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Gender and Sexuality Representations in Hip Hop

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Gender and Sexuality Representations in Hip Hop Music
Teaching Media - Hip Hop Submission
Dr. Tia C. M. Tyree
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1. Summary and rationale for assignment

When MTV aired in 1981, music videos took the stage in pop culture in a way that they had not prior to the channel's inception. Since this time, music videos have become a staple in the music industry, and they provide the opportunity for record companies to promote new artists and songs. However, as a key part of pop culture, music videos, more specifically rap videos, have come under criticism, because they increasingly present often negative and controversial representations of women. Further, research shows youth learn about sexuality, gender roles, and relationship from them.

As rap music is an international medium that influences how Black women are viewed in the world, it is critical for us to investigate its lyrics and representations. How gender and sex are characterized is a contentious space in Hip Hop. However, the analyses of voice and representation are critical in any mass medium. With rap music historically dominated by men, what they say about and do with women is often studied and predominately couched as misogynistic. In the rare moments when women gain the stage, what women say and do is worthy of investigation and discussion.

This assignment is a critical examination of how rappers and consumers view gender and sexuality representations and messages in rap music, but it also forces students to understand how research paradigms shape what investigators uncover in their studies. What also makes this innovative is the classroom discussion is based on key readings, but students must come to classroom with the visual (videos or pictures) and audio to support or refute the messages and ideas within the readings. What happens is a not only a well-informed discussion, but a robust, symphonic experience where student presentations create what is a "classic battle" of visual and audio arguments based on actual rap images and sounds. With students' lives entrenched in the Internet's offerings, this assignment allows them to use digital resources to find texts that bring the ideas, concepts and discussions to life. It connects in a way that a traditional lecture cannot do.

The outcomes of the assignment are as follows:

- 1) Identify the research traditions (or paradigms) that framed a study and explain how it was beneficial,
- 2) To think critically of the ways in which gender, sexuality and race shape the foundation, results and conclusions of an article,
- 3) To lead a dynamic class discussion covering the main points of a reading,

- 4) To research and collect specific visual and audio texts that work to refute or substantiate findings, theories and/or conclusions within a study, and
- 5) To effectively present work orally and within a written scholarly format.

2. Assignment sheets and/or discussion prompts

Students should write a 5-7 page paper summarizing the reading. Depending on the number of students in the class, the professor can give each student a specific article or cluster articles based on appropriate topics and provide a group to students for review. With the former, students should not simply regurgitate the contents of the article. Instead, they should use it as the foundation to bring forth critical thoughts regarding race, gender and sexuality. Key linkages between milestones in rap, African American and women's history, scholarly articles and pop culture should be included. With the latter, students should also be required to identify the commonalities among the articles, including findings, conclusions, methodologies and theories.

In addition to the paper, students should create a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation. The goal is to provide a brief summary of the readings and provide visual - video or pictorial - and audio representations within rap music or hip hop culture that refute or support key issues within the readings. For the rap songs, students should be encouraged to not just focus on the content of the lyrics, but the images within the videos. The goal is to provide the class with the opportunity to think critically along with the presenter by offering audio or visual texts that facilitate robust conversations and intriguing connections to findings, conclusions, and implications of the articles.

3. Full citations of readings

Aubrey, J.S., Hopper, K.M., & Mbure, W.G. (2011). Check that body! The effects of sexually objectifying music videos on college men's sexual beliefs. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 55(3), 360-379.

Conrad, K., Dixon, T., & Zhang, Y. (2009). Controversial rap themes, gender portrayals and skin tone distortion: A content analysis of rap music videos. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 53(1), 134-156.

Frisby, C.M. & Aubrey, J.S. (2012). Race and genre in the use of sexual objectification in female artists' music videos. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 23(1), 66-87.

Gan, S., Zillmann, D., & Mitrook, M. (1997). Stereotyping effect of Black women's sexual rap on White audiences. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 19(3), 381-399.

Goodall, N.H. (1994). Depend on myself: T.L.C. and the evolution of Black female rap. *The Journal of Negro History*, 79(1), 85-93.

Kistler, M.E, & Lee, M.J. (2010). Does exposure to sexual hip-hop music videos influence the sexual attitudes of college students. *Mass Communication and Society*, 13, 67-86.

- Lena, J.C. (2008). Voyeurism and resistance in rap music videos. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 5(3), 264-279.
- Oware, M. (2009). "A man's woman"? Contradictory messages in the songs of female rappers, 1992-2000. *Journal of Black Studies*, 39(5), 786-802.
- Morgan, M. (2005). Hip-hop women shredding the veil: Race and class in popular feminist identity. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 104(3), 424-444.
- Phillips, L., Reddick-Morgan, K., & Stephens, D.P. (2005). Oppositional consciousness within an oppositional realm: The case of feminism and womanism in rap and hip-hop 1976-2004. *The Journal of African American History*, 90(3), 253-277.
- Reid-Brinkley, S.R. (2007). The essence of res(ex)pectability Black women's negotiation of Black femininity in rap music and music video. *Meridians*, 8(1), 236-60.
- Roberts, R. (1991). Music videos, performance and resistance: Feminist rappers. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 25(2), 141-152.
- Rose, T. (1990). Never trust a big butt and a smile. *Camera Obscura*, 23, 109-131.
- Ross, J.N. & Coleman, N.M. (2011). Gold digger or video girl: the salience of an emerging hip-hop sexual script. *Culture, Health, & Sexuality*, 13(2), 157-71.
- Stephens, D.P. & Few, A.L. (2007). Hip-hop honey or video ho: African American preadolescents' understanding of female sexual scripts in hip-hop culture. *Sex Cult*, 48-69.
- Stephens, D.P. & Phillips, L.D. (2003). Freaks, gold diggers, divas and dykes: The socio-historical development of African American female adolescent scripts. *Sexuality and Culture*, 7, 3-47.
- Turner, J.S. (2011). Sex and the spectacle of music videos: An examination of the portrayal of race and sexuality in music videos. *Sex Roles*, 64, 173-191.
- Tyree, Tia C. M. (2009). [Lovin' Momma and Hatin' on Baby Mama: A Comparison of Misogynistic and Stereotypical Representation in Songs about Rappers' Mothers and Baby Mamas](#). *Women and Language*, 32(2), 49-58.
- Wallis, C. (2011). Performing gender: A content analysis of gender display in music videos. *Sex Roles*, 64, 160-172.
- Zhang, Y., Dixon, T.L., & Conrad, K. (2009). Rap music videos and African American women's body image: The moderating role of ethnic identity. *Journal of Communication*, 59, 262-278.

4. Full citations and/or links to media used with assignment

Students can select from the list of videos below to prompt class discussions within their

presentations. Students can select videos that support or refute ideas, concepts, theories, conclusions or findings in the articles. It is not mandatory to select from the list. Students are encouraged to find other videos, pictures or audio files.

**WARNING: Some videos below have explicit lyrics and/or adult content. Students should have the option to excuse themselves from viewing any video or picture as well as viewing any photograph, and presenters should prompt the class, if any content has explicit lyrics and/or adult content.*

2pac - Dear Mama

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mb1ZvUDvLDY>

2 Live Crew - Me So Horny

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6VTj7LhCtE>

Azalia Banks - 212

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3Jv9fNPjgk>

Jay-Z - Girls Girls Girls

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0yrm2eI2bM>

Juicy J - Bands A Maker Her Dance

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AI0gk2KJeho>

Lauren Hill - Doo Wop (That Thang)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6QKqFPRZSA>

Lil Jon & the Eastside Boyz - Get Low

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYH7_GzP4Tg

Lil Mama - Lip Gloss

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5ck6TJQ5Ow>

Lupe Fiasco - Bitch Bad

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3m3t_PxiUI

Missy Eliot - We Run This

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2oIhJG7rXA>

MC Lyte - I'm Not Having It

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2IZtD9gfzg>

Nelly - Flap Your Wings

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_f8L6OYHZFo

Rah Digga - Imperial

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KdV6t78IHE>

Salt-N-Pepa - Independent

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1I8J7Q1ho-4>

Salt-N-Pepa - Ain't Nuthin' But a She Thang

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=na3u8S9tF9o>

Three 6 Mafia - Baby Mama

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tA-oNFI7yJc>

Trina - That's my attitude

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIKkTQ7zP6c>

Queen Latifah - Unity

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8cHxydDb7o>

Webbie ft. Lil Boosie and Lil Phat - Independent

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCUiGARhW2M>

Yo Yo - You Can't Play With My Yo Yo

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZ-UEn11aDs>

5. Reaction of students and teacher to assignment

Students appreciated the opportunity to see visual representations of the ideas and concepts within many of the articles. In addition, some artists within the scholarly articles are pioneers of rap and are not necessarily ones students know or see often. This assignment allows students to experience their work in a setting that facilitated in-depth conversations about the impact of their work when it was released and as it relates to current rap artists. Finally, after the first few presentations, students seemed challenged by the opportunity to bring forth their translations of the articles and the visual representations they deemed most appropriate.

6. Brief biography

Dr. Tia C. M. Tyree is the Interim Chair and Associate Professor at Howard University within the Department of Journalism. She is currently the Public Relations Sequence Coordinator for Department of Journalism, and she teaches several graduate and undergraduate courses, including Introduction to Public Relations; PR Writing II; PR Writing I; SR: Friends, Follower and Social Media; SR: Event Planning; CapComm Lab and Issues in Mass Communication Theory and Research. As an instructor, she primarily teaches students the history, theory, practices and issues of contemporary public relations; informs students about corporate communications, media and community relations, action and communication strategies; and teaches students how to create key public relations information products, including media advisories, press releases, promotional items, fact sheets and media packets. Her research interests include African American and female representations in the mass media, hip hop, rap,

reality television, film and social media. She has published articles in several journals, including *Women and Language*, *Howard Journal of Communications*, *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism* and *Journal of Black Studies*. She is also co-author of the upcoming book – *The HBCU Experience*.