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Conflicting Paradigms on Gender and Sexuality in Rap Music: A Systematic Review

Denise Herd

Abstract   Rap music has major social and cultural significance for American and global youth audiences and, along with other media, is believed to play a central role in shaping adolescents' beliefs, attitudes and intentions related to sexuality. However few studies concerned with health issues have explored the *content* of lyrics regarding sex and gender, with most research in this area focused on the *effects* of media portrayals on sexual behavior and problems. Much of the scholarship analyzing sexuality and gender issues in the media comes from disciplines outside of health and the behavioral sciences, such as cultural studies. This paper compares literature related to sexuality and gender in rap music from a variety of perspectives such as feminism, cultural studies, and sociology as well as from health and behavioral research in order to deepen understanding of the lyrical content that may influence sexual attitudes and behavior. The review illustrates that conflicting paradigms, for example of sexual agency or misogyny, emerge in this literature and that few studies are both conceptually rich and empirically strong. Future research should address this challenge as well as explore changes over time in how sexual and gender relationships have been depicted in this musical genre.

Keywords   Rap music · Sexuality · Gender relationships · Feminism · Masculinity

Introduction

This review focuses on the presentation of gender relationships and sexuality in rap music lyrics. This is a compelling research issue because of the major cultural significance of rap music for American and global youth audiences (Mizell 2003)

D. Herd (✉)
School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94707, USA
e-mail: tiara@berkeley.edu

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and the critical role the media is believed to play in shaping adolescents' beliefs, attitudes and intentions related to sexuality (Aubrey and Frisby 2011; Martino et al. 2006; Primack et al. 2008; Peterson et al. 2007 Brown 2002; Brown et al. 2006).

Despite widely held perceptions that popular music influences sexual behavior, little health related research has analyzed the *content* of lyrics regarding sex and gender—most research in this area is concerned with the *effects of media content* on norms and behavior related to sexual behavior and problems. Literature focused on understanding how sexuality and gender relationships are portrayed in the media often come from disciplines outside of health and the behavioral sciences, such as cultural studies and the humanities. Few studies have incorporated these diverse perspectives that could provide insight into the social and cultural role of media portrayals of sexuality and gender portrayals as well as their impact on behavior and social problems.

In addition, there is a wide methodological gulf in how these issues are analyzed in different disciplines. Research from a cultural studies perspective is usually based on in depth qualitative analysis of a limited number of selected texts or cases; while public health and empirical work is often quantitative and based on a large number of cases, but with little interpretive depth. As a result, there are substantial gaps in the field regarding the social meaning of sexuality and gender in a genre known for heterogeneous and complex depictions of gender and sexual issues.

The purpose of this review is to explore and compare literature related to sexuality and gender in rap music from a multidisciplinary perspective which crosses conceptual as well as methodological boundaries. This is an important task with the goal of enriching perspectives on the content of images of sexuality and gender in rap music to better inform how rap music constructs sexual and gender related phenomenon as a baseline for more nuanced understanding of the implications of media portrayals and sexual health.

The following analysis of the scholarly and research literature on sexuality and gender relationships in rap music is based on exhaustive searches of the literature from a variety of data bases that focus on research in social science, cultural studies and the health fields. The key perspectives are derived from work within studies of feminism and masculinity; folklore and media studies; sociological studies; and public health.

Feminist Perspectives on Sexuality in Rap Music

An important thread of feminist theory argues that images of black women and sexuality represent modern day resurrections of historically constructed derogatory images. Evelyn Brooks Higginbothan (1993) and Patricia Hill Collins (2000) show how European thought and the American political economy of slavery, race, and labor relations helped control black female sexuality and fertility through creating stereotypes of black women that deny black female equality and denigrate healthy sexuality or femininity in black women. From this perspective, images of black women have been shaped by the following principles: black women are unfeminine; their sexuality is abhorrent (either hypersexual, asexual; or anti male and sexually

punitive) their economic and social outlook is similarly deviant (they are predators or lazy and dependent on public assistance and men). The resulting "controlling images" of black women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients and "hot mamas" are used to justify black women's oppression and to normalize racism, sexism, poverty and other forms of social inequality. Countering and challenging these controlling images has long been a central focus of black feminist thought.

These viewpoints have emerged in some social science analyses of sexual images in rap music. Stephens and Phillips (2003) used this framework and argued that the basic stereotypes applied to black women historically—e.g. the "Jezebel, Mammy, Matriarch, and Welfare Mother"—form the basis of the modern more sexually explicit and demeaning portrayals of black women as "Freaks, Gold Diggers, Divas, Dikes, and Baby Mamas" in rap music today. In fact they argue that despite the availability of a diversity of images for black women, the substance of media portrayals has changed little over the past century. Furthermore, these authors state that Hip Hop is a male oriented cultural space in which controlling images of black women are mediated through a patriarchal framework that "includes sexism and both the physical and emotional abuse of women", p 37.

In contrast other theorists, primarily those focusing on female rappers (Roberts 1991; Troka 2002; Goodall 1994; Pough 2007; Rose 1990; Shelton 1997; Skeggs 1993; Phillips et al. 2005) have identified counter narratives in this music which do several things: promote women's right to assert their own desires for sexual fulfillment and pleasure apart from meeting the needs of men or being controlled by them (Roberts 1991; Goodall 1994; Rose 1990; Skeggs 1993); resist patterns of sexual objectification (Rose 1990; Skeggs 1993): promote women's independence and economic prowess (Troka 2002; Oware 2007) provide critiques of male dominance (Troka 2002), and sexual and domestic violence (Troka 2002; Oware 2007). Tricia Rose's (1994) earlier work asserts that rap music is heterogeneous and fluid rather than monolithic with respect to female images of sexuality and gender relationships, and that men and women rappers have rapport and are in dialogue together. One of her central arguments centers on the sexual empowerment of women to not only hold the ultimate power to control male sexuality, but to also enjoy sexual expression, play, and innuendo without the need for sanctioning through romance and dating. In fact, Rose's explanation of misogyny in men's rap lyrics focuses on men's fears and anxieties regarding women's ability to control heterosexual sex. In addition, she described a broader range of empowering activities through which female rappers expressed feminist agendas—e.g. supporting and protecting women; responding to the needs and perspectives of working and lower class urban women; redefining stereotypes of derogatory female images to use them as images of female agency and empowerment.

Other important strains of feminist theory in this tradition emphasize the role of women rappers in defying broader structural forces such as sexism and racism that oppress black women and men. For example Shelton (1997) agues that women rappers subvert traditional roles and the focus on the nuclear family through presenting unmarried women enjoying motherhood—images which undermine images of the welfare mother and combat the Norplant era ideology. Skeggs (1993)

asserts that women rappers "defiantly speak to the system of institutionalized and hegemonic masculinity that places all women as objects through the representational processing of masculine fear and fantasy" p. 301. In her view women rappers display assertive sexuality to liberate themselves from moralizing and victimizing discourses promoted within the society as a whole. In fact Skeggs' states that while all music objectifies women, rap music is the only genre that responds to or protests those views. Making similar points, Phillips (2005) identifies three strands that define women's oppositional voices in rap music—"talking back to men in defense of women and demanding respect for women; women's empowerment, self-help and solidarity; and defense of black men against the larger society" p. 261. Song lyrics expressing these points include dialoguing (dissin) songs between black women and men (e.g. Roxanne songs); songs critiquing domestic violence; and the "ride or die songs" showing black women's loyalty to their men opposed to the society or criminal justice system.

In sum, feminist analyses of black women's roles and portrayals in rap music and rap music videos are polarized with respect to critiques of hegemonic controlling images identified in the Hill-Collins framework, in contrast to the frames of resistance and empowerment emphasized by hip hop scholars and feminist writers such as Rose (1994) in her earlier work. Emerson (2002) and Oware (2007) both attempt to reconcile these conflicting viewpoints through empirical analyses of rap music videos and music lyrics. Emersons's qualitative analysis of 38 music videos concludes that they reflect features of both perspectives—e.g. the ideological controlling image of the hypersexual "jezebel" as well images of agency, independence, strength, and autonomy. Emerson also points out that the videos often feature reversals of the traditional focus on female bodies from the male gaze. Instead he notes that the videos have in common "the construction of the male body, and particularly the black male body, as the object of Black female pleasure", p. 131. In addition he states that the videos show mutual sexual fulfillment with women's sexual pleasure predominating. Oware's (2007) analysis of 44 popular songs by women rappers showed that their songs differed from men's in more frequent references to empowering lyrics about women. However he emphasizes that some of these lyrics undermine empowering messages by strong sexual themes that "self-objectify and self-exploit, seemingly employing a male gaze", p. 790.

Images of Masculinity in Rap Music

For the most part, scholars agree that images of manhood in rap music are hypersexual, misogynistic, and violent. However, these writers offer different explanations to account for these portrayals. They include the importance of historical controlling images (Hill-Collins); sociology of black life in the ghetto with a major sub-theme of strained relationships between African American men and women; media constructions of black male sexuality and the impact of corporate influences on rap music.

A few scholars locate the origins of misogynistic rap music in larger structural forces such as capitalism and patriarchy which are mediated through racism, elitism

and sexism (Adams and Fuller 2006) or as part of the general valorization of masculinity and cultural resistance to feminism (Weitzer and Kubrin 2009). For example, Bell hooks (2006) states that the "sexist, misogynist, patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving that are glorified in gangsta rap are a reflection of the prevailing values in our society, values created and sustained by white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (p. 135). In her view, hedonistic consumerism that richly rewards young black men for lyrics promoting violence and misogyny is one avenue through which these values are propagated. Hooks argues that this process mirrors the essence of mainstream culture, which in her words "would not lead us to place gangsta rap on the margins of what this nation is about but at the center. Rather than seeing it as a subversion or disruption of the norm, we would need to see it as the *embodiment* of the norm" (p. 137). From her perspective, members of white mainstream culture are not concerned about misogyny and sexual violence unleashed on black women and children, but only become uncomfortable when young white consumers use it to rebel against bourgeois values.

Important themes in this literature trace the images of black male hypersexuality and violence in rap music to the social construction of black sexuality during slavery and post reconstruction segregation as part of the apparatus of institutionalized racism (West 2001). Hill-Collins (2004) pivotal works describes the creation of the stereotype of the "black buck" that embodied images of black men as "tamed beasts"—wild, violent, unintelligent and hypersexual beings used to justify domination and labor exploitation under chattel slavery in the mid nineteenth century (pages 56–57). After reconstruction, the image of the black man as a hyper sexual rapist possessed by the insatiable desire for white women emerged in era of wide spread lynching. These images helped fuel the campaigns for disfranchisement and provided ideological support for extreme anti-black terrorism (Herd 1985).

Media and Folklore Images

Studies of contemporary media show how images of black masculinity are constrained to conform to derogatory stereotypes emphasizing similar traits. Turner's work (2011) argued that in the analysis of TV shows, "we see the perpetuation of the hypermasculine black buck and the objectified and overly sexualized one-dimensional Black female who is reduced to "decorative eye candy" p. 187 (Emerson 2002, p. 123). From a similar perspective, Orbe's (1998) analysis of black male characters on MTV concludes that they are designed to show that black men are inherently angry, potentially violent and sexually aggressive which in his words "work toward the reification of a syntagmatic code: Black men are to be feared", p. 42.

Another strain of research on images of masculinity in rap music describes the role of culture and folklore. Kelley's (1996) work emphasizes that as an art form rap music incorporates mythical and folktale elements—with braggadocio "tall tales" figuring prominently. Kelly argues that some of the exaggerated sexual exploits and put downs of women are less a reflection of real life and social relations than of verbal dueling and one upmanship characterizing black performance and cultural styles which pre-date rap music and in fact reach back into the early cultural

traditions of African Americans. "Playing the dozens" is a good representation of this genre.

Other writers trace recent stereotypes of 1970s black exploitation characters such as Dolomite, the Mack and Superfly as well as athletes like Muhammed Ali or Charles Barkley to images of the badman that originated in the fables of Stagolee and Shine (Ogbar 2007; Perry 2004). These authors argue that the "badman" is partly created by racism and classism, and is feared by whites and middleclass black society for not conforming to established rules, norms, or laws of society. Perry (2004) states that the badman "is a rebel to society, living on the margins of a black community that at once regards him as a hero and a threat", p. 128) In his view, drug dealers, hustlers, pimps, and players exercise badman behavior by emphasizing sexual and physical prowess, and embracing misogyny and homophobia as part of their character.

Corporate Influences

A number of scholars have directly or indirectly alluded to the influence of corporate influences on black male images in rap music (Kitwana 2004; Lena 2006; Weitzer and Kubrin 2009; Englis et al. 1993). They suggest that stereotypical images of black males as angry, violent, and dangerous have been created and manipulated to increase sales of songs and music videos. Weitzer and Kubrin (2009) state that "Producers not only encourage artists to become ''hardcore'' but also reject or marginalize artists who go against the grain", p. 6. Lena's research substantiates the impact of corporate ownership on music lyric content. Her findings showed that when independent labels owned most of the charted singles, lyrics focused on the local environment and hostility to corporate music production and values. In contrast, dominant labels featured lyrics with a focus on "street" credibility and commercial success in the hustler as hero. She notes that Billboard Magazine editors said that corporations invested in puerile rap "because [it] was sleazier as a lure, easier as an enterprise, and more speedily remunerative at the end of the day" (Anonymous 1996: 4).

Some researchers have also described the commercialization of rap music and artists through campaigns using them to market alcoholic beverages, athletic shoes, and athletic clothing (Blair 1993; Herd 2005). Herd's study (2005) shows that the integration of corporate structures between the music and alcohol industries was accompanied by a major increase in alcohol depictions in rap music. With respect to images of gender relationships and masculinity, some scholars have described the increasing connections between hip hop and pornography (Kitwana 2002; Stephens and Phillips, 2003; Neal 2006) that might encourage more explicit sexual depictions in music videos. For example, Miller-Young (2007) argues that the masculinist, hypersexualized and antiestablishment qualities of rap music videos have made them extremely attractive to the pornography industry for developing a new genre of hard core celebrity rap videos. As examples of the merge of hip hop with pornography she mentions the release of Snoop Dogg's Doggystyle and notes that Tupac Shakur's soft-core video "How Do You Want it" featured legendary porn starts Heather Hunger, Angel Kelley, Jeanine Pepper and Nina Hartley (p. 271).

Other writers propose a more nuanced view in which representations are mutually shaped by the industry and artists that use stereotypes to self-promote and create their own branding. For example, Balaji (2009) argues that while the media has a strong ideological influence on how black male identity is constructed (e.g. capitalizing on the "thug appeal" of black men in rap music boosts sales and income in the music industry and justifies repressive social policies in black communities), he also states that artists engage in a self-commodification process to create their own unique brands and social following. He cites artist 50 cents willingness to capitalize on existing stereotypes of black masculinity with his own self-conception as an example of this process. Miller-Young's (2007) work makes a similar point with reference to the integration of images of black masculinity in rap music and pornography. In her view hip hop pornography serves ideological and pragmatic arenas of resistance for performers. She raises the possibility that hip hop artists use the form to resist black bourgeois values and respectability as well as a way to expand entrepreneurial opportunities.

Sociological Research

In contrast to the above perspectives, some scholars argue that images of black masculinity in rap music are derived from actual norms and behavioral patterns typifying social life in black communities. Armstrong's (2001) work is a graphic example of these views. He asserts that rap music promotes and reflects a "rape culture" that "is a complex of beliefs supporting a continuum of threatened violence against women that ranges from sexual remarks to rape itself" (p. 105). Armstrong argues that gangsta rap is a real cultural statement about rappers and their lives and refutes other structurally oriented explanations, e.g. that corporate structures have influenced the rise of misogyny in rap music. Weitzer and Kubrin's (2009) more nuanced work takes a broader view of influences on misogyny in rap music which encompasses larger social forces, norms about gender relations, the music industry and local neighborhood conditions. However citing Bourgois (1995, 276, 275) these authors focus on the prevalence of misogyny in rap music as a reflection of the "street code" of young males in disadvantaged communities which strip men of traditional sources of dignity and promote values emphasizing a high level of male promiscuity, the "celebration of the gigolo image", the value of "being an economic parasite" on one's girlfriends, and justifications for violence against women, p. 9. Weitzer and Kubrin argued that these elements of the street code parallel five misogynistic themes that they identified in their content analysis of rap music lyrics: (a) derogatory naming and shaming of women, (b) sexual objectification of women, (c) distrust of women, (d) legitimation of violence against women, and (e) celebration of prostitution and pimping.

Taking a slightly different approach, Collins (2005), stated that the growth of a prison culture in the 1980s has influenced ideas about masculinity and gender relationships in African American communities. In her view the incarceration of large numbers of black men has lead to a cultural focus that valorizes thug life and increases misogyny and homophobia in black youth. Kitwana (2002) argues that the

misogynist descriptions of black women in music dominated by black men reflects real tensions in gender relationships within African American communities.

Rose's (2008) later work echoes similar themes—she asserts that within rap music "Sexism is visible, vulgar, aggressive and popular" (p. 114), fueled by a complex of factors including sexism in black communities that influences rappers' attitudes and lyrics as well as the patriarchal values permeating the wider society.

Health/Behavioral Research

The *content* of sexual imagery in rap music has received very little attention in health-related literature. For example, we were able to identify only two studies focused on this topic in the public health literature. Primack et al. (2008) explored the prevalence of "degrading and non-degrading" sexual images in different music genres. Degrading sex was defined as sex with three different attributes: insatiable sexual appetite—usually on the part of males, objectification—usually of females and "sexual value placed solely on physical characteristics", p. 594. Findings of the study showed that references to degrading sex were almost twice as common as references to non-degrading sex and that these references were more prominent in rap music than in other genres such as Country or Rhythm and Blues/Hip Hop. Songs with degrading sex were also more likely to mention alcohol and drug use, violence, and weapons compared to songs mentioning non-degrading sex. From a similar perspective, Aubrey and Frisby (2011) showed that sexual objectification was more prominent in R&B/hip hop and pop videos than in country music videos.

In contrast, there is a considerable body of health-related literature examining the impact of music lyrics and music videos on adolescent sexual norms, attitudes and behavior. First, some of this research asserts that negative portrayals of sexual and gender relationships—e.g. objectification, degradation, or stereotypes—promotes unhealthy sexual attitudes or behavior among youth. Aubrey et al. (2011) found that watching music videos with highly objectified women artists predicted oppositional sexual beliefs, acceptance of interpersonal violence and trends towards tolerance of sexual harassment among male college students. Martino et al. 2006 and Primack et al. 2008 both reported that youth listening to "degrading" sexual content were more likely to start engaging in sexual intercourse or participate in higher levels of sexual activity while youth exposed to non degrading sexual lyrics of music did not show significant changes in their sexual behavior. Peterson et al. (2007) found that adolescents who perceived more sexual stereotypes in rap music were more likely to have more than one sexual partner, to engage in binge drinking, test positive for marijuana and have a negative body image.

Second, some researchers (Pardun et al. 2005) have argued that *amount* rather than *type* of exposure to sexual content is the more critical determinant of adolescent sexual behavior and related intentions. For example, L'Engle et al. (2006) found that youth with higher levels of exposure to sexual content in the media are more like to have intentions to have sexual intercourse and to engage in sex than other youth. In addition, Wingood's (2003) study showed that greater exposure to rap music vides was associated with having more sexual partners as

well as having an STD and social problems such as school violence, being arrested and using alcohol and drugs. Brown's (2006) research found that white adolescents aged 14–16 with the most media exposure were more than twice as likely to have had sex than those with the least exposure. However after controlling for parent attitudes and peer norms, this relationship did not hold for black youth. Kistler and Lee's (2009) study reported that watching MTV sexually oriented videos significantly increased scores of approving premarital sex in adolescents. Lou et al. (2012) also showed that use of the mass media and media messages influenced sexually related knowledge and behaviors in unmarried Asian and young adult respondents.

However, some literature has focused on explaining how media influence sexual behavior beyond exposure effects. The media practice model (Brown 2002) assumes that adolescents are not passive recipients of media messages, but that they have agency and choice in selecting and interacting with media based on their own sense of identity. The model assumes that the impact of the media on youth is shaped by their personal attributes. As an example of this perspective, Brown et al. (2005) reported that earlier maturing girls were more interested than girls maturing later in viewing or listening to sexual media content. Earlier maturing girls were also more likely to interpret media messages as approving of teens being sexually active. L'Engle et al. (2006) also showed that teens interpretation as well as exposure to sex in the media influenced their sexual behavior. Those teens that viewed the media as being supportive of teen sexual behavior had a higher level of intentions to have sexual intercourse and more sexual activity. In addition Ter Bogt et al. (2010) argued that preferences, rather than exposure were associated with permissive sexual attitudes and gender stereotypes. For both girls and boys, preferences for hip hop and hard-house music were associated positively with gender stereotypes and preference for classical music was negatively associated with gender stereotypes. Taking these perspectives even further, Arnett (1995) argues that adolescents ability to control media choices allows them to engage in a form of self-socialization based on their own individual preferences and personalities in a way that is not possible with broader socializing agents such as family, school, community and the legal system.

Cognitively oriented theories such as Priming Theory and Social Cognitive Theory emphasize the effect of media on sexuality through perception and learning by shaping belief systems. In Priming Theory, Ter Bogt et al. (2010) theorizes that stimuli in songs and music activate cognitive schemas and reinforce and strengthen them through repetition. From this perspective, stereotypical depictions of gender roles can promote/activate the development of conforming stereotypical belief systems.

Finally, some research has applied sexual script theory—normative frameworks for making sense of sexual behavior—to music influences on sexual behavior. Stephens and Phillips (2003) state that African American pre adolescents belief systems mirror the sexual scripts circulating in African American culture including the Diva, Gold Digger, Freak, Dyke, Gangster Bitch, Sister Savior, Earth Mother, and Baby Mama.

Discussion and Conclusions

This review of portrayals of sexuality and gender relationships in rap music identified a fairly wide range of approaches rooted in feminist theory, cultural studies, sociology and behavioral science, some of which are at odds with each other. For example, some strains of feminist theory have argued that portrayals of women and gender relationships reflect the historical oppression associated with slavery and domination, while others have focused on narratives of women's empowerment within the music. Analyses of the role of masculinity in rap music have generally emphasized misogyny and violence often attributed to actual social patterns within urban communities. On the other hand some critical studies have examined the social and cultural construction of sexuality and gender in the music and pointed to the influence of structural factors such as patriarchy and corporate practices in shaping how gender relationships and sexual content are portrayed in the music. Behavioral science researchers generally have had little to say about the sexual and gender related content of rap music, but nonetheless conclude the content is important because it influences sexual attitudes, behavior and intention.

The different conceptual approaches that have been applied to images of sexuality and gender relationships in rap music are interesting and thought provoking—however, for the most part they have not been informed by strong empirical work. Rap music itself is richly varied and provides ample material to illustrate a variety of specific conceptual frameworks. Existing research has mined some of these images and linked them to important theoretical contexts but has not provided substantial analysis of how gender and sexual relationships are depicted within the genre as a whole.

On the other hand, empirical work on this topic is extremely limited and generally lacks theoretical richness. The virtual absence of content studies in health research and the simplistic dichotomous frames used to describe sexual portrayals (e.g. as "degrading or non-degrading") illustrate this problem.

In addition, none of the literature discussed analyzes changes in portrayals of sexuality and gender relationships over time in rap music. The genre is now approximately 35 years old and has undergone a number of changes in corporate ownership, audiences, and sub genre types. These kinds of changes would be expected to influence lyrical content related to portrayals of gender relationships and sexuality. For example, research on other social issues illustrates that images of alcohol, illegal drugs, and violence have increased substantially over time in rap music lyrics in response to corporate pressures and other societal factors (Herd 2005, 2008, 2009).

Given the importance of music as a social influence on the development of sexual attitudes and gender norms among youth, it is important to understand more about the content of the music. Existing studies indicate that the content is important, but lack precision in identifying what aspects of gender and sexuality portrayals are influential. Part of the problem may be that analyses of the content of lyrics in health research are very limited in terms of understanding the varied landscape of sexual portrayals and gender images in the music and their social meanings.

As such, one of the critical questions for future research is to understand more about the variety of gender and sexual relationships depicted in rap music. For example the music includes lyrics about courtship and love; sexual gratification; sexual violence; and sexual and economic exploitation among others. Some researchers have hinted at this variety by dichotomizing sexual depictions as "degrading versus non-degrading". However, more analysis is needed to provide insight into the nuances and contexts of different kinds of sexual relationships portrayed as well as their prevalence in the music. This kind of analysis could provide a basis for exploring how particular theoretical frameworks map onto portrayals of gender relationships and sexuality in rap music.

Another compelling question is to understand whether these images have varied significantly over time. As an illustration of this possibility, Rose's (1990, 1994) earlier work emphasized women's sexual power and skill in confronting men's attempts to control and subordinate women in rap music; however her later work (Rose 2008) points to the blatant and aggressive sexism characterizing popular music in the genre. A related issue to explore is whether there have been shifts in the social context of sexual behavior in rap music. For example, have their been changes in the association with sexuality and social behavior such as romance, glamorous lifestyles, drug and alcohol use, crime and violence over time? Future research should focus on addressing these questions by providing in depth empirical work informed by relevant theories.

Conflict of interest   The author declares that the author has no conflict of interest.

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