



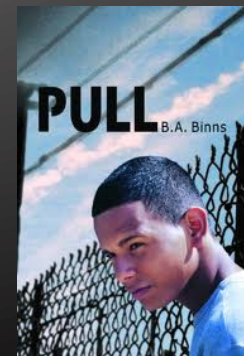
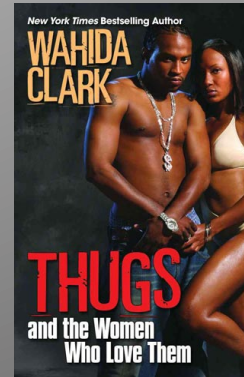
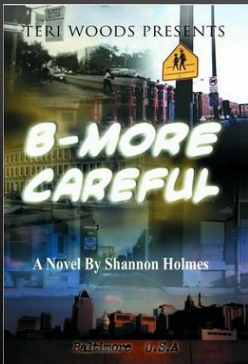
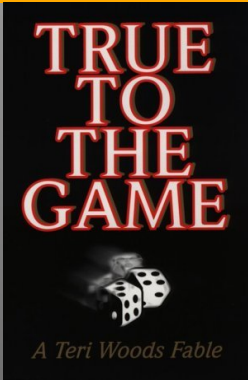
Just because the hood raised you, doesn't mean you have to raise the hood: A content analysis of urban lit.

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Introduction

Sexual activity is common during adolescence. Currently 47.7% of adolescence are sexually active.¹ Among racial groups 60% of African American (AA) adolescents report sexual activity, approximately twice as many as their counterparts.¹ There are many influences on adolescent sexual behavior including parents, peers, religion and media.² Evidence has shown that media, including print media, can be highly influential on the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of adolescents.³ Children spend 7 ½ hours daily with some type of media.⁴ Media references have a way glamorizing and normalizing risky behaviors including smoking, substance and alcohol and sexual activity.⁵ One type of print media, urban lit is a favorite among AA adolescents and urban teens. According to one article, urban lit is so popular that it is literally "flying off the shelves".⁶

Background

African American fiction is a thriving market with over 500 authors and annual revenue in the billions. Urban lit is extremely popular among AA teens and adults with individuals citing their authenticity as the reason for its popularity. Urban lit is known for its gritty portrayal of urban life with themes of violence, promiscuity, drug activity and infidelity. Urban lit remain a lucrative business as it celebrates the Hip Hop culture and elaborates on the every day struggles that AA teens feel that they can mostly relate to. While it represents an 'authentic' form of entertainment to AA teens, it also normalizes risky behaviors, including sex, that many of their protagonists may partake in. The purpose of this research is to explore and document the common themes of urban lit and their influence on risk behaviors among AA adolescents.

Method

Six popular urban-lit novels were examined for common themes using thematic content analysis. The novels were: *Thugs & The Women Who Love Them*; *True to the Game*; *B-More Careful*, *Pull*, *Upgrade U*, and *The Coldest Winter Ever*. Each participant was assigned an urban-lit novel to read. Key phrases and themes and their definitions were developed for each novel. For the final level of coding, participants gathered to review and discuss the key phrases and themes. All themes were reviewed. Themes common to all novels and were thought to broadly represent urban lit genre were kept. The final themes contributed to the conceptual understanding of urban lit and their influence on AA risks behaviors.

Results

6 themes emerged from the data. *A Way Out* is the overarching theme that represents the paradox of urban life. The struggle is the means to the end- escape to a better life. Many of the themes revolve around navigating intimate relationships and sexual behaviors. The characters engage in risk sexual behaviors that may result in negative health consequences. The consequences of these risky behaviors are rarely mentioned in the stories. The themes are listed below.

| Novel Theme | Theme Definition | Illustrative Quote |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Thugs | Desired men who have money & power | "I couldn't stand the he was so cute, and so thugged out, and had a swagger that made him the king of irresistible" |
| Rubber band man | Person/man? Who sales drugs for money | " I heard he's a rubber-band man...I heard he's living that trap life" |
| The wratched | Women who sale sex for money; considered not clean, "down & dirty" | "She has no hips, and she's plain as porridge. I'll give you five hundred." |
| Hoodrat | "A female lacking standards, education, person care, etiquette and engages in sexual relationships with multiple men from her neighborhood | "Cause I don't appreciate them calling you a hoodrat. They could have at least called your name or said you had hoodrat tendencies. But to straight-out call you a hoodrat, that's just wrong" |
| Being dogged | To be cheated on/played | Oh no!" Country sniffed. "I can't take being dogged. Not again, Lawd, not again!" |
| Caught up in the life | Individuals who are involved in criminal activity/fast life of ghetto; Theme geared towards explaining the responsibility teens in impoverished area and in destroyed family have to carry.. | "Unfortunately, praise, no matter how warm it leaves my heart, won't buy food or pay the rent. Or solve my problem with my sister. I'm looking for a new job, working the old one, studying and trying to figure out how to fit a real girlfriend into everything else. Not to mention keeping my sister as my friend." |

Implications for Research/Practice

Urban lit may provide a window into AA adolescents' attitudes, beliefs and behaviors as well as hip-hop culture. By understanding urban lit, clinicians can provide culturally competent risk behavior counseling to adolescents and their families. Using this knowledge researchers can develop culturally competent interventions to reduce risky health behaviors.

Conclusions

Media is an integral part of adolescent lives. As a developmental task, adolescents use media to audition and incorporate interpersonal and social norms into their view of the world and begin to model both positive and negative behaviors. It is important that healthcare providers be knowledge of current media, including urban lit to assess their patient's media diet and provide appropriate risk reduction education.