can conclude is that there seems to be no empirical support for restricting live Hip-Hop performances more than other genres in Madison based on a fear that Hip-Hop is a *more* violent genre. Safety for the public is, of course, always a concern. Venue owners, police, and community members are right to care about people’s safety. But we believe this research shows that caring about people’s safety should not be limited to Hip-Hop, and there may be other music genres that present more threats to safety than live Hip-Hop.

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Authors are listed alphabetically.

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