

BEAMS PROJECT

BEAMS: Breaking down European Attitudes towards
Migrant/Minority Stereotypes

Project code: JUST/2011/FRAC/AG/2844



With financial support from the
Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme
of the European Union

Representations of Ethnic Minority Groups and Migrants in UK Rap Videos 1993 – 2013

Dr Patrick Turner and Dr Eugenia Markova
London Metropolitan University

A thematic and discourse analysis of fifteen UK rap videos from the last twenty years as a 'case study' for the examination of stereotyping in popular culture of UK ethnic minority and migrant groups.

The majority of the rap videos in this study are made by the ethnic minority artists they feature; many are 'user generated' and disseminated virally online.

Our sample includes work by rap artists and producers from the following UK ethnic minority and migrant communities: Indian; Pakistani; African-Caribbean; Sri-Lankan; White Polish; Bangladeshi; Turkish; Palestinian; White Russian; White English; Somali; African; Iranian; Saudi-Arabian.

The gender distribution of the artists is 11-12 males and 3-4 females.



Choice and Source of the Sample...

1. Rap video perceived as stereotyped *and* stereotyping: like TV soap operas/tabloid press/adverts...
2. Complex relationship of hip hop culture to stereotyping: its global idiom, African American vernacular cultures, hip hop identity/boundary work.
3. Ethnic minorities and migrants and their active role in the evolution of UK hip hop and Creolized urban youth inter-cultures: UK rap videos a signature medium of this creolized culture.

Fifteen of sixty UK rap videos found through the online platform Youtube.



UK Rap Video Example:

Tekmill (Turkish male) – ‘Can Pazari’ (a life and death situation) (2011) (3.10):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJnr3DV6Q14>



Main Conclusions

On the basis of a close analysis of the videos, we conclude that it would be mistaken to view them as *simply* producing or reproducing ethnic, racial, cultural, class or gender stereotypes.

Whilst a few of the videos arguably offer crude and possibly de-humanising representations they are all, in our view, at *some level* engaged in the act of resisting stereotyping.

The form such resistance takes is quite variable, sometimes subtle, and can be complex.

However, we believe that in the process of analysing the videos we have been able to identify some common and shared patterns to this.



Three analytic categories, each of which reflects a particular orientation toward stereotyping:

Reversing the stereotype: ‘adopting a caricature-in-reverse’ as a tactic for public assertions of strength and potency and for arming against racist and classist domination

Substituting the stereotype: dis-identification and ‘righting the balance’ in terms of how identity is represented, substituting negative images with positive ones.

Contesting the stereotype: stereotyped representations turned against themselves and played with so that the result is neither caricature in reverse nor outright dis-identification but instead a less conclusive, more open account of identity

