

Dance in Black and White:

Examining the Stereotypes of Black and White Ballerinas and Hip Hop Dancers

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Background



Historically, dance critics did not think that Black dancers have the aesthetics or demeanor for ballet*.

There are four main stereotypes of Black women that restrict their presence in ballet*.

"Jezabel":
hypersexual

"Mammy":
selfless caregiver

Strong Black Woman

"Matriarch":
aggressive

In 2015, Misty Copeland became the first Black principal dancer of American Ballet Theatre, after 76 years of production.

Perceivers of dance may be less likely to associate Black dancers with ballet due to roles prescribed by social hierarchies, rigid stereotypes, and an overrepresentation of White women in this form of dance*.



Participants

268 total (M=36.79, SD=10.91)
53.7% Males
75.5% White

15.7% had
ballet
experience

17.9% had
hip hop
experience

Procedure

IAT

Images of Black and White women categorized with*:

Ballet words: classical, delicate, graceful, exquisite, dainty
Hip Hop Words: urban, breakdance, aggressive, strong, freestyle



Semantic Differentials

"Ballerinas are..."
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Black White

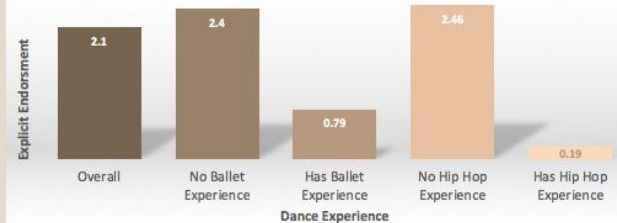
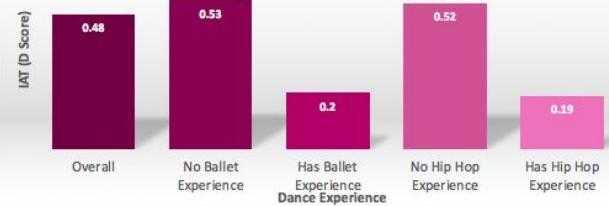
"Hip hop dancers are..."
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
White Black

The higher the number the more explicit endorsement.

Experience with Dance
(ballet, hip hop, and other forms)

None → beginner → intermediate
→ advanced → professional

Results



Do people implicitly and explicitly stereotype White women as ballerinas and Black women as hip hop dancers?

Viewers have expectations about the racial identities of ballet and hip hop dancers

Being within the context of a stereotype may lead to a reduction in endorsement