

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF POPULAR THEMES AND SEXUALITY IN RAP AND
REGGAE MUSIC

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Abstract

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The discourse surrounding the destructive nature of rap and reggae music has persisted throughout academic literature and the media. Yet, homophobia in music is often ignored in the discourse and in sociological studies, specifically. Are the homophobic messages contained in the songs of some reggae or rap artists representative of these genres? And, given that homophobia is not a theme that generates much attention in scholarly criticism of rap music, is reggae more homophobic than rap? Do the frames used in the discussion of reggae and rap in the media and academic discourse accurately reflect the lyrical content of popular songs? Furthermore, since both rap and reggae have been accused of being explicit, are the genres more explicit or implicit? These questions are explored by using data from *Billboard's Year-End Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums* and *Top Reggae Albums*, between the years 1993 and 2008. Drawing on Binder's (1993) argument about how media frames shape popular perceptions of music, I used content analysis to analyze a sample of 540 songs for several themes. Contrary to critical discourse surrounding these music genres, results of this study show that homophobia is the least prevalent theme in reggae and one of the least prevalent themes in rap. While reggae artists might not be as explicit as rap artists, several themes supported the hypothesis that their songs

may be more implicit. The distinction between implicit and explicit categories may illuminate the different cultural barriers inherent in marketing music to American audiences.

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INTRODUCTION

The sociology of the arts has analyzed culture by looking at explicit cultural objects which include artworks, musical pieces and museums (Acord and Denora 2008). These objects are viewed in a variety of ways: “First, the arts are communicative, expressive, and meaning-laden objects that influence human behavior and structure human experience in social settings.... Second, artistic objects are social texts representing shared values or belief systems” (Acord and Denora 2008:224). Therefore, music can be perceived as a form of social interaction between its consumers and its producers. When that interaction is perceived as negative, a discourse about the subsequent implications is inevitable. The discourse surrounding the destructive nature of rap, rock & roll and reggae music has persisted throughout the literature and the media.

Although rock music has been criticized for its homophobic lyrics (Outlaw 1995) and has been compared to rap music (Binder 1993; Knobloch-Westerwick, Musto, and Shaw 2006) there are some similarities between rap and reggae music that makes their comparison salient. The genres have often been linked together in academic literature: “an important input into the rap and hip hop music of today came from Jamaican disc jockeys who did ‘toasting overdubs,’ speaking rhythmically over a recorded foundation” (Malm 1993:350). While Jamaican disc jockeys might have influenced rap, reggae also has some American roots: “the harmonic and rhythmic structure of the music has its most significant antecedent in the American soul music of the 1950s and 1960s” (Anderson 2004:206). In fact, reggae has been categorized as hip hop: “Hip-hop, then, is another form of musical expression that has included rhythm and blues (R&B), rap or urban style, dance, new jack swing, reggae or ska. All may serve as a protest of racism and poverty” (Krohn 1995:140). Reggae and rap music are often produced by

marginalized groups and, as such, these genres illuminate the political and social realities of the artists. While both genres are grounded in the musical expression of the underclass, they may differ in the type or frequency of their content. They may both be seen as forms of hip hop, but the two genres have distinct differences.

While Chiu (2005) notes that “rap and hip hop’s ‘fellow traveller (sic) in the killing fields of homophobia’ is Jamaican dancehall music” (p. 25), reggae has been criticized more than rap, for its violent lyrics toward homosexuals. However, the media might frame reggae as more homophobic than rap and this may be an inaccurate assumption. Due to the efforts to regulate lyrical content in both rap and reggae, this thesis is interested in whether homophobic lyrics are prevalent in these genres. Furthermore, this study is interested in whether the genres are more explicit or implicit. Such a study is important because these two genres are popular all over the world and are both so complex in their vocabulary that they have their own dictionaries. As a result, some consumers may be unaware of homophobic content in some songs because they may misunderstand the slang or dialect. Therefore, content analysis is necessary: “Only by understanding the music and deciphering the phrases articulated in black lingo, will society be able to reach a level of understanding of the needs of an exploited community” (Krohn 1995:152).

First, the study begins with a brief review of the academic and popular discourse of homophobia in rap and reggae music. It also examines previous studies and media frames of several sexual and non-sexual lyrical themes in both genres. The second major section builds a theory of explicit and implicit content and uses it, along with previous research, to construct several research questions. The third major section focuses on data, methods, descriptive

statistics, t-tests and figures to demonstrate the importance of lyrical themes within each genre. It also gives a background of the genre and the artists who appeared in the samples. Examples of song lyrics will be used to explain coding decisions and as evidence of the themes. Additionally, I conducted chi-squared analyses to examine the across genre differences.

In the final section, I have an analysis and a conclusion that addresses the prevalence of all of the themes and their accompanying social, political, theoretical and cultural implications. I also provide a few lingering questions that may provide opportunities for future research. “While the foundations for a potentially vibrant cultural sociology of popular music exist, considerable groundwork is required in order for such an approach to be properly formulated and realized as a means of exposing and explicating the increasingly complex interplay between popular music and everyday cultural practice” (Bennett 2008: 420). The results of this study will contribute to the cultural sociology of popular music by examining the music lyrics of songs on high ranking reggae and rap albums on the *Billboard* charts. This will give insight into the production and (to a lesser degree) the consumption of lyrical content. However, this study will specifically contribute to the debate on sexual themes in rap and reggae music by providing quantitative and qualitative analyses of song lyrics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Homophobia in Rap Music

Rap music is a genre that emerged “from the streets of inner-city neighborhoods, ostensibly as a reflection of the hopes, concerns, and aspirations of urban black youth” (Kubrin 2005:433). Yet, several studies noted the prevalence of negative themes in the genre as a whole:

Rap music “demeans women and promotes drug use and violence as a way to achieve empowerment through symbolic verbal action” (Krohn 1995:140). The genre has been accused of being sexist, violent and materialistic but rarely homophobic. While numerous studies have identified and analyzed other themes, only a few studies to date mention the existence of homophobia in rap (Binder 1993; Chiu 2005; Kubrin 2005; Outlaw 1995) and none systematically study it.

In his qualitative study, Chiu (2005) examined homophobia, sexism, hypermasculinity and heterosexism in rap. He notes that while academia has largely ignored homophobia in rap music, male rappers may need to assert their hypermasculinity through heterosexism or homophobia. Chiu finds that women are portrayed as sexual and materialistic objects and often referred to as bitches and hoes.

While homophobia was not examined in Lena’s (2006) article, it did influence some of the themes used in this study. Lena (2006) used the *Top 100 Billboard Magazine Charts* to analyze 1,221 rap singles between 1979 and 1995. Lena examined the flow, musical style, rhythmic style and semantic content. However, most pertinent to the current study is her examination of semantic content. She listed 10 tropes in rap music: sex, love, violence, gender roles, politics, race, partying, money, comedy/parody and boasting (Lena 2006). Lena was interested in exploring the link between the context of production and the content of rap music. While this study will not analyze the connection between rap artists and record labels, it will reveal the difference in production and consumption of the semantic content in top rap and reggae albums.

As in Lena’s research, data from *Billboard* was used in the study by Primack, Gold,

Schwarz and Dalton (2008). Primack et al. used *Billboard* magazine to identify the top popular songs of 2005. Using several charts including *Pop 100*, *Hot 100*, *Hot Country Tracks*, *Hot Rhythm & Blues (R&B)/Hip-Hop Songs*, *Hot Rap Tracks*, *Mainstream Rock Tracks*, and *Modern Rock Tracks*, the authors coded 279 songs for degrading vs. non-degrading sexual references, substance use, violence, and weapon carrying. The results revealed that 36.9 percent of the sample contained references to sexual activity. Songs with references to degrading sex were more common than songs with references to non-degrading sex (65.0 percent vs. 35.0 percent). However, songs with degrading sex were most commonly rap.

Another study that looked at rap music was done by Charis Kubrin. While Kubrin (2005) only mentioned homophobia in her discussion section and never addressed it in her research, some of her methods and themes have strongly influenced the current study. Kubrin (2005) explored the prevalence of the street code in rap music by conducting a content analysis of 403 songs on platinum rap albums from 1992 to 2000. She examined several elements of the “street code” in rap songs, including respect, material wealth, willingness to fight or use violence, objectification of women, nihilism and violent retaliation. Some of her findings revealed that violence was present in 64.8 percent of the songs, material wealth was referenced in 57.8 percent of the songs and only 22.3 percent of the songs had references to the objectification of women.

The most influential study that helped shape the theory and frames presented in this research is Binder’s (1993) analysis of media frames that influence the cultural texts of heavy metal and rap music. She argues that different media outlets promote conflicting views and frames about each genre. Based on this theory of social framing, her study identifies several

frames and counterframes prevalent in media discourse.¹ Binder concludes that while some media sources went out of their way to valorize “black” rap as art, other mainstream writers were “concerned about the dangers these black youths posed to the larger society” (1993:765). To explore the basis of these frames, she coded the lyrics of 20 of the most controversial heavy metal and rap songs commonly cited in the media sources.

Lyrical themes Binder finds include violence or murder of police, drugs and/or alcohol, degradation and violence towards women and several categories of sex (graphic, innuendo and group). Binder also found that “while heavy metal songs used double entendres and thinly-veiled symbolic allusions to refer to sexual acts and male domination of women, rap made these acts more graphic and explicit” (1993:764). Therefore, I tested her assumption by coding the themes in rap and reggae for both explicit and implicit content.

The above studies demonstrate the thematic content of popular music. These themes include drug and alcohol use, partying, material wealth, threat of incarceration, violence, sexual references, heterosexism, hypermasculinity and the objectification of women. However, these scholars have not developed a systematic method for studying either the frequency or the appearance of themes related to homophobia. “The hatred towards or fear of gays and lesbians seem to be an infamous criticism of the culture and music of rap and hip hop yet such an issue is still largely absent and still not written about within academic literature” (Chiu 2005:25). The current study fills this gap in the literature by analyzing the content of rap lyrics for female and

¹ Corruption, Protection, Danger to society, Not censorship ("Music Is Harmful" Frames) and freedom of speech, no harm, threat to authorities, generation gap, important message/art ("Music Is Not Harmful" Counterframes).

male homophobia.

Homophobia in Reggae Music

Scholars have noted that the sexual themes in reggae often reflect homophobic views and identify the genre as a contributor to homophobia (Chin 1999; Chiu 2005; Cooper 1994; Gutzmore 2004; Hope 2006; Noble 2008; Sharpe and Pinto 2006; Saunders 2003; Williams 2000). The literature has identified certain homophobic slurs such as “batty bwoy” or “chi chi man” and encouragement of violent acts that include murdering and burning gay men (Chiu 2005; Pinto 2006; Williams 2000).

Dancehall music, specifically, has been criticized for having homophobic themes (Chin 1999; Chiu 2005; Noble 2008; Saunders 2003). “The sexual explicitness and erotic hedonism of Jamaican reggae’s Bashment Dancehall culture is defined through the symbolic unity or homology (Hebdige, 1979) of sexually explicit lyrics, dance, music, fashion styles and values” (Noble 2008:107). Therefore, dancing may be a major part of dancehall culture, specifically, and Jamaican culture, in general.

When Shabba Ranks became the first dancehall artist to win a Grammy in 1992 (vh1.com), he validated America's acceptance of reggae music. However, his homophobic views raised concerns about the genre in general. Another artist criticized for homophobia is Buju Banton. During the early 1990s, Buju Banton's song "Boom Bye Bye" sparked considerable controversy since it suggested that gay men ("batty bwoys") should die because of their sexual activities. While a disproportionate amount of attention has been given to Shabba and Buju, there

are other artists who have produced songs with homophobic content including Beenie Man, Baby Cham, TOK, Louis Culture, Elephant Man, Bounty Killer, Anthony B. and Capleton (Chiu 2005; Gutzmore 2004; Saunders 2003). Some of these artists have even suffered economic losses such as cancelled product endorsements and concerts due to the perceived homophobia in their music (Noble 2008). Additionally, since many Conscious Vibes artists are Rastafarians, their religious beliefs (which are often homophobic) may be reflected in their music (Saunders 2003). Therefore, religion may be an important theme in the genre.

A few of the studies exhibit a brief qualitative analysis of some reggae lyrics (Chin 1999; Gutzmore 2004; Hope 2006; Sharpe and Pinto 2006). However, unlike rap, there is no systematic random sample of songs or quantitative analyses of the lyrics. Despite the commercial, political, social and cultural implications, there are few, if any, sociological studies that use both quantitative and qualitative research to assess reggae lyrics. Therefore, along with most of the themes in rap, religious and dance themes will be evaluated. Such studies are needed in light of efforts to redress homosexual prejudice.

The Reggae Compassionate Act, created by British gay rights activist Peter Tatchell in 2007, was a response to the homophobic lyrics in reggae music (Tatchell 2008). It encouraged reggae artists to sign an agreement declaring that their music will no longer promote hatred or violence based on religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity or race (Tatchell 2008). Organizations like Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), OUTRAGE and Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD) have also campaigned diligently against homophobia in reggae (Chin 1999). Yet, there has been little, if any, extensive quantitative sociological research that confirms empirically the assumptions underlying these political efforts.

The current study uses quantitative and qualitative evidence to compare the prevalence of similar themes in rap and reggae music across a 15-year span, from 1993-2008. In addition, the results will be analyzed to assess the similarities and differences in the findings by previous research. Furthermore, the theoretical importance of implicit and explicit content will be examined.

MEDIA AND ACADEMIC FRAMES OF THE GENRES

Available research does not address whether homophobic lyrics from particular songs or artists are representative of the genres. Noting this lacuna, I became interested in investigating the extent to which the theme of homophobia is present in rap and reggae music. I also wanted to see if the different media frames used to describe each genre would be supported by my research. It will reveal whether the themes that scholars, activists or the media are concerned about may actually exist in the genres.

Drawing on Binder's (1993) argument about how media frames shape popular perceptions of music, I analyzed the extant literature to see if any of these same frames were present in the academic and popular discourse on rap and reggae music. Some of the frames Binder identifies are *corruption*, *protection*, *danger to society*, *no harm* and *important message/art*.

According to Binder (1993), *the corruption frame* "emphasized the music's corrupting effect on young listeners rather than on the effects such listeners might have on the society at large" (p. 758). Chiu (2005) believes that the popularity of rap music may have negative consequences: "As the media is woven into our everyday social processes, we should begin to

look specifically at how sexism in the music and culture of hip hop and rap can affect young viewers” (p. 26). Instead of music being an outlet for aggression, many fear that it may encourage bad habits, values or even violence among youth.

The *protection frame* suggests that “parents and other adults must shield America's youth from offensive lyrics” by labeling lyrics or enacting laws against harmful music (Binder 1993:758). The Parental Advisory Label, which has been applied to music containing explicit lyrics, is one way parents can determine what music is appropriate for their children. Krohn (1995) believes that it is the parent’s responsibility to “monitor their childrens' music purchases, listening, and viewing” (p. 152). Knobloch-Westerwick et al. (2006) shared Krohn’s sentiments: “It seems advisable for educators and parents to stay informed about teens’ musical tastes and consumption, and further communication research on popular music will hopefully shed more light on the issue” (2006:14). However, children are not the only consumers of popular music. Parents and other adults are also affected by the lyrics and messages in music.

The *danger to society frame* “warned that when lyrics glorify violence, all of society is at risk” (Binder 1993:758). These lyrics may encourage consumers to commit acts of violence against authority figures such as the police, parents and teachers. Additionally, these lyrics may normalize violence against disadvantaged groups such as women and homosexuals. There were articles in the *New York Post*, *Village Voice*, *Vibe* (Chin 1999) and videos such as Isaac Julien’s anti-homophobia film *The Darker Side of Black* (Gutzmore 2004), that helped illuminate the threat of violence surrounding homophobia, specifically, in reggae music. Similarly, there was one article, “Hip Hop's Homophobia and Black America's Silence About It,” (Cannick 2006) and a video, “Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes” by Filmmaker Byron Hurt, that raised questions

about the lack of discourse on homophobia in rap music. This discourse is critical since “‘minority stress’ or a conflict between the minority group and the dominant society, may transform into ‘internalised (sic) homophobia’ where the homosexual individual may expect to be rejected, and develop ‘poor self-regard’ and negative attitudes towards himself or herself’ (Chiu 2005:26-7) . Therefore, the homophobia in these genres may alienate the black queer community.

The *no harm frame* argues that “there is no causal connection between music and behavior” (Binder 1993:759). Kubrin argues “that media content has multiple meanings and that audiences actively construct this meaning suggest no direct relationship between music and behavior” (Kubrin 2005:442). While it is difficult to prove that music directly influences human behavior, lyrics can be seen as a social text that represents the shared values between artists and their audience. Consequently, music may serve as a symbolic and discursive way to convey values. These values can be both negative and positive. While most scholars focus on the dangers of these genres, some focus on the positive aspects and frames.

The *important message/art frame* asserts that rap lyrics are important because they are a form of artistic expression and a reflection of urban reality (Binder 1993:760). This frame was very prevalent in the literature (Chiu 2005; Krohn 1995; Kubrin 2005). Krohn believes rap “recalls the African tradition of storytelling” (p. 141) and expresses “a need for social, political, and cultural action” (p. 152). Rap is also “an art form that reflects the nuances, pathology, and most importantly, the resilience of America’s black ghettos” (Kubrin 2005:434). Reggae music is similarly important since it is a product of marginalized groups and represents the working class and poor Jamaicans (Saunders 2003).

Corruption, protection, danger to society, no harm and important message/art frames were all used to describe reggae and rap music. Yet, without quantitative analysis, there is little basis for these frames. If it were known to what extent the themes are prevalent in these genres, then it would provide evidence of the necessity or validity of these frames. The current research will use quantitative and qualitative analyses to address these claims and to look at more positive themes such as dance and religion. When rap was compared to rock music, the results revealed that rap was more explicit and had more destructive messages (Binder 1993). This study will compare rap and reggae music to explore if a similar relationship exists between the two genres.

THEORY: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT CONTENT

There are several scholars who reinforce the need to study both implicit and explicit lyrical content. Kubrin suggests that black youth culture or “street code” is “present not only on ‘the street’ but also in rap music” (2005:434). According to Krohn, “many teenagers and minority group members view rappers as their spokesmen because of their ability to speak in street language and bluntly express their frustrations. That street language usually depicts the least socially desirable elements of urban life including misogyny, illegal drugs, and violence” (1995:142). However, this “street code” or “language” may not always be accessible to mainstream audiences. Therefore, rap artists consciously communicate with outsider audiences through explicit lyrics and collaborations with artists in other genres. As a result, some scholars question the validity of today’s rap music: “When meshed with other genres, such as pop and Latin, the authenticity of rap music has become compromised as it begins to be produced and targeted toward a more mainstream audience and less toward the use value of music” (L. Myer

and C. Kleck 2007:146). Reggae music is similar to rap since it has also been meshed with other genres and collaborations are common. However, the consumption and production of reggae is different from rap because of the use of patois.

Reggae music is often performed in patois, a type of broken English spoken by Jamaicans. Jamaican patois is used as “‘a vehicle of resistance and as an emblem of cultural difference’ (p. 149) and, because of its relative unintelligibility to those uninitiated in the culture, symbolized the exclusion of outsiders” (Kuppens 2009:44). Cooper (1994) also argued that reggae lyrics are often misunderstood by non-native speakers. “Some research had suggested that (the mainstream Euro-American) audience has in fact largely failed to comprehend what is actually being sung” (Alleyne 2000:15). Additionally, if a non-native speaker were to try to find the written lyrics, they are usually in patois. Some lyrics are implicit to native-speakers due to the subtle references of themes. However, these same implicit lyrics are made even more implicit to non-native speakers because of the use of patois. To non-native speakers, the lyrics in patois, in general, may be implicit or even ambiguous. As a result, the use of patois serves to authenticate subcultural identity through both consumption (fans) and production (artists) (Kuppens 2009). UB40 and Snow are among the white artists that Alleyne cites as using reggae to advance their careers (2000:28). However, while UB40 uses reggae beats to appeal to a wider audience, Snow uses both reggae beats and patois.

Despite the “language” barrier, outsiders still enjoy the beat of reggae music: “The mainstream Euro-American audience has continually demonstrated a propensity for adopting reggae-oriented material on the basis of its aesthetically pleasing surface qualities rather than for explicitly political or deeper musical content” (Alleyne, 2000:15). It can be argued that besides

using beats or instruments, these artists may use certain lyrical themes in both implicit and explicit ways to market their music to local and international audiences. Therefore, the distinction between implicit and explicit musical content in reggae is salient because of the cultural barrier between Americans and Jamaicans.

For both reggae and rap music, the main outsider audience may be white Americans. Kubrin argues that an important issue is “the reality and/or reproduction of the street code in rappers’ lyrics and its correspondence with the “lived experience” of listeners of rap music, many of whom are white middle-class youth” (2005: 454). Rap artists seem to cater more to these outsider audiences by having explicit content in their lyrics. Reggae artists, on the other hand, have more implicit lyrics that may alienate non-native speakers. Therefore, I theorized that explicit lyrics are an important means of communicating meaning to outsider or mainstream audiences.

These theories may have social implications since, according to *the corruption frame*, “explicit lyrics-whether glorifying suicide, anti-authority attitudes, or deviant sexual acts-have a negative effect on children's attitudes” (Binder 1993:758). I further theorized that implicit lyrics are not only more subtle but may also be an important means of communicating culturally embedded meaning to insider audiences. While outsider or mainstream audiences may understand the implicit lyrics, these lyrics may be more accessible to the subcultural audience. As a consequence, mainstream consumers might unknowingly support music with implicitly offensive themes. Consequently, the distinction between explicit and implicit has important theoretical, political, social and cultural implications.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES/QUESTIONS

There are several research questions that this study will address: Do the frames used in the discussion of reggae and rap in the media and academic discourse accurately reflect the lyrical content of popular songs? Are the homophobic messages contained in the songs of some reggae artists representative of the genre? Is reggae or rap homophobic? And, given that homophobia is not a theme that generates much attention in scholarly criticism of rap music, is reggae more homophobic than rap? Furthermore, since both rap (Binder 1993) and reggae (Noble 2008) have been accused of being explicit, are the genres more explicit or implicit?

Since the literature often cites "Boom Bye Bye" (1993) as the beginning of the debate, and the Reggae Compassionate Act (2007) marks an effort to end the phenomenon, I will examine the time frame, 1993-2007 and include 2008 in my analysis since it was the most current available data at the time of data collection. I argue that while the Reggae Compassionate Act is a response to homophobic lyrics in reggae, there is evidence that rap music might have similar themes. While there might be some homophobic rap songs, tolerance for homosexuals is exhibited in American culture in a variety of ways: openly gay entertainers, queer friendly organizations and the Logo channel which provides programs targeted towards the LGBT community. Conversely, Jamaica lacks LGBT-friendly media channels, entertainers or support networks. However, Jamaicans do have one major support group: J-FLAG.

The formation of Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG) in 1998 was a turning point in Jamaica's history since "it was the first significant political and institutional attempt to address homosexual issues" (Williams 2000:107). According to its website, "J-FLAG's mission is to work towards a Jamaican society in which the Human Rights

and Equality of Lesbians, All-Sexuals, and Gays are guaranteed”

(<http://www.jflag.org/about/index.htm>). Yet, the fact that the location of J-FLAG’s headquarters is kept a secret is a testament to the ongoing threat of violence.

While complete equal rights are not guaranteed to the LGBT community in America, there are anti-discriminatory laws and more support networks than those in Jamaica. Also, the literature has shown that disproportionate attention has been given to homophobia in reggae music while homophobia in rap has been largely ignored. Therefore, we may expect that there is less homophobia in rap than reggae.

DATA AND METHODS

SAMPLING STRATEGIES

Reggae Songs. Reggae music has elements of mento, ska (influenced by modern jazz and American rhythm and blues), African rhythms and European melodies (Connell and Gibson 2004). The literature has identified several types of reggae including Ska, Conscious Vibes (Saunders 2003) and Dancehall/Bashment (Noble 2008). However, the *Billboard* charts do not make the distinction between these subgenres. Therefore, reggae music in general was analyzed for its lyrical content.

To get my population of reggae songs, I used the data source EbscoHost Academic to retrieve the archival *Billboard* records. I also subscribed to *Billboard* in order to get access to their records. I used primary data from *Billboard’s* Year-End *Top Reggae Albums* which was first compiled in 1993. I took a simple random sample of all the songs in the *Top Reggae Albums* from 1993 to 2008 using only the top five albums in each year. I chose this time frame

because 1993 is when the chart began and 2008 was the most current year at the time of data collection. However, in 2005, one of the top five albums on the *Top Reggae Albums* chart was a Latin album (mostly in Spanish) which also charted in the Latin Rhythms chart that was created later that year. While there were reggae beats on the album and it could be considered reggae, my knowledge of Spanish was very limited and this would have resulted in coding errors. Therefore, I used the next album that ranked below (6th) to replace the Latin album. After identifying the albums, I used ARTISTdirect.com and Amazon.com to get the track listings.

There were 1,274 (including repeating) songs on the 58 albums. To get a simple random sample that was 20 percent of the population, I used random.org to generate 255 random numbers. I put the population of songs in an excel spreadsheet and selected the songs that corresponded to the random numbers. When there were duplicate numbers, I replaced it with the next song down on the list. The reggae chart was not very dynamic since there were often the same albums in the top five slots from prior or subsequent years. Therefore, the same songs would appear repeatedly in the sample. When this occurred, I replaced it with the next song down on the list of songs in the population. Similarly, I replaced tracks that were skits, interludes, intros and outros.

Rap Songs. There are several subgenres in rap including booty rap, crossover rap, don rap, dirty south rap, east coast gangsta rap, g funk, jazz rap, new jack swing, parody rap, pimp rap, race rap, rock rap and west coast gangsta rap (Lena, 2006). Like reggae, the *Billboard* charts do not make the distinction between these subgenres. Therefore, rap music in general was analyzed for its lyrical content.

To get my population of rap songs, I used primary data from *Billboard's Top R&B/Hip-*

Hop Albums since experts agree that it is the least subjective of the published music charts (Lena, 2006). Prior to 2005, the Year-End *Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums* chart contained both R&B and rap albums since there was no separate chart for rap albums. Following Kubrin's procedure, for the years 1993-2004, I used my knowledge of rap along with the Web site ARTISTdirect (<http://www.artistdirect.com/>) to distinguish between rap and R&B albums. ARTISTdirect provided detailed information about artists and groups from all music genres. I then chose the top 5 rap albums from the Year-End *Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums* chart. However, in 2005 *Billboard* introduced the first *Top Rap Albums* chart. I matched the albums from this chart to the albums I selected from the *Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums* for the years 2005 - 2008. This was done since the *Top Rap Albums* had the same rap albums as on the *Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums* chart and I wanted to ensure that I was selecting the correct rap albums for my sample.

I took a simple random sample of all songs in the Year-End *Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums* from 1993 until 2008 using only the top five albums in each year. I chose this time frame to correspond to my reggae sample. I did not note the official release date of the songs but included the date they appeared on the charts. After identifying the albums, I used ARTISTdirect and Amazon.com to get the track listings. There were 1,426 (including repeating) songs on the 77 albums. To get a simple random sample that was 20 percent of the population (285 songs), I used random.org to generate 285 random numbers. I put the population of songs vertically in an excel spreadsheet and selected the songs that corresponded to the random numbers.

When there were duplicate numbers or songs, I replaced that song with the next song down on the list. Tracks that were skits, interludes, intros and outros were much shorter than songs and less likely to be heard through popular means or commercially on radios and

television. Therefore, they were also replaced with full length songs as I did in the reggae sample.

BACKGROUND OF RAP SAMPLE

Table 1 shows the description of artists who appeared more than twice as solo artists or groups in the rap sample. There were at least 39 other artists/groups who had one hit during the time period. Artists who had only one song or did collaborations with other artists or groups were omitted in order to focus on highly influential artists. The gender of the artist/artists was also included in the table. If there was a song with both male and female artists, I labeled the song “both.”

A few artists dominated the charts but their effects were controlled for and there were no differences in the themes with or without them in the data. Although 2Pac and The Notorious B.I.G. are deceased, their albums still top the charts and they account for most of the songs in the sample. Eminem was mentioned in the literature as being homophobic (Chiu 2005) and in the sample he does have a few homophobic songs (see coding section). However, he is the only white rap artist with top albums in the charts. There are a few female solo artists who appeared more than once in the rap sample: Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott, Foxy Brown and Lauryn Hill. There are also a few groups who have male and female members: Fugees and P. Diddy & the Family. Otherwise, the rap sample is dominated by male artists.

Table 1. Rap Songs from *Billboard's* Year-End Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums by Artist, Gender and Year

Rap Artists	# of songs in sample	Gender	Years with top 5 albums
2Pac	22	male	1993, 1995-1997, 2001, 2003
The Notorious B.I.G.	17	male	1995, 1997, 2000, 2006
OutKast	12	male	2001, 2004
50 Cent	10	male	2003, 2005, 2007
DMX	10	male	1998-2000
Nas	10	male	1996, 2002-2003
Jay-Z	9	male	1998, 2000, 2004, 2007-2008
Lil Jon & The East Side Boyz	9	male	2003, 2005
Eminem	8	male	2002, 2005-2006
Ja Rule	8	male	2001-2002
Silkk The Shocker	8	male	1998-1999
Lauryn Hill	7	female	1998-1999
Lil Wayne	7	male	2006, 2008
Snoop Dogg	7	male	1994, 2001
Foxy Brown	6	female	1997, 1999
Nelly	6	male	2002
Kanye West	6	male	2004, 2007
Wu-Tang Clan	6	male	1997
Ludacris	5	male	2001-2002,2005
Bone Thugs-N-Harmony	4	male	1995-1996
Fugees	4	both	1996
G-Unit	4	male	2004
Geto Boys	4	male	1993
Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott	4	female	2003
T.I.	4	male	2006-2008
Twista	4	male	2004
Chamillionaire	3	male	2006
Ice Cube	3	male	1993-1994
Juvenile	3	male	2000
Method Man	3	male	1995
P. Diddy & the Family	3	both	1997
Warren G	3	male	1994
Young Jeezy	3	male	2007-2008
Rick Ross	2	male	2008

*Note: songs are by artists who appear at least twice in the sample by themselves (no collaborations).

BACKGROUND OF REGGAE SAMPLE

Table 2 shows the description of artists who appeared more than twice as solo artists or groups in the reggae sample. There were at least 35 other artists/groups who had one hit during

the time period. These artists who had only one song or did collaborations with other artists or groups were omitted from the table. The gender of the artist/artists was also included in the table. There was only one female solo artist who appeared more than once in the reggae sample: Patra.

Patra had a top five album in 1994 but, in the sample, no other female artist has been as influential since that year, with the exception of Diana King. Unfortunately, Diana King's album was not in the sample because none of the random numbers generated corresponded to her album. The dominance of some artists on the charts may mean that the themes are more associated with their beliefs and are not representative of the genres as a whole. However, their possible effects were controlled for and there were no differences with or without them in the data.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Bob Marley helped spread the message of peace and love. However, decades later his influence is still felt since he had the highest number of songs and albums throughout the 15 year span of the data. There were a few other prominent Jamaican artists in the sample. While reggae music in general may not be concerned with sexuality, the sexual themes in this study are largely associated with the songs of several dancehall artists including Shaggy, Sean Paul, Beenie Man and Bounty Killer. Some of them were mentioned in the literature as being homophobic: Buju Banton, Beenie Man, Elephant Man, Bounty Killer and Shabba Ranks (Chiu 2005; Gutzmore 2004; Saunders 2003; Outlaw 1995). However, in the sample, only a few of them have homophobic songs.

Table 2. Reggae Songs from *Billboard's* Year-End *Top Reggae Albums* by Artist, Gender and Year

Reggae Artists	# of songs in sample	Gender	Years with top 5 albums
Bob Marley	38	male	1995-1996,1998, 2000-2002, 2005-2008
Sean Paul	27	male	2000, 2003-2004
Beenie Man	19	male	1998-2002, 2004
UB40	18	male	1993-1994, 1996-1997, 2001-2002
Buju Banton	11	male	1993, 1998
Shaggy	9	male	1995-1997, 2002-2003
Maxi Priest	9	male	1996
Bounty Killer	7	male	1997
Elephant Man	7	male	2004
Matisyahu	7	male	2006-2007
Damian "Jr. Gong" Marley	6	male	2005-2007
Inner Circle	6	male	1993-1995
Stephen Marley	5	male	2007 - 2008
Ini Kamoze	4	male	1995
Kevin Lyttle	4	male	2004
Skindred	4	male	2005
Snow	4	male	1993
Wayne Wonder	4	male	2003
Born Jamericans	3	male	1994
Chaka Demus & Pliers	3	male	1993
Patra	3	female	1994
Ky-Mani Marley	2	male	2008
Luciano	2	male	1999, 2008
Shabba Ranks	2	male	1998, 2001
Sizzla	2	male	1998, 2000
Tanto Metro And Devonte	2	male	1999, 2001

*Note: songs are by artists who appear at least twice in the sample by themselves (no collaborations)

Both charts were dominated by male artists but this occurred to a larger extent in the reggae sample. There was less dynamism in the reggae charts than in the R&B/Hip-Hop charts. Some reggae albums were so popular that they ranked in the top five for several consecutive years. This occurred a few times in the R&B/Hip-Hop charts but not to the extent that it was common in reggae. There were a lot of compilation albums in reggae that had various artists. There were also a few soundtrack albums on the R&B/Hip-Hop charts. However, one important similarity was that collaborations across and within genres were common in both the rap and

reggae songs.

CODING SCHEME

After drawing my sample of songs, I used several lyric Web sites (including lyrics.com, allreggaelyrics.com, jamaicalyrics.com, www.azlyrics.com and www.sing365.com) to find the corresponding lyrics of each song. I copied the lyrics from the Web sites and put them in a word document. I then used two Microsoft excel spreadsheets (one for reggae and one for rap) to code the songs in my samples. I coded the lyrics for several themes discussed by the literature. When the lyrics could not be obtained, the complete audio recording was secured from several online archives including YouTube.

To document the expressive character and extent of homophobia in reggae and rap music, I conducted a content analysis of the songs in my sample. Since I was interested in analyzing the content of communication (music), content analysis was the best measure to achieve this goal. After coding all of the songs, I transferred the results into Stata version 10.1 in order to conduct quantitative analysis. I originally coded a sample of 540 songs (255 reggae and 285 rap). However, the analysis is based on the descriptive statistics of 519 songs (249 reggae and 270 rap) after ambiguous songs were dropped.

My system enumerates the appearance of each theme using words and phrases in context. If the themes were absent in the lyrics, I coded it 0. If the lyrics were implicit, I coded it 1 for that theme. Compared to explicit lyrics, implicit lyrics used more subtle phrases, words, subcultural slang or patois that were less offensive but clearly represented the themes (even to non-native speakers). However, implicit lyrics are harder to explain than implicit lyrics.

Therefore, I will provide examples of implicit lyrics for each theme.

When the lyrics explicitly referred to a theme, I coded it 2. Explicit lyrics were blatant phrases or, at times, vulgar words that clearly represented the themes. If the lyrics were ambiguous, I coded it 3 for that theme. Lyrics were coded ambiguous when multiple meanings of words, the use of slang or metaphors made it difficult to tell if the themes were present or absent. This resulted in several different interpretations of the text. While ambiguous lyrics are potentially interesting theoretically and culturally, they represented a small percent of my sample. Therefore ambiguous songs were dropped from the analysis in order to study the explicit and implicit categories.

For my sample, I content coded songs that had words and phrases related to the following themes: (1) homophobia, (2) heterosexual acts (3) female anatomy (4) male anatomy (5) degradation of women (6) material wealth (7) material deprivation (8) threat of incarceration (9) violence (10) illicit drugs (11) liquor (12) dance (13) religion. While most of the themes are similar for both rap and reggae, based on previous research, there were a few that were more exclusive to each genre: Repatriation to Africa (reggae) and the use of the “N” Word (rap). Therefore, I coded these 2 additional themes for the corresponding genres. However, it should be noted that there were times when these criticisms could be applied to each genre. For example, the rap group the Fugees used Rastafarian references and reggae artist, Beenie man, used the “N” word in his song “girls dem sugar.” However, there was no distinction between implicit and explicit content for this theme since it focuses on just one word.

Homophobia was coded 2 whenever there was negative name-calling, suggestion of violent acts/hate crimes towards homosexuals or disapproval of homosexual acts. For example, if

a song uses the term “batty bwoy,” “fagot” or “dyke,” I coded it 2 for that dimension. Implicit homophobia was also coded 1 when the artists used homophobic words or phrases that were not as explicit or blatant. “My 1st Single” (Eminem 2005) is an example:

Erra Erra Eric swallowed some generic sleeping pills
and woke up in bed next to his best friend Derick bare naked
jig-aig-ji-ji janean just turned 16 and used a fake id
To sneak in V.I.P. to see R. Kelly
Hehehehehe, to be so young and naïve.

These lyrics, while not explicitly homophobic, suggest that Eric or Derick may have been horrified to wake up naked next to his best male friend.

Heterosexual acts were coded 2 when the artist explicitly mentioned sexual acts between members of the opposite sex. However, I coded it 1 when heterosexual acts were implied but not explicitly mentioned. An example is “That Girl” by Maxi Priest featuring Shaggy (1996):

Well I'm weak to her touch
So vulnerable to her blush, love struck
That girl I got an instant crush
You can call me a lush, infatuation or just lust
The girl possess the stuff to
make the man them oh ah

The terms “infatuation” and “lust” imply sexual acts but these acts are not described explicitly.

Male Anatomy was coded 2 when it mentioned male genitalia. It was coded 1 when there were metaphors or phrases that clearly described a male’s anatomy but were not explicit.

An example is rap song “Amusement Park” by 50 cent (2007):

There're so many tricks to the trade you should learn
Suck that, lick that, swallow that lollipop
forget that, grab that, ride it non-stop

The term “lollipop” here seems to be a phallic symbol and he is using it as a metaphor to suggest sexual acts.

Female anatomy was discussed by male rappers in terms of sexual acts or was used as a label to insult another man or criticize his masculinity. I coded female anatomy 0 when it was absent or was an insult used against another man because I wanted my measure of female anatomy to focus on the sexual nature of the lyrics towards women. With this exception, female anatomy was coded 2 when a song included mention of female genitalia or breasts. Some artists used metaphors to talk about female anatomy. However, if these metaphors were not explicit then it was coded 1. An example is “Brake Fluid (Bitch Pump Yo Brakes)” by Snoop Dogg (2001):

Back in the days when I was on the block
At an early age man I was on the couch
Non-stop, I beat it up and tell that bitch to get ghost
(They be like hot butter on a breakfast toast)
Hollarin' out, poppin' a collar out
And talkin' shit on the phone to me at my baby-momma house.

Snoop Dogg tells the woman to leave after he has sexual intercourse with her (or, in his words, “beat it up”). “It” is a reference to her genitals.

Degradation of women was coded 2 when women were called “hoes,” or were seen as sexual objects. Songs were also coded 2 if artists told women to perform sexual acts or encouraged them to dance to entertain men. However, I coded it 1 when women were referred to as “bitches” because this phrase can have both negative and positive connotations. One example is “Get Low” by Lil Jon and the East side boyz (2003):

Now give me my doe back and go get ya friend
Stupid bitch standing there while I'm drinking my hen
Steady looking at me Still asking questions
Times up nigga pass me another contestant
Hoe move to the left if you ain't bout 50

Since both “bitch” and “hoe” are mentioned in the lyrics, I coded it 1 since the term “hoe” makes it clearly offensive. However, if only “bitch” is used, I coded it 2 since the term is, arguably, less offensive.

Material wealth was coded 2 when artists explicitly talked about having a lot of money, status symbols and/or living an extravagant lifestyle. Material wealth was coded 1 when artists implicitly mentioned being rich or getting paid. An example is reggae song “Warrior Love” by Etana (2008):

Living in a house with a bed and a bruk down fridge
I was there a me cook di cabbage when tings dem did go from bad to worst
a kiss from your lips seems to break the curse
now that we're living glorious
there's no way I can forget when it was just us

The term “living glorious” can be interpreted as acquiring material wealth.

Material deprivation was coded 2 when the artists mentioned conditions in which they were deprived of food, wealth or adequate housing. Material deprivation was coded 1 when these conditions were implied but not explicitly mentioned. One implicit example is reggae song “Trench town rock” by Bob Marley (re-released in 2006):

I say, one good thing about music, when it hits you (you feel no pain)
Hit me with music, hit me with music now
This is (Trench town rock), don't watch that
(Trench town rock), big fish or sprat now
(Trench town rock) You reap what you sow
(Trench town rock), and only Jah, Jah know
(Trench town rock) I'd never turn my back
(Trench town rock), I'd give the slum a try
(Trench town rock) I'd never let the children cry
(Trench town rock), 'cause you got to tell Jah, Jah why

It seems that Bob Marley provides comfort to children in the slums by hitting them “with music.”

Threat of incarceration or authority figures was coded 2 when it included mention of words such as “police,” “po-po,” “feds,” “jail,” and “prison.” Threat of incarceration was coded 1 when artists implicitly mentioned being incarcerated. Initially, I only included a category for “police” but while coding I realized that the anger towards the police stemmed from the fear of being incarcerated due to racial profiling or because of criminal activities (illicit drugs, violence). An example is “This Is 4 My” by rap artist Silkk the Shocker featuring Fiend (1999):

This for my thug niggas (huh), what, my drug dealers
From the pound to mix around, hard to give you a hug niggas
For my key and a half niggas
Facing 10 but took a plea for 3 and a half niggas

The line “facing 10 but took a plea for 3 and a half” seems to refer to a pending prison sentence.

Violence was coded 2 whenever there was mention of physical violence or use of weapons. Violence was coded 1 when it was implied but not explicitly mentioned. One example is rap song “Life Goes On” by 2Pac (1996):

How many brothers fell victim to the streets
Rest in peace young nigga, there's a Heaven for a G
Be a lie, if I told ya that I never thought of death
My nigga, we the last ones left
But life goes on

While it is apparent that his brothers are victims to violence, 2Pac only says they’re “victim(s) to the streets.”

Illicit Drugs was coded 2 when the artists mentioned possession, consumption, endorsement or presence of illegal drugs. Illicit drugs was coded 1 when the artists only hinted at possession, consumption, endorsement or presence of illicit drugs. Yet, they might not have used the words “marijuana” or “heroin.” One example is “Make It Clap (Remix)” by Busta

Rhymes (featuring Sean Paul and Spliff Star):

Rotate yuh body then non stop like apache
Dawn and Karyn or Angie and Patsy
Inna di videolight just like a big sunday matinee
Nuff fi gimme di light mi blow di smoke like apache
Mashin up di dance and mi flatten it, we make it clap

It is clear that smoking is occurring in this song with the phrases “gimme di light” and “blow di smoke.” It can be implied that this is probably marijuana smoke.

Liquor was coded 2 when the artist explicitly mentioned the possession, consumption, endorsement or presence of alcoholic beverages. However, I coded it 1 when the artist mentioned drinking but did not explicitly refer to alcohol. An example is in “Pull Up The Cork” by Ini Kamoze (1995):

Hey, pull up the cork and pour it on
'Tis the beginning of a new dawn
Bring in the wheat and bring in the corn
Inhibition is going, going, gone, all gone, gone.

The phrase “pull up the cork and pour it on” can be assumed to be a reference to liquor.

Dance was coded 2 when the artists explicitly mentioned the word “dance” or when they mentioned types of dances. Yet, it was coded 1 when phrases could be interpreted as dancing but is not as explicit. One example is in the rap song “Flip Flop Rock” by Outkast (2004):

The "Kast shit ain't plastic, we smash it and move the crowd
And rock the crowd original material while you bore 'em
Your life show consists of everybody's shit but you're-uns
Do you own shit! In your life show (bitin ass nigga).

Here the term “rocking” to music can be perceived as dancing. Making the crowd “move” might also mean making them dance.

Religion was coded 2 when the artists explicitly mentioned words such as God, Lord, Jah, Selassie and prayers. However, I coded it 1 when words such as Heaven, Hell, soul or blessings were used. These were seen as implicit because they often did not refer to religion or God explicitly but were used as metaphors for pain (hell) or pleasure (heaven). One example is “(I Can't Help) Falling in Love with You” by UB40 (1996):

Wise men say - Only fools rush in,
But I can't help falling in love with you.
Shall I stay - Would it be a sin,
If I can't help falling in love with you.

Sin often refers to religion but sometimes it can be used in a different context. Here it is hard to tell which way UB40 means it, so it was interpreted as an implicit reference.

Repatriation was coded 2 when the artists explicitly suggested going back to Africa. However, I coded it 1 when it was an implicit suggestion. One example is “Sing Our Own Song” by UB40 (1997):

When the ancient drum rhythms ring
The voice of our forefathers sings
Forward Africa run
Our day of freedom has come
For me and for you
Amandla Awethu

The phrase “Forward Africa run” can be seen as a suggestion to run back to Africa.

SELECTION BIAS

Instead of specifically targeting controversial songs, a random sample will allow the results to be representative of all the songs in both genres. Billboard.com has a database of year-end charts dating back to 1946. Data for the charts are compiled by Nielsen SoundScan from a

sample of music stores, the music departments at electronics and department stores, direct-to-consumer transactions and Internet sales that include both physical albums bought over the Internet “and ones bought via digital downloads” (<http://www.billboard.com>).

Although I used only the *Billboard* charts, several authors offer other charts/methods that might also produce similar findings (Binder 1993; Kubrin 2005). My sample may be biased to the extent that it only represents songs recognized by *Billboard*. Perhaps other music charts have different popular songs released between 1993 and 2008. However, *Billboard* has a reliable and extensive database, historical archives and is widely used by scholars (Knobloch-Westerwick et al. 2006; Lena 2006; Primack et al. 2008).

Both genres use slang that is not easily identifiable or understood by consumers. Reggae, in particular uses the dialect *patois* in its music. Additionally, dictionaries are frequently updated and slang often changes, so validity may be compromised in the future. However, to get valid information by following Kubrin’s method, I used the rap dictionary (<http://www.rapdict.org>) as a reference. As a Jamaican-American with an insider perspective, I used my personal knowledge of the dialect in addition to the online Rasta/Patois Dictionary (<http://niceup.com/patois.txt>) to identify the words and slang in reggae. My exposure and familiarity with the genres might slightly affect what I deem as explicit and implicit. However, if I had to use the dictionaries to find the meaning of the lyrics or if the meaning wasn’t easily recognizable, then arguably the lyrics are implicit to the average American listener.

EXTERNAL VALIDITY

Although dancehall music has specifically been labeled as homophobic, for the purposes

of this thesis I examined reggae music in its entirety. Similarly, I examined rap music in its entirety. These sub-genres are not identified by *Billboard*. Therefore, my results may not be generalizable to all the different sub-genres of reggae or rap music. Because of collaborations or remixes across genres, some songs can be counted in both genres. “R&B, rap and hip-hop songs that were present on the charts were all infused with pop artists, themes, lyrics, and even beats. Therefore, homogenization of music and corporate ownership and influence helped to cross hip-hop music over into the mainstream” (L. Myer and C. Kleck 2007:145). In fact, many of the reggae songs in the sample were originally R&B or pop songs but were sung or remixed by reggae artists using reggae rhythms. Furthermore, *Billboard* sometimes categorize rap as R&B or hip hop in the music charts: “While hip-hop has been recognized as a music genre by the *Billboard* charts, culturally it is not viewed as an actual style of music. Hip-hop is used to refer to culture, language, and behavior, as well being produced and taught, while rap is the musical form that emerged from this culture” (L. Myer and C. Kleck 2007:142). While very helpful, the way *Billboard* has categorized songs can result in many methodological problems.

Billboard has several charts including *Hot Rap Tracks* and *Top Rap Albums*, but these charts do not have the available data for songs dating back to 1993. Additionally, *Billboard* does not have a *Hot Reggae Tracks* chart to make a comparison between the two genres. Therefore, these charts will not represent the sampling frame. It may be more valid to take a sample of singles than a sample of songs from albums because many songs on albums are not released as singles. Therefore, only people that purchased these particular albums may be familiar with the songs that I will have in my sample. Since I am interested in popular songs, this may pose a problem. However, the *Top Reggae Albums* and *Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums* were the best charts

to obtain a comparable sample. Since I focus only on U. S. popular consumption, my results will not be generalizable to all the different types of reggae and rap in other countries. Jamaican music charts may rank songs differently. Still, in terms of U.S. popular consumption, external validity would be high.

Since there are many music sites that provide easy, free and/or illegal access to music (YouTube, Freenapster), there may be an overall decrease in legal or paid consumption which results in coverage issue. Therefore, these results may not represent popular consumption, views or tastes. Anyone has the ability to publish material online; as a result, the sources I used may have incorrect or outdated information. The websites I used to get the lyrics may omit words, incorrectly spell words or otherwise misrepresent the song. This may be due to the fact that some artists may not speak the words clearly enough for listeners to understand the lyrics. To address this problem, I used several websites to see if I recognized the lyrics from my previous exposure to the songs. Additionally, I asked two people who were familiar with both genres, to verify the accurateness of the lyrics. Although this may not completely address the problem, any possible errors that resulted were random.

After addressing issues with the printed lyrics, I listened to unfamiliar songs if the audio was available to ensure the reliability of the information. When I could not find the audio or the lyrics, I replaced the song. However, this only occurred twice: I could find all but one of the rap song lyrics but it was harder to find the lyrics for reggae songs. I had to find the audio for 26 reggae songs and transcribed based on what I heard. Additionally, in the rap sample, I replaced 2 songs because after listening to them, they had no rap beats or rap artists. They were clearly slow R&B songs and were on soundtrack albums. I could have screened my population prior to

picking my sample and excluded skits, interludes, intros and outros. However, it was not always easy to identify these before listening to the track since some albums did not mention which tracks were songs. Additionally, it may have resulted in sampling errors.

RESULTS

To answer my research questions, I used content analysis to get quantitative and qualitative information. Table 3a shows the descriptive statistics of all the sexual themes in reggae and the corresponding absent, present, explicit and implicit categories. Table 3a shows that while heterosexual acts were the most common sexual theme², homophobia was the least common sexual theme in reggae. Homophobia was present in 2.41 percent (explicitly in 1.61 percent and implicitly in 0.80 percent) of reggae songs in the total sample. However, heterosexual acts were present in 30.12 percent (explicitly in 20.88 percent and implicitly in 9.24 percent) of reggae songs.

Female anatomy was present in 11.65 percent (explicitly in 6.43 percent and implicitly in 5.22 percent) of reggae songs. Male anatomy was present in 10.84 percent (explicitly in 6.02 percent and implicitly in 4.82 percent) of reggae songs. Women were rarely referred to as “bitches” in the reggae sample (0.80 percent). However, they were referred to as “hoes” or otherwise sexually objectified explicitly in 11.65 percent of reggae song

² Sexual themes accounted for 34.14 percent (or 85 songs) in the total reggae sample. Homophobia was present in only 7.06 percent of sexual reggae songs. Heterosexual acts were present in 88.24 percent of sexual reggae songs. Female anatomy was present in 34.12 percent of sexual reggae songs. Male anatomy was present in 31.76 percent of sexual reggae songs and sexual objectification of women was present in 36.47 percent of sexual reggae songs.

Table 3a. Descriptive Statistics of Sexual Themes in Reggae Songs, 1993 – 2008

Reggae Themes	Percent	N
Homophobia		
Absent	97.59%	243
Present	2.41%	6
Implicit	0.80%	2
Explicit	1.61%	4
Heterosexual acts		
Absent	69.88%	174
Present	30.12%	75
Implicit	9.24%	23
Explicit	20.88%	52
Female anatomy		
Absent	88.35%	220
Present	11.65%	29
Implicit	5.22%	13
Explicit	6.43%	16
Male anatomy		
Absent	89.16%	222
Present	10.84%	27
Implicit	4.82%	12
Explicit	6.02%	15
Degradation of women		
Absent	87.55%	218
Present	12.45%	31
Implicit	0.80%	2
Explicit	11.65%	29
Total (N=249)		

Table 3b shows the descriptive statistics of all of the non-sexual themes in reggae. The monetary themes included material wealth and material deprivation. Material wealth was present in 19.28 percent (explicitly in 17.67 percent and implicitly in 1.61 percent) of reggae songs. Material deprivation was the opposite of material wealth and just as important of a theme. Material deprivation was present in 14.17 percent (explicitly in 12.96 percent and implicitly in 1.21 percent) of reggae songs.

Some themes that may be related to poverty and wealth are threat of incarceration and violence. Threat of incarceration was present in 10.04 percent of reggae songs, with no implicit references. Violence was present in 28.92 percent (explicitly in 26.91 percent and implicitly in 2.01 percent) of reggae songs.

Religion was present in 46.59 percent (explicitly in 40.96 percent and implicitly in 5.62 percent) of reggae songs. Overall, this was the most prevalent theme found in the reggae sample. However, a slightly related theme, Repatriation to Africa was only mentioned in 2.81 percent (explicitly in 1.20 percent and implicitly in 1.61 percent) of reggae songs.

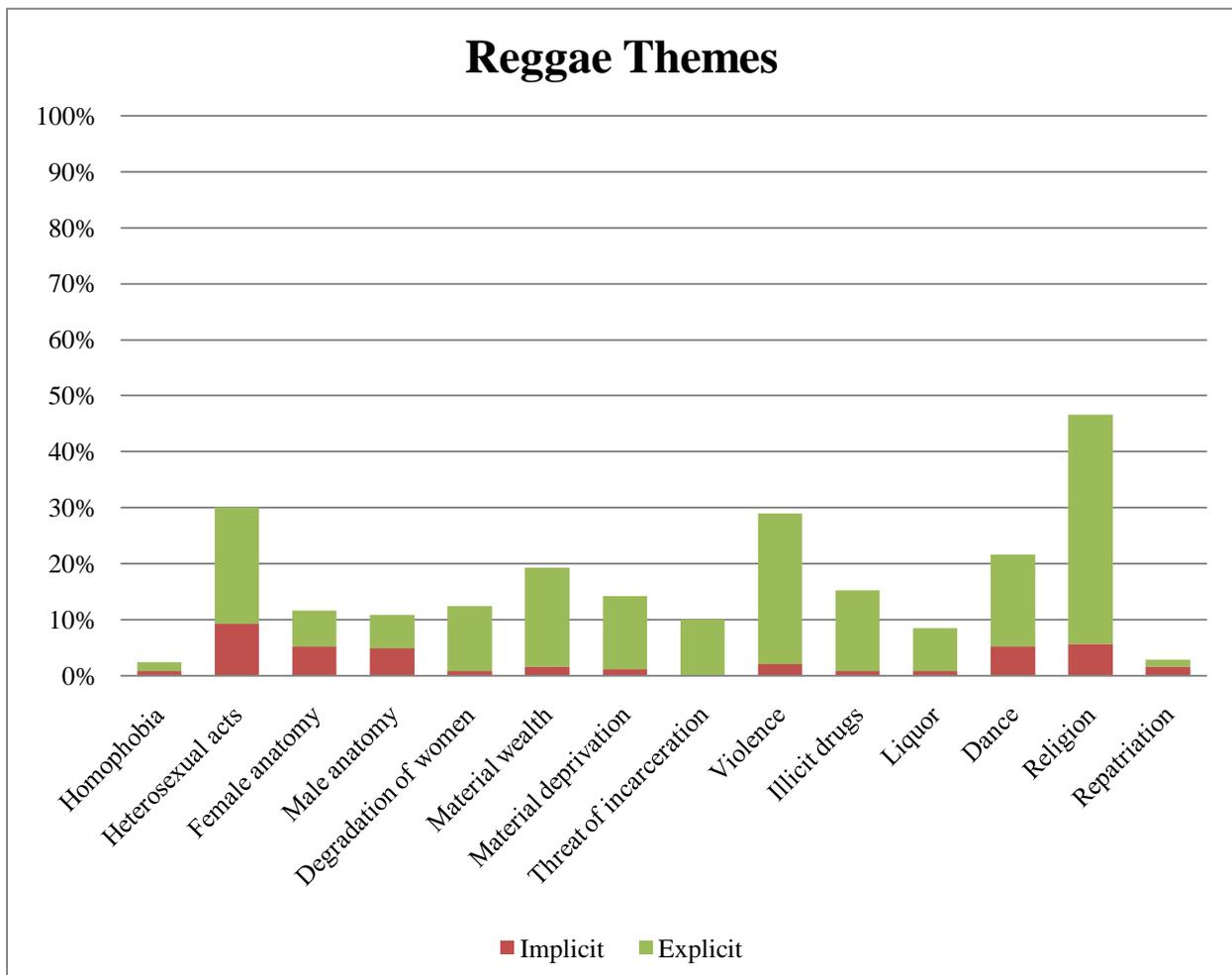
Leisure themes included illicit drugs, dance and liquor. Illicit drugs were present in 15.26 percent (explicitly in 14.46 percent and implicitly in 0.80 percent) of reggae songs. Dance was present in 21.69 percent (explicitly in 16.47 percent and implicitly in 5.22 percent) of reggae songs. Liquor was present in 8.43 percent (explicitly in 7.63 percent and implicitly in 0.80 percent) of reggae songs.

Table 3b. Descriptive Statistics of Non-sexual Themes in Reggae Songs, 1993 – 2008

Reggae Themes	Percent	N
Material wealth		
Absent	80.72%	201
Present	19.28%	48
Implicit	1.61%	4
Explicit	17.67%	44
Material deprivation		
Absent	85.94%	214
Present	14.17%	35
Implicit	1.21%	3
Explicit	12.96%	32
Threat of incarceration		
Absent	89.96%	224
Present	10.04%	25
Implicit	0.00%	0
Explicit	10.04%	25
Violence		
Absent	71.08%	177
Present	28.92%	72
Implicit	2.01%	5
Explicit	26.91%	67
Illicit drugs		
Absent	84.74%	211
Present	15.26%	38
Implicit	0.80%	2
Explicit	14.46%	36
Liquor		
Absent	91.57%	228
Present	8.43%	21
Implicit	0.80%	2
Explicit	7.63%	19
Dance		
Absent	78.31%	195
Present	21.69%	54
Implicit	5.22%	13
Explicit	16.47%	41
Religion		
Absent	53.41%	133
Present	46.59%	116
Implicit	5.62%	14
Explicit	40.96%	102
Repatriation		
Absent	97.19%	242
Present	2.81%	7
Implicit	1.61%	4
Explicit	1.20%	3
Total (N=249)		

Figure 1 gives a visual representation of all of the lyrical themes. In Figure 1 the implicit and explicit percentages of each theme are shown. This illustrates the presence of each theme relative to the other themes.

Figure 1: Reggae Themes



On average, most of the themes were more explicit than implicit. However, no single theme is present in more than 50 percent of songs. Less than 10 percent of songs mentioned

repatriation or liquor. Female and male anatomy was not as common as the other sexual themes in the sample. However, homophobia was the least common theme in reggae. Therefore, figure 1 answers one of the main research questions by showing that while there were homophobic reggae songs, the genre, in general, is not pervasively homophobic.

I conducted a two tailed t-test in order to see if there were any significant differences between the absent and present (combined explicit and implicit means) categories of each theme. The results in table 4 illustrate how significantly different the absent and present means were for almost every theme in reggae, except religion. With the exception of religion, all of the themes had significantly high differences in absence and presence of themes ($p < .001$). Furthermore, all of the themes had higher absent means than present means which suggests that there are other themes, besides the ones listed here, that may represent the genre.

Table 4 shows that in reggae, the only theme similar in mean compared to homophobia was repatriation. This was due to how rarely both themes were mentioned in the genre. Therefore, in general, reggae was not homophobic because homophobia was less present than all of the other themes.

Table 4. T-test of Absent and Present Themes in Reggae Songs from the Year-End Top Reggae Albums.

Reggae Themes	Mean ^a and S. E. difference ^b	t-value
Homophobia		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .97$)	.94	69.12***
Present ($\bar{x} = .03$)	(.01)	
Heterosexual acts		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .70$)	.40	9.65***
Present ($\bar{x} = .30$)	(.04)	
Female anatomy		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .88$)	.76	26.63***
Present ($\bar{x} = .12$)	(.03)	
Male anatomy		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .89$)	.78	28.05***
Present ($\bar{x} = .11$)	(.03)	
Degradation of women		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .88$)	.76	25.33***
Present ($\bar{x} = .12$)	(.03)	
Material wealth		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .81$)	.62	17.34***
Present ($\bar{x} = .19$)	(.03)	
Material deprivation		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .86$)	.72	23.03***
Present ($\bar{x} = .14$)	(.03)	
Threat of incarceration		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .90$)	.80	29.61***
Present ($\bar{x} = .10$)	(.03)	
Violence		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .71$)	.42	10.36***
Present ($\bar{x} = .29$)	(.04)	
Illicit drugs		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .85$)	.70	21.51***
Present ($\bar{x} = .15$)	(.03)	
Liquor		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .92$)	.83	33.31***
Present ($\bar{x} = .08$)	(.02)	
Dance		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .78$)	.56	15.30***
Present ($\bar{x} = .22$)	(.04)	
Religion		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .53$)	.06	1.52
Present ($\bar{x} = .47$)	(.04)	
Repatriation		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .97$)	.94	63.58***
Present ($\bar{x} = .03$)	(.01)	

^a Difference between absent and present means in each theme indicated.

^b Numbers in parentheses indicate the combined differences in standard error.

Note. Present is implicit and explicit means combined. Degrees of freedom = 496.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed test).

REGGAE THEMES AND LYRICS

Homophobia

The results in tables 3a and 4 show that the homophobic messages contained in the songs of some reggae artists are not representative of the genre. Reggae in general may not be homophobic, but the evidence supports the fact that the subgenre dancehall may have homophobic songs: “Extreme anti-homosexual discourse and performance are important patriarchal sites from which marginalized Jamaican men, who are over-represented in dancehall culture, seek to garner the social power and status that they are otherwise denied” (Hope 2006:133). Dancehall artists did account for the homophobic songs in the sample. One explicitly homophobic reggae song was “The Greatest” by dancehall artist Bounty Killer (2003):

Bring all di gal dem mek mi kill dem wid di agony
Gunshot pon a sissy and a faggoty
From dat widout pity nah apology
Badmind dutty niggas wanna test mi
Bounty major figgas got to bless mi
Nuff guns pull yuh triggas if yuh stress mi

Here Bounty Killer tells his listeners that he will not apologize for his belief that “sissy” and “faggoty” people should be shot. While this song is clearly homophobic, a more implicit song was “Like Glue” by dancehall artist Sean Paul (2002):

So how can they waan big up dem chest
But they dun know Dutty Cup we deyah rated as di best
A wouldn't they love for see Sean-A-Paul this
We nuh cater fi nuh guy and only girls we a request

So gimme di gal dem, yo and every minute I'm wid it
Fi get di gal dem exquisite and get dem regular visit

In this song, Sean Paul talks about sticking to his girls “like glue”. He further states that “we nuh cater fi nuh guy and only girls we a request.” Since he hints at sexual acts with women, not catering to men would imply that he does not approve of homosexual acts. Therefore, heterosexism, in a way, invalidates homosexuality.

Heterosexual Acts

In this study, heterosexual acts were a prevalent theme. In reggae, heterosexual acts focused almost exclusively on sexual intercourse. However, when oral or anal sex was mentioned, it was perceived in a negative light: “There are a growing number of songs dedicated completely to sexual conduct and, more specifically, to the prohibition of oral sex” (Saunders 2003:105). Jamaican artists may seek to enforce appropriate heterosexual behavior (no oral or anal sex) and the inappropriateness of homosexual behavior in general (Gutzmore 2004; Saunders 2003; Sharpe and Pinto 2006). One example of this is “Heads High” by Mr. Vegas (1998):

Heads High. kill dem wit it now
Just mek a bway know yuh nah blow
Heads High.. kill dem wit it now
Tell dem Vegas say so...

Mi wan fi hear yuh scream
If yuh mouth clean
No man never rope yuh in fi no ice cream.

Here Mr. Vegas is saying that a girl can keep her head up high if she has never performed oral sex on a man. Yet, there was very little support that prohibition of oral sex was a prevalent theme

since only a few songs in the sample mentioned anti-oral sex lyrics. However, heterosexual sex in general was celebrated and encouraged. An explicit example is “Lucky Day” by dancehall artist Shaggy (2003):

They don't call me Mr. Lover cause I like ice cream
I am Mr. Lover cause I fulfill dreams
When last your man made you moan and scream
Girlfriend, this is your lucky day.

Heterosexual acts often included mention of the female and male anatomy.

Female and Male Anatomy

In Jamaica “women’s bodies are the site for articulating wealth, national prosperity, and lyrical and sexual prowess” (Saunders 2003:105). Therefore, male reggae artists may want to promote their sexual conquest of women. Although, there are a few female artists in the reggae sample, “we cannot deny the very limited freedom women have in constructing their own sexuality, controlling their resources (their bodies and their labor), and certainly in protecting themselves from economic, political and physical violence” (Saunders 2003:114). One explicit reggae song is “Eloh” (or “hole” spelled backwards) by dancehall artist Beenie Man (2004):

Mi waan di gal wid di eloh well tight, who love di led pipe nuh fraid a wear tight
Dem waan a man weh fi gi dem it right
Cause some bwoy now a day just a cook up and a bite
Mi waan di gal wid di coochie well tight, who love di led pipe nuh fraid a wear tight
Dem waan a man weh fi gi dem it right
Cause some bwoy now a day just a cook up and a bite

In these lyrics, Beenie Man explicitly mentions his idea of the appropriate conditions of a female’s genitalia and also says that a woman wants a man to please her in bed. He further states that he wants a woman who loves male genitalia (“di led pipe”). This reinforces the idea that

“dancehall lyrics celebrate Jamaican men as black stallions and valorize women with tight pussies and big breasts” (Sharpe and Pinto, 2006:259). Therefore, male anatomy was present to the same degree as female anatomy in the sample of songs. One implicit example is reggae song “Hey Sexy Lady” by Shaggy featuring Sean Paul (2001):

One ting me haffi tell you
Is the reason why
Sean-a-Paul give her di love
Be~cah me well supa fly girl check me
Cah you done know say you erect me
An me waan fi give you disa lovin ya directly

The phrase “erect me” here shows that he is referring to his genitals in an implicit way. Male and female anatomy are discussed in reggae songs as a way to promote hypermasculinity. However, degradation of women is another theme that promotes hypermasculinity and attenuates positive gender relations.

Degradation of women

Since the reggae sample is dominated by male artists, “recognizing the centrality of women in dancehall lyrics, as objects of desire and the subjects for the performance of masculinity, is crucial for understanding both the literal and lyrical contexts of songs, particularly those that take sexuality as the subject matter” (Saunders 2003:105). The dancehall artist Beenie Man has several songs that degrade women. His song “Book Shelf” (1999) is an explicit reggae song:

Di way dem gal ya nice and pretty, an nuh witty
Dem nuh gritty mi haffi put dem pon mi bookshelf....Yes
A nuh one a di whole committee inna di city dem ya kitty
Naah guh share wid nuhbody else.....Cau
Mi very picky when mi choose dem
Who nuh good mi lose dem

In this song, Beenie Man says he wants to put nice and pretty girls on his bookshelf so he can have them to himself. Furthermore, he will lose the ones who are not good.

Despite the small frequency of the word “bitch” in reggae, degradation of women is still an important theme. An implicit example is reggae song “Haters and fools” by Beenie Man (2001):

Tell mi when
Niggas will stop sending other niggas to the pen
Bitches will stop hating other bitches for their men
People player hating other people will it end?

In this song, Beenie Man uses “bitches” and “niggas,” two words that were more common in the rap sample than in the reggae sample. This may be his attempt to market his songs to American audiences.

Jamaica’s hegemonic masculinity is similar to American masculinity since it incorporates key elements of masculine status. This includes homophobia, (polygamous) heterosexuality and domination of women (Hope 2006). However, there are non-sexual themes that reinforce this masculinity such as access to or ownership of status symbols (material wealth) violence and access to leisure (dance, liquor and drugs).

Material Wealth and Deprivation

Material wealth was an important way that male artists can show their social status and attract women. However, some artists see the problems inherent in attracting female partners in that manner. One explicit reggae song is “Beautiful” by Damian Marley (2006):

And she love me for real mi nuh haffi have no cash
And any little thing from mi splish she splash

Yow...all this blinging it's like you forgot
Use cheddar as the bait den you recruit a rat
So we listen couple speech of Martin Luther chat

Damian Marley proclaims that his woman loves him for real, even if he has no money. He further states that if you use “cheddar as the bait den you recruit a rat” which means that luring women with money will only attract deceptive partners.

Material deprivation was another concern for reggae artists: “Everyday life is often interpreted as an arena for repression and social determinism, while popular music is regarded as a possible means through which the oppressed and disempowered can resist the everyday circumstances in which they find themselves” (Bennett 2008:421). Dancehall music is “a vehicle for filling the information gap among poor Jamaicans” (Saunders 2003:99). These artists serve as liaisons between the media, the government and the poverty-stricken. In “Fed Up” by dancehall artist Bounty Killer (1997), he explicitly raises awareness of the frustration of poor people and mentions violence as a likely outcome:

Well poor people fed up to how yuh system sheg up
Yuh issue gun fi wi pickney bus
Poor people fed up to how yuh system sheg up
Well every day the ghetto youths dead up.

Threat of incarceration and Violence

Threat of incarceration is sometimes associated with poverty and violence which may be contributing factors. One explicit reggae song is “Who We Are” by dancehall artist Elephant Man & rapper Killah Priest (2004):

Real bad man dat's who we are
And mi seh come dung to di chair
Nuttin real gangsta don't fear
Yuh know mi from di projects, but we nuh care

Always strapped like di cops anywhere we appear
Yuh tell us by di clothes dat we wear, everybody sing.

Here Elephant Man says he is from the projects and just like the cops, he is “always strapped” which means that he always carries a weapon. Possession of this weapon enables him to portray himself as a “real bad man” and a “real gangsta.”

In marginalized groups, violence may be a method to command respect, gain social status and exhibit masculinity among peer groups. Therefore, violence can be seen as a product of disadvantaged neighborhood conditions and peer influence (Kubrin 2005). However, the use of drugs and alcohol and the exhibition of dancing skills is another way to legitimize masculinity.

Illicit Drugs and Liquor

Despite the stereotypes associated with drug use in Jamaica, the results reveal that it is not a very prevalent theme in reggae. One explicit example of drug use is in reggae song “Gimme the Light” by Sean Paul (2002):

Just gimme the light and pass the dro! Buss anotha bokkle a moe
Gal dem inna mi sight and I got to know
Which one is gonna catch my flow?
Cause I'm inna di vibe and I got my dough! Buss anotha bokkle a moe
Gal dem lookin' hype and I got to know!!!

Not only does Sean Paul ask for a light to smoke marijuana but he also wants to burst open a bottle of “moe” or Moet which is a brand of champagne. Therefore, liquor was another leisure theme in reggae. One explicit song was “Get My Party On” by Shaggy and Chaka Khan (2003):

Rollin with the big dogs hangin' with my click
Punk you better think twice you don't wanna trip
Put away your pistols sip up on this cristal
Catch up on the in style watch them honeys hips (Ho!!!)

By saying “put away your pistols sip up on this cristal,” Shaggy is encouraging inebriation or celebration instead of violence.

Dance

Music serves many purposes and inspiring people to dance is a main function. Dance was seen as an activity that both men and women were encouraged to engage in whether together or separately:

“Male dancing in the center of the dancehall has been generally tolerated when the man in question is dancing erotically with a female or when the man is particularly skillful and is allowed a brief moment to signify his prowess... the contemporary phenomenon of young men claiming this sacred and very hyped public space in the center of the dance and dancing in groups, touching each other and holding hands, without the intervention of a female or in direct competition with a female dancer signifies an alternative rendering of masculine roles in the dancehall”(Hope 2006:133).

In Jamaican culture, dancing provides opportunities for social interaction. Therefore, songs may not need to address gendered differences since dancing, in general, is a key cultural component.

An explicit example is reggae song “Pull It Up” by Buju Banton featuring Beres Hammond (1999):

Without di dancehall, a whe we woulda do
Reggae muzik call, you must ansa to
Wine up, jump up, when you hear sweet reggae
Buju Banton, Beres Hammond a fi tell dem go deh.

In this song, the artists are telling their audience to dance whenever they hear reggae music.

Repatriation to Africa and Religion

According to Anderson (2004) the lyrical content of reggae has changed as the instrumental sound has changed: “The lyrics of ska and rock steady songs had always featured a

mixture of the earthy and the sacred but with the onset of the 1970s the music's message came to focus predominantly on spiritual and political matters – or, in the local parlance, ‘roots and culture’” (2004:208). Alleyne (2000) elaborates on these lyrical themes which he describes as “the ghetto people’s suffering, repatriation to Africa, Haile Selassie as a living deity, (and) slavery in Babylon” (2000:16).

Repatriation to Africa is the idea that Black people should return to Africa and embrace their ancestral roots. It was something mostly emphasized by Rastafarian musicians since it is part of their ideals. However, it was not a prevalent theme. In “Taking Over” by Sizzla (2000), he not only extols the Rastafarian God Haile Selassie, but he explicitly states the importance of repatriation:

Holy Emmanuel I Selassie I Jah Rastafar I
Him live an reign in di heart of all flesh
Di conquering lion crown king of kings
LORD of lords wid him lioness
So hear mi nuh, repatriation is a must to Ethiopia Africa boom.

Although a few Rastafarian references were used in a few rap songs, it is mostly associated with reggae. Reggae music often talked about religion in terms of both the Rastafarian and Christian God. One explicit example of this is “Jah Blessing” by Rastafarian musicians Luciano and Sizzla (1999):

Spread a little love and let Jah blessings go round
place your feet on higher ground
Humble as a dove and let Jah blessings touch down
And give some love to someone who is hurt

Despite the assertion that reggae music is less religious today than it was in the 80s, religion remains the most prevalent theme in reggae. “Nowhere else in the world is the popular

music basically religious music” (Alleyne 2000:16). Yet, religion has been cited as a factor contributing to homophobia: “The religious fundamentalist anti-homosexuality imperative has primacy within African-Jamaican popular culture, dramatically manifesting in both the religious” and popular music (Gutzmore 2004: 125). However, there are too few instances of homophobia in the sample, to test this causal relationship.

Most of the themes in reggae appeared in rap. However, there were quantitative and qualitative differences across genres. Table 5a shows the descriptive statistics of all the sexual themes in rap and the corresponding absent, present, explicit and implicit categories.

Table 5a. Descriptive Statistics of Sexual Themes in Rap Songs, 1993 – 2008

Rap Themes	Percent	N
Homophobia		
Absent	90.00%	243
Present	10.00%	27
Implicit	3.70%	10
Explicit	6.30%	17
Heterosexual acts		
Absent	56.30%	152
Present	43.70%	118
Implicit	3.70%	10
Explicit	40.00%	108
Female anatomy		
Absent	78.89%	213
Present	21.11%	57
Implicit	3.33%	9
Explicit	17.78%	48
Male anatomy		
Absent	66.67%	180
Present	33.33%	90
Implicit	2.22%	6
Explicit	31.11%	84
Degradation of women		
Absent	55.19%	149
Present	44.81%	121
Implicit	7.03%	19
Explicit	37.78%	102
Total (N=270)		

Table 5a shows that while degradation of women was the most common sexual theme³ in rap, homophobia was the least common sexual theme. In Kubrin's sample only 22.30 percent of the songs had references to the objectification of women. However, in this rap sample, women were referred to as "hoes" and otherwise sexually objectified explicitly in 37.78 percent of the total sample of rap songs. Women were also referred to as "bitches" in 7.03 percent of the total sample. Homophobia was present explicitly in 6.30 percent of rap songs and implicitly in 3.70 percent of rap songs. However, female homophobia was mentioned explicitly in .35 percent of rap songs. These results show that only about 10 percent of the total sample of rap songs contained homophobic messages. Therefore, these songs were not representative of the genre as a whole. However, heterosexism was prominent since heterosexual acts were present in 43.70 percent (explicitly in 40.00 percent and implicitly in 3.70 percent) of rap songs.

Female anatomy was present in 21.11 percent (explicitly in 17.78 percent and implicitly in 3.33 percent) of rap songs. Male anatomy was present in 33.33 percent (explicitly in 31.11 percent and implicitly in 2.22 percent) of rap songs. Therefore, male dominance was prominent since male anatomy was discussed more than female anatomy.

Table 5b shows the descriptive statistics of all of the non-sexual themes in rap. The "N" word was used explicitly in 77.04 percent of rap songs. Overall, this was the most prevalent theme found in the rap sample. While material wealth was referenced in 57.80 percent of the rap

³ Sexual themes were mentioned in 64.81 percent (or 175 songs) of the sample of 270 songs. Sexual objectification of women was present in 69.14 percent of sexual rap songs. Heterosexual acts were present in 67.43 percent of sexual rap songs. Homophobia was present in 15.42 percent of sexual rap songs. Female anatomy was present in 32.57 percent of sexual rap songs and male anatomy represented 51.43 percent of the sexual rap songs.

songs in Kubrin's sample, material wealth was present in 76.67 percent (explicitly in 70.00 percent and implicitly in 6.67 percent) of rap songs in this study. Material deprivation, another monetary theme, was present less than half as much as material wealth. Material deprivation was prevalent in more than 25 percent of my rap sample (explicitly in 23.33 percent and implicitly in 1.85 percent) of rap songs. Some themes that may be related to poverty and wealth are religion, threat of incarceration and violence.

Religion was present in 45.93 percent (explicitly in 39.26 percent and implicitly in 6.67 percent) of rap songs. Threat of incarceration was present in 47.04 percent (explicitly in 46.30 percent and implicitly in 0.74 percent) of rap songs. In Kubrin's sample, violence was present in 64.8 percent of the songs. However, in this sample, violence was present in 75.93 percent (explicitly in 75.19 percent and implicitly in 0.74 percent) of rap songs, making it the second most prevalent theme in rap.

Leisure themes included illicit drugs, dance and liquor. Illicit drugs were present in more than 68 percent (explicitly in 64.44 percent and implicitly in 3.70 percent) of rap songs. Dance was present in 7.78 percent (explicitly in 5.93 percent and implicitly in 1.85 percent) of rap songs. Liquor was present in 39.63 percent (explicitly in 37.41 percent and implicitly in 2.22 percent) of rap songs.

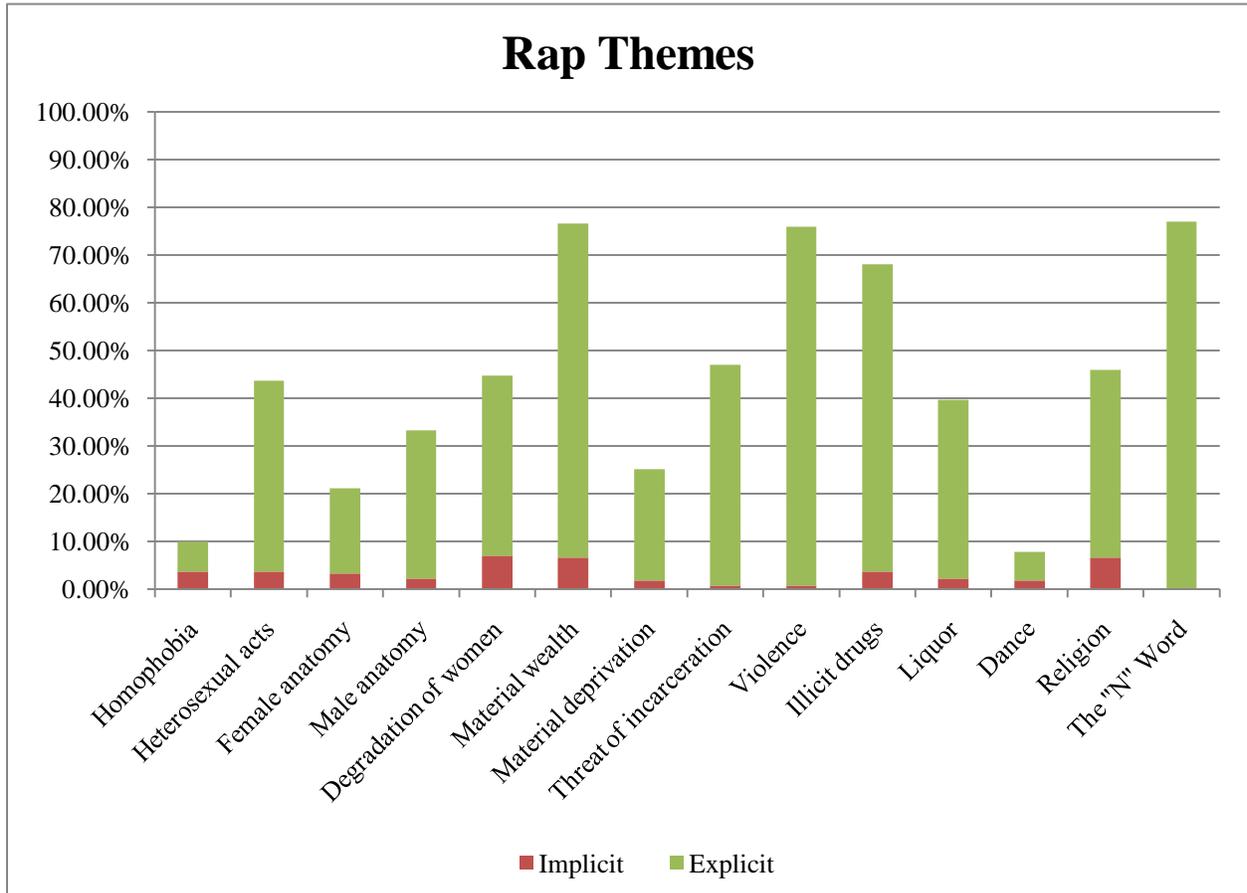
Table 5b. Descriptive Statistics of Non-sexual Themes in Rap Songs, 1993 – 2008

Rap Themes	Percent	N
Material wealth		
Absent	23.33%	63
Present	76.67%	207
Implicit	6.67%	18
Explicit	70.00%	189
Material deprivation		
Absent	74.81%	202
Present	*25.19%	68
Implicit	1.85%	5
Explicit	23.33%	63
Threat of incarceration		
Absent	52.96%	143
Present	47.04%	127
Implicit	0.74%	2
Explicit	46.30%	125
Violence		
Absent	24.07%	65
Present	75.93%	205
Implicit	0.74%	2
Explicit	75.19%	203
Illicit drugs		
Absent	31.85%	86
Present	*68.15%	184
Implicit	3.70%	10
Explicit	64.44%	174
Liquor		
Absent	60.37%	163
Present	39.63%	107
Implicit	2.22%	6
Explicit	37.41%	101
Dance		
Absent	92.22%	249
Present	7.78%	21
Implicit	1.85%	5
Explicit	5.93%	16
Religion		
Absent	54.07%	146
Present	45.93%	124
Implicit	6.67%	18
Explicit	39.26%	106
The “N” word		
Absent	22.96%	62
Present	77.04%	208
Implicit	0.00%	0
Explicit	77.04%	208
Total (N=270)		

Note. *Some of the percentages in “present” have been rounded up to the hundredths.

Figure 2 gives a visual representation of all of the themes in rap. In Figure 2, the implicit and explicit percentages of each theme are shown. This illustrates the presence of each theme relative to the other themes. Although homophobia was one of the least common themes in rap, Figure 2 shows that dance was the least common theme in the sample. Therefore, like Figure 1, it answers one of the main research questions by showing that while there are homophobic rap songs, the genre, in general, is not pervasively homophobic.

Figure 2: Rap Themes



I conducted a two tailed t-test in order to see if there were any significant differences between the absent and present (explicit and implicit) categories of each theme. The results in table 4 illustrate how significantly different the absent and present means were for almost every theme in rap, except religion and threat of incarceration. With these exceptions, all of the themes had significant differences in absence and presence of themes. While most of the themes had higher absent means than present means, for some themes this trend was reversed (material wealth, violence, illicit drugs and the “N” word). This suggests that these themes may be particularly important in rap and the hip hop culture in general. However, the genre, in general, is not homophobic since, besides dance, the mean of homophobia shows that it was less present than all of the other themes.

Table 6. T-test of Absent and Present Themes in Rap Songs from the Year-End Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums.

Rap Themes	Mean ^a and S.E. difference ^b	t-value
Homophobia		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .90$)	.8	30.93***
Present ($\bar{x} = .10$)	(.02)	
Heterosexual acts		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .56$)	.12	2.94**
Present ($\bar{x} = .44$)	(.04)	
Female anatomy		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .79$)	.58	16.42***
Present ($\bar{x} = .21$)	(.03)	
Male anatomy		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .67$)	.33	8.20***
Present ($\bar{x} = .33$)	(.04)	
Degradation of women		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .55$)	.10	2.42*
Present ($\bar{x} = .45$)	(.04)	
Material wealth		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .23$)	.53	14.62***
Present ($\bar{x} = .77$)	(.04)	
Material deprivation		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .75$)	.49	13.26***
Present ($\bar{x} = .25$)	(.04)	
Threat of incarceration		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .53$)	.06	1.38
Present ($\bar{x} = .47$)	(.04)	
Violence		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .24$)	.5	14.06***
Present ($\bar{x} = .76$)	(.04)	
Illicit drugs		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .32$)	.36	9.03***
Present ($\bar{x} = .68$)	(.04)	
Liquor		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .60$)	.20	4.91***
Present ($\bar{x} = .40$)	(.04)	
Dance		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .92$)	.84	36.57***
Present ($\bar{x} = .08$)	(.02)	
Religion		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .54$)	.08	1.90
Present ($\bar{x} = .46$)	(.04)	
The “N” word		
Absent ($\bar{x} = .23$)	.54	14.91***
Present ($\bar{x} = .77$)	(.04)	

^a Difference between absent and present means in each theme indicated.

^b Numbers in parentheses indicate the combined differences in standard error.

Note. Present is implicit and explicit means combined. Degrees of freedom = 538.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed test).

RAP THEMES AND LYRICS

Homophobia

Male rappers often encouraged other males to perform oral sex on them. At first glance, it would appear that these men are promoting homosexuality. Yet, it is actually meant as an insult due to the homosexual nature of this act between two men. Therefore, technically these instances could be coded as “male homophobia.” Yet, I was conservative and coded it 1 for implicit homophobia.

Some rappers perceived prison as an environment that may be conducive to homosexuality and ridiculed incarcerated men. Others saw homosexuality as being effeminate or a sign of weakness: In “Hot Boys and Girls” (Kane & Abel, Master P, Mia X, Mystikal and Silkk the Shocker 1998), homophobic language is explicitly used:

I'm that dick in the picture on yo girlfriends dresser
I ain't no ho, I ain't no punk, I ain't no bitch, I ain't no fag
I ain't no sucker, I ain't no trick, I ain't no snitch, I ain't no rat
I'm that \$20,000 a pop every stop when I'm tourin'

In this song, “fag” is equated with other negative terms like “punk,” “bitch” and “sucker.”

The bisexuality of women, specifically, was sometimes encouraged in rap. However, it seems as if encouraging women to be bisexual is not tolerance of homosexuals in general but only as it serves the needs or entertainment of heterosexual men. The only explicit rap song of female homophobia is “The What” by The Notorious B.I.G. (1995):

Biggie Smalls is the illest
Your style is played out, like Arnold wondered
"What you talkin bout Willis?"
The thrill is gone, the black Frank White
is here to excite and
throw dick to dykes

“Throw dick to dykes” may seem particularly offensive to the lesbian community. Although homophobia was not common in rap, heterosexism was pervasive throughout the genre.

Heterosexual Acts

In this study, heterosexual acts were a prevalent theme. Oral sex and sexual intercourse was mentioned more often than anal sex in rap. These acts were often consensual but tended to objectify the women or were primarily pleasurable to the man. “The street code presents promiscuity as a virtue, and sex is an important symbol of local social status. In the process, women become sexually objectified” (Kubrin 2005:440). Despite this, there were some cases where intercourse was clearly consensual and did not objectify women:

I never could build up the words to express how I loved her
Long hair, pretty face, slim waist
The kind that you marry and take to another place
and exchange vows, spend thous'
Make love in a hot tub, where there's a hot towel
She'll be loyal without being spoiled
(P. Diddy & The Family 1997, “Señorita”)

One song that used metaphor to describe sexual acts was “I know” by Jay-Z (2008):

You don't wanna feel no different
they said lust has got you itchin'
nose wide open and its' drippin'
I know what you like, I am your prescription
I'm your physician, I'm your addiction

However, implicit songs like this were not common since songs tended to be more explicit.

Furthermore, songs with heterosexual acts also mentioned the female and male anatomy.

Female and Male Anatomy

Often a woman's anatomy was described in terms of heterosexual acts. However, "when women's bodies and physique are constantly mentioned.it can give the impression that a woman's body, weight and shape are among the most important things about a woman" (Chiu 2005:26). Yet, some female artists help to perpetuate these ideas. One explicit example is rap song "It's Hard Being Wifey" by Foxy Brown (1999):

Niggas might take advantage if you let 'em (ughh)
Play your cards right and if you fuck 'em in the same night
Make sure that he don't snitch must be up to sumpin'
Or be lyin' on his dick, shit
You know how niggas flip from gettin' pussy

Here Foxy Brown says it is acceptable for a woman to have sex with a man the same night they meet if she plays her cards right because men will snitch and "flip from gettin' pussy."

When male rappers refer to their penises, it is usually in a sexual way or describing a sexual act. In "P.I.M.P." by 50 Cent (2003), he explicitly refers to his genitals:

The last nigga she was with put stitches in her head
Get your hoe out of pocket, I'll put a charge on a bitch
Cause I need 4 TVs and AMGs for the six
Hoe make a pimp rich, I ain't paying bitch
Catch a date, suck a dick, shit, trick!

50 Cent not only refers to women as "bitches" and "hoes" but, as a self-proclaimed pimp, he also encourages them to make money by performing fellatio. Songs like this help to perpetuate the myth of "the Black man as a 'hetero-sexual superstud', with a 'larger penis, a greater sexual capacity and an insatiable sexual appetite" (Chiu 2005:25). However, this hypermasculinity is at the expense of female degradation.

Degradation of women

Men often expressed the need to be “players” or to have many women. The validity and credibility of female rappers was frequently challenged by male rappers and fans (Chiu 2005). As a result, female rappers have to fight for the respect of their male listeners. While the term “hoe” is clearly offensive, bitch is “sometimes used to mean ‘a woman who gets what she wants’” (Krohn 1995:143-4). Bitch may also be the feminine equivalent of “nigger.” Female artists sometimes referred to themselves as bitches or allowed men to call them bitches to be on equal footing with their male counterparts. An example of this is in “Hot Spot” by Foxy Brown (1999):

I'm sitting on top of tha world like Brandy and Mase
You wanna, buy me a drink, nigga hand me a case
Big ballin bitch I want all of this shit
Six AMG's with the spoiler kit
Chromes from the fac', phones front and back.

Women were sexually degraded since rappers frequently encouraged women to have sex with them and/or their friends. According to Krohn (1995), “they appear to take pride in describing their abuse of power in sexual situations” (p. 142-3). Similarly, in music videos, “men are always exhibiting dominant or controlling behaviour (sic) over women” (Chiu 2005: 24). An explicit example of this is in “Ain't No Fun (If the Homies Can't Have None)” by Snoop Dogg Featuring Nate Dogg, Kurupt and Warren G (1994):

I know the pussy's mine, I'ma fuck a couple more times
And then I'm through with it, there's nothing else to do with it
Pass it to the homie, now you hit it
Cause she ain't nuthin but a bitch to me
And y'all know, that bitches ain't shit to me.

In this verse, Kurupt degrades a woman by calling her a bitch and saying “she aint shit to me.” He also uses her as a sexual toy and tells his “homie” to have sex with her, facilitating male

comradeship. Having material wealth is one way these rappers can attract and encourage women to engage in sexual activities.

Material Wealth and Deprivation

Material wealth is an important theme since “the street code calls for the bold display of the latest status-symbol clothing and accessories” which include “jackets, sneakers, gold jewelry, expensive firearms, and nice cars” (Kubrin 2005:440). These status symbols are often used by males to attract women. An example of this is the rap song “Virgo” by Ludacris (2005):

Now I was, so fresh and so fly in diamonds
When I stepped up in the club even my eyes was shining
Bling! A little cute thing said, "What's yo' name?"
I put my necklace in her face and told her read the chain

In rap, material wealth and material deprivation were often intertwined. At times, rappers are seen as important since music provides “release from the grinding tension created by poverty and substandard schooling and housing” (Krohn 1995:148). Therefore, as Kubrin notes, rap songs serve as “a contemporary response to joblessness, poverty, and disempowerment” (p. 433-434). However, material deprivation often meant that rappers sought to acquire material wealth. Some status symbols are acquired in both legitimate and illegitimate ways. One explicit example of this is in “Cash Still Rules/Scary Hours” by the Wu-Tang Clan (1997):

I remember stickin fiends at the one-six-oooh
when we was starvin, duckin five-oh, payin em dues
Times is hard in the slums I'm from, they got us barred in
We warrin and cage dodgin, rippin and robbin

In this song, rappers of the Wu-Tang Clan proclaim the need to rip and rob because they live in the slums and “times is hard.”

Threat of incarceration and Violence

Threat of incarceration was a common theme since “racism and the systematic oppression of minority groups, especially young African American men, has been legitimized and institutionalized in the criminal justice system” (Kubrin 2005:437). Rap music is a method of resistance since it “asserts independence from the authority of the police and white power structures in general” (Binder 1993:765). One example is in “1970 Somethin’” by The Notorious B.I.G. featuring The Game and Faith Evans (re-released in 2006):

Mom said that I should grow up, and check myself,
before I wreck myself, disrespect myself,
put the drugs on the shelf, naww! I couldn't see it,
Scarface king of New York, I wanna be it,
rap was secondary, money was necessary
until I got incarcerated, kinda scary

Here The Notorious B.I.G. says that he got involved in drugs because “money was necessary” and he eventually got incarcerated. Incarceration is often a way to rehabilitate people and curtail violence. However, “many have condemned rap music relating it directly to violence and drug use” (Krohn 1995:147). There were other themes that coincided with violence: In Binder’s research, she found that “the majority of rap songs in the sample alluded to violent street scenes and graphic sexual behaviors” (1993:764). Therefore, incarceration, sex, drugs and violence are often mentioned in the same songs.

Violence was common since the sample coincides with the gangsta rap era of the mid-70s to early 90s (Krohn 1995; Kubrin 2005). The violence was pervasive in rap and can be seen explicitly in songs such as “Keep Your Shit the Hardest” by DMX (1999):

Carry Niggas greasy because I'm built like that
Bury Niggas easy cause they get killed like that

If you ain't in it wit me than you in my way
But either or you will respect mine
And leave tech 9 and leave it for dude
The realest you gonna feel is when you face your death

Yet, there is disagreement on the extent to which the lyrics represent the views of the artists:

“Critics note that the violence and gangsterism in today’s rap music has been exaggerated as a marketing ploy by the record companies” (Kubrin 2005:442). Therefore, regardless of the music label, all popular rap music may be influenced by this marketing ploy. This is also important considering some artists do not write their own lyrics.

Illicit Drugs and Liquor

Marijuana (and cocaine to a lesser degree) were often mentioned as the drugs of choice by rap artists: “Many rappers have a history of drug dealing or abuse” and “seem to take pride in their illegal drug consumption” (Krohn 1995:144). Consuming illicit drugs was a way to socialize with friends but was also a coping mechanism to deal with issues such as poverty. However, this involvement in illicit drugs often has dire consequences. “Drug arrests are a principal reason that the proportion of blacks in prison has risen so rapidly” (Kubrin 2005:437). One explicit example of this is in the rap song “Ridin” by Chamillionaire and Krayzie Bone (2006):

Doin a hundred while I puff on the blunt
And rollin another one up, we livin like we ain't givin a fuck
I got a revolver in my right hand, 40 oz on my lap freezing my balls
Roll a nigga tree, green leaves and all
Comin pretty deep, me and my do-jo
I gotta get back to backstreets

Here driving above the speed limit while possessing alcohol, marijuana, and a weapon is seen as acceptable since the artists say they “aint givin a fuck.” Another example of drug use is “Deadly

Melody” by Wu-Tang Clan (1997):

I walk with the Shaolin strut, burn a dutch
Watch Street eat em up, cold crush, bumrush
Spot rusher get touched backed up handcuffed
Y'all niggaz can't FUCK with us

According to the rap dictionary, “Dutch” refers to “a brand of cigars called Dutch Masters.” These cigars are often gutted and replaced with marijuana. Therefore, to “burn a dutch” most likely means smoking marijuana in a dutch cigar, although the meaning is implicit.

Liquor served many purposes and, like illicit drugs, it was used in times of celebration and to cope with the harsh realities of violence, poverty and despair in the ghetto (Kubrin 2005).

Liquor was mentioned implicitly in “True Lies” by Snoop Dogg featuring Kokane (2001):

Lies, lies, stories and alibis
Big Mac in the land of the small fries
Everyone lies and tries to get by
Some of us drink while most just get high

While it is not explicit that “drink” refers to alcohol, the comparison to getting high would lead to the assumption that it is describing alcohol consumption.

Dance

Dance was rarely mentioned in the discussion of rap and these results show that it indeed is not a common theme in the sample of songs. Women were often encouraged to dance in a sexually explicit way. Yet, “as much as they seemed to enjoy dancing and shaking their ‘booty’, I’m sure they would have something to say about the way (they) are treated and viewed in some of the songs and videos” (Chiu 2005:23). An explicit example is in the rap song “Badunkadunk” by Twista featuring Jazze Pha (2004):

I like it when you, strut that thang, floss that ass,
work it all the way down to the flo',
Climb to the top, shake it upside down,
slide down the muthafuckin pole
work that crowd, give a lap dance,
shake it like it's one lady crew ,
take all da ballaz up in V.I.P.,
Girl go on work yo badunkadunk

In this song, Twista tells women (strippers specifically) to bounce and shake their asses down to the floor and upside down. He also encourages them to “give a lap dance.” Although some may argue that strippers and video vixens objectify themselves by dancing, men encourage this “booty shaking” for their entertainment. Even female artists encouraged other women to dance in this manner. Rarely were men specifically encouraged to dance by either gender.

Religion

Religion was a prevalent theme in rap but it was usually mentioned in conjunction with other themes as in “One Mic” by Nas (2002):

Only if I had one gun, one girl and one crib
One god to show me how to do things his son did
Pure, like a cup of virgin blood; mixed with
151, one sip'll make a nigga flip
Writing names on my hollow tips, plotting shit

Nas mentions the possession of a weapon (“gun”) and use of alcohol (“151”) in addition to religious references (“God” and “his son”). However, there are some songs that are more focused on positive themes. One example is the rap song “I'll Be Missing You Lyrics” by P. Diddy and the family (1997):

Its kinda hard with you not around (yeah)
Know you in heaven smiling down (ehh)
Watching us while we pray for you
Every day we pray for you

Till the day we meet again
In my heart is where I'll keep you friend

The lyrics here are about mourning the loss of a friend and the words “pray” and “heaven” have religious connotations. “In the ghetto, untimely death is such a common occurrence that rappers often begin their songs with a dedication to someone who has died” (Kubrin 2005:447).

Although death may be negative, these rappers celebrate their loved ones by reminiscing about the memories and experiences they shared before their death. However, they might have some comfort in thinking that their loved ones are in Heaven.

The “N” word

While “nigga” was mentioned in a few reggae songs, use of the word is very common in rap. Although many of the consumers of rap music are white Americans, black rappers (and African Americans in general) are uncomfortable with them using the “N” word because of its linkage to slavery: “Words that might be inappropriate for outsiders to use are commonly employed by those within a group” (Krohn 1995:143). White rappers like Eminem do not use the “N” word but black rappers often refer to other men as “niggers” or “niggas.” Like “bitch,” nigger can be seen as a form of degradation, albeit a racial example. Yet, ‘Nigga’ is not merely another word for black; “it encompasses a specific class, spatial, and to a larger degree, gendered subject position” (Kubrin 2005:435). In “Pour Out a Little Liquor” by 2Pac (1994):

Pour out a little liquor for your homies nigga
This one here go out to my nigga Mike Coolie
(Light up a fat one for this one)
How you come up man?

Here 2Pac refers to his friends or “homies” as niggas. In this instance, and in many rap songs, nigga can be used to describe African American males or used as an affectionate term for a friend. While it is an explicit word and the general American audience understands its racist meaning, its positive meaning is implicitly targeted at subcultural (African American) audiences. Therefore, like “bitch,” the word nigga has both positive and negative connotations depending on the target audience.

The above lyrics, tables and figures show that while all of the themes exist in both genres, they have fundamental quantitative and qualitative within genre differences. They particularly, show not only homophobia but other sexual themes. Sexual themes⁴ accounted for 34.14 percent of the reggae sample and 64.81 percent of the rap sample. Male anatomy was present in 51.43 percent of sexual rap songs. However, male anatomy was present in 31.76 percent of sexual reggae songs. Female anatomy represented 34.12 percent of sexual reggae songs and 32.57 percent of sexual rap songs. Women were referred to as “hoes” and otherwise sexually objectified in 36.47 percent of sexual reggae songs. However, this occurred in 69.14 percent of sexual rap songs.

Despite the hypothesis that reggae music would be more homophobic than rap, homophobia represented 15.42 percent of the sexual rap songs but only 7.06 percent of sexual reggae songs. Therefore, when compared to reggae, rap songs were more than twice likely to have sexual themes that included homophobia. However, heterosexual acts represented 88.24 percent of the sexual reggae songs and only 67.43 percent of sexual rap songs. This indicates that

⁴ Percentage of sexual themes in rap and reggae sexual songs as described in footnotes 2 and 3.

while rap might be more homophobic than reggae, reggae may be more heterosexist than rap. Overall, rap is far more sexualized than reggae in most of the sexual themes.

The above tables and figures do not show the across genre differences or similarities in explicit and implicit themes. Therefore, table 7 presents chi square analyses comparing all of the themes across both genres and the corresponding explicit and implicit categories. Since there are several dummy variables measured on nominal scales, I used chi squared analyses. Chi squared analyses were run in Stata version 10.1 to test independently the significance of the explicit and the implicit categories for each theme in both genres. The genres were then compared to each other to see if there were any significant implicit or explicit differences in the prevalence of the themes.

Table 7 shows that homophobia was present explicitly in more rap songs than reggae songs (17 vs. 4). This difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). As in the case of explicit homophobia, implicit homophobia was present in more rap songs than reggae songs. This difference was also statistically significant but at a lower level ($p < 0.05$). Female homophobia was mentioned explicitly in .35 percent of rap songs but was not mentioned at all in any of the reggae songs. Although homophobia is not a theme that generates attention in scholarly criticism of rap music, the results show that rap is more homophobic than reggae. However, homophobia is only one sexual theme in reggae and rap music.

Table 7. Chi-squared comparison of the Explicit and Implicit Themes across both Reggae and Rap music.

<u>Explicit Themes</u>	<u>Percent</u>	χ^2	<u>Implicit Themes</u>	<u>Percent</u>	χ^2
Homophobia			Homophobia		
Reggae (n=4)	19.05	7.34**	Reggae (n=2)	16.67	4.82*
Rap (n=17)	80.95		Rap (n=10)	83.33	
Heterosexual acts			Heterosexual acts		
Reggae (n=52)	32.50	22.20***	Reggae (n=23)	69.70	6.66*
Rap (n=108)	67.50		Rap (n=10)	30.30	
Female anatomy			Female anatomy		
Reggae (n=16)	25.00	15.44***	Reggae (n=13)	59.09	1.14
Rap (n=48)	75.00		Rap (n=9)	40.91	
Male anatomy			Male anatomy		
Reggae (n=15)	15.15	52.81***	Reggae (n=12)	66.67	2.61
Rap (n=84)	84.85		Rap (n=6)	33.33	
Degradation of women			Degradation of women		
Reggae (n=29)	22.14	46.88***	Reggae (n=2)	9.52	12.97***
Rap (n=102)	77.86		Rap (n=19)	90.48	
Material wealth			Material wealth		
Reggae (n=44)	18.88	144.23***	Reggae (n=4)	18.18	8.17**
Rap (n=189)	81.12		Rap (n=18)	81.82	
Material deprivation			Material deprivation		
Reggae (n=32)	33.68	9.52**	Reggae (n=3)	37.50	.36
Rap (n=63)	66.32		Rap (n=5)	62.50	
Threat of incarceration			Threat of incarceration		
Reggae (n=25)	16.67	82.87***	Reggae (n=0)	0	1.85
Rap (n=125)	83.33		Rap (n=2)	100	
Violence			Violence		
Reggae (n=67)	24.81	120.96***	Reggae (n=5)	71.43	1.56
Rap (n=203)	75.19		Rap (n=2)	28.57	
Illicit drugs			Illicit drugs		
Reggae (n=36)	17.14	134.36***	Reggae (n=2)	16.67	4.82*
Rap (n=174)	82.86		Rap (n=10)	83.33	
Liquor			Liquor		
Reggae (n=19)	15.83	64.62***	Reggae (n=2)	25.00	1.72
Rap (n=101)	84.17		Rap (n=6)	75.00	
Dance			Dance		
Reggae (n=41)	71.93	14.72***	Reggae (n=13)	72.22	4.39*
Rap (n=16)	28.07		Rap (n=5)	27.78	
Religion			Religion		
Reggae (n=102)	49.04	0.16	Reggae (n=14)	43.75	0.24
Rap (n=106)	50.96		Rap (n=18)	56.25	

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (two-tailed test).

All of the other sexual themes (heterosexual acts, female anatomy, male anatomy and degradation of women) were more explicit in rap than reggae. In addition, the differences were all highly significant ($p < 0.001$). In contrast, most of the sexual themes (heterosexual acts, female anatomy and male anatomy) were implicit in more reggae songs than rap songs. The only exception was degradation of women. Women were rarely referred to as bitches or hoes in the reggae sample but these phrases were used frequently in rap. The implicit differences in rap and reggae music for this theme were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The only other significant implicit sexual differences were in heterosexual acts ($p < 0.05$).

There were other non-sexual themes mentioned or studied in previous literature that were present in both genres. Table 7 shows that even these non-sexual themes (with the exception of dance) were present in more rap songs than reggae songs. Rap was more implicit than reggae in themes that dealt with monetary status: material wealth and material deprivation. However, only material wealth was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Rap was also more explicit than reggae in these monetary themes. Material wealth was present explicitly in more rap songs than reggae songs (189 vs. 44) and the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Material deprivation was present explicitly in more rap songs than reggae songs (63 vs. 32) and the differences were also statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

In themes that dealt with violence and authority, rap was more explicit than reggae. Threat of incarceration and violence was present explicitly in more rap songs than reggae songs and the differences were highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). However, while threat of incarceration was present implicitly in more rap songs than reggae songs (2 vs. 0), violence was present implicitly in more reggae songs than rap songs (5 vs. 2). Implicitly the differences in rap

and reggae music for these themes were not statistically significant. This may be due to the small numbers in the sample.

Two of the “leisure” themes were more explicit in rap than reggae: Illicit drugs and liquor were present explicitly in more rap songs than reggae songs and the differences were highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Illicit drugs and liquor were also more implicit in rap than reggae. However, only illicit drugs were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Dance was a “leisure” theme and the only theme that was present explicitly in more reggae songs than rap songs (41 vs. 16). This difference was also highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Dance was also present implicitly in more reggae songs than rap songs and the differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Religion was present explicitly in slightly more rap songs than reggae songs (106 vs. 102). However, explicitly there were no statistically significant differences in rap and reggae music for this theme. This was due to the fact that there were a similar amount of songs in both genres. As in the case of explicit religious references, religion was present implicitly in more rap songs than reggae songs (18 vs. 14) and this difference was also not statistically significant.

The results show that there were significant explicit differences between reggae and rap for every theme except religion. In the case of religion, both samples had a similar number of songs in the theme. While table 7 offers contradictory results for the theory that reggae has more implicit themes than rap, it shows that most of the themes mentioned or studied in previous literature are prevalent in both genres.

Table 7 supports the theory that rap is more explicit than reggae. Compared to significant explicit differences, there were not as many implicit differences between reggae and

rap. While reggae artists might not be as explicit as rap artists, several themes supported the fact that they may be more implicit: violence, male anatomy, female anatomy, heterosexual acts and dance were all present implicitly in more reggae songs than rap songs. Additionally, there were statistically significant implicit differences between the genres in the themes homophobia, heterosexual acts, degradation of women, material wealth, illicit drugs and dance. However, this conclusion should be accepted with caution since there were very few implicit songs in either genre.

ANALYSIS

The use of patois or street language and the inability to find certain definitions in the reggae or rap dictionaries, makes the lyrics implicit or even ambiguous to outsiders. While reggae artists may try to be explicit, the use of patois sometimes hinders comprehension. Although rap artists often use street language and are a part of a subculture, as Americans, they can communicate to American audiences easier since they do not have the cultural barriers inherent in reggae music.

Because popular music is a partial reflection of cultural values, its lyrical content is, arguably, a reflection of those values or beliefs: “Many of the violent (and patriarchal, materialistic, sexist, etc.) ways of thinking that are glorified in gangsta rap are a reflection of the prevailing values created and sustained in the larger society” (Kubrin 2005:454). American consumers may not admit to having similar values but they may tolerate explicit and vulgar content in rap music because these lyrics and values are a common part of the genre. However, reggae music (and Jamaica in general) has been associated with dancing, marijuana and the

Rastafarian movement. Therefore, when a few popular reggae songs had explicit sexual themes, the media noticed and may have exaggerated the prevalence of these themes in the genre itself.

Another issue is that, in Jamaica, open homosexuality is often not tolerated and can be dangerous. The criminalization of buggery in Section 76 of the Offences Against the Person Act may be one reason for homophobia in Jamaica (Williams, 2000). While this might be a cultural norm based on homophobic laws, Saunders claims that “culture” in the music industry is “understood primarily in market demands” (2003:99). Therefore, the production of reggae music is influenced by American consumption and values. If dancehall music represents the “unofficial” cultural codes of conduct in Jamaica, then it has to negotiate its existence vis-à-vis the international market’s codes of conduct. This is especially crucial considering the assumption that “the primary audience for all music is first and foremost American (which) demands a certain uniformity in the production of goods” (Saunders 2003:110). Therefore, reggae music does not have as many explicit sexual, violent or homophobic themes. Where these themes do exist, the results show that they may be more implicit, for the most part, when compared to rap music.

CONCLUSION

While the results supported some of the previous research and frames associated with rap music, it largely contradicts the hypothesis and frames used in the media and academic discourse of reggae music. The tables (3a, 4, 5a, 6 and 7) in conjunction with figures (1 and 2) show that the theme homophobia was not prevalent in either genre. Furthermore, despite the opinions presented in the literature, the evidence in table 7 shows that reggae is less homophobic than rap.

Therefore, the homophobic messages contained in the songs of some reggae artists were not representative of the genre. Although potential ethnocentrism may suggest that “North American culture is more advanced and therefore less homophobic than its Caribbean counterpart” (Chin 1999:16), these results show that Americans may consume more homophobic music. While neither genre may be severely homophobic, other sexual themes were prevalent in the song lyrics.

Heteronormativity and heterosexism is apparent through the high percentage of explicit and implicit heterosexual acts conveyed in both genres. Although reggae music may have a smaller quantity of explicit sexual themes compared to rap, the heterosexual acts were significantly higher implicitly. Additionally, heterosexual acts were a higher percentage of sexual reggae songs than sexual rap songs. Hypermasculinity is exhibited through the pervasive reference to the male anatomy and the negative treatment of women. “Bitch” has a dichotomous meaning in rap but it may only be a negative word in reggae. The degradation of women and the frequent references to the female anatomy revealed the power dynamics and gender relations between males and females. This was not surprising since Tables 1 and 2 illustrated that there were significantly more male artists than female artists with top five albums. Therefore, these sexual themes may have been prevalent in order for male artists to communicate with their male audience. Consequently, rap and reggae music can be dangerous since they may show that the objectification of women, hypermasculinity and heterosexism is normative behavior.

When Binder compared rap to heavy metal, her study showed that rap was more explicit. Tables 3, 4 and 7 revealed the same relationship between rap and reggae. Rap has more explicit content when compared to reggae. There was a higher percentage of explicit content in every rap

theme except dance. Additionally, there were several themes where rap music had a higher percentage of implicit content when compared to reggae (religion, homophobia, degradation of women, material wealth, material deprivation, illicit drugs, liquor, and threat of incarceration). However, the “N” word was used explicitly in 77.04 percent of rap songs making it the most prevalent theme in rap music. Therefore, a “Rap Compassionate Act” may be just as (if not more) necessary than a Reggae Compassionate Act.

Corruption, protection, danger to society, no harm and important message/art frames were all used to describe reggae and rap music. Based on the results of the sexual and violent themes in this study, it appears that the *corruption, protection* and *danger to society frames* were relevant to both genres. If the target audience of these genres is children, then the sexual and violent themes may be inappropriate which supports the *corruption* and *protection* frames. Furthermore, the evidence supports the critiques in the literature about the reggae subgenre, dancehall music. While there may be more homophobic rap songs than reggae, the homophobia in reggae tends to be more extreme. In Jamaica “the overtly virulent expressive homophobia arguably encourages the documented tendency towards and the practice of physical brutality and violence against homosexuals” (Gutzmore 2004:124). Rappers may ridicule homosexuals but some reggae artists often call for their death. In this light, reggae music not only alienates but endangers homosexuals. Since reggae music may promote explicit violence against homosexuals, it tends to be framed as more dangerous than rap music. However, using homophobia in lyrics may be one way that artists appeal to their homophobic audiences which supports the *danger to society frames*. Although the link between violence and music is hard to test empirically, attention should be paid to the explicit and implicit forms of homophobia since

all forms of homophobia may be dangerous.

While several of the artists in the sample are Rastafarian, repatriation to Africa was not a prevalent theme in reggae music. However, religion was still a prominent theme in the genre which supports the idea that reggae music is religious. Rap music also has a similar amount of religious content despite prior focus on more negative themes. Religion may be a source of comfort for people living in poverty and dangerous conditions. As a consequence, rap and reggae music have the *important message/art frames* because they illuminate the religious views, economic struggles and the prevalence of substance abuse in the lower class. “Musical texts and the narratives they allegedly bespeak have come to be regarded by many popular music academics as a singularly rich source for the construction of analytical discourses concerning the relationship between music and culture” (Bennett 2008:421). Therefore, there is constant negotiation between music and culture: Music may mirror the wider cultural beliefs and practices as much as these aspects of culture influence the production and consumption of music.

One critique of previous studies is that “top-down analyses of musical texts, the political economy of the music industry or the ‘authenticity’ of particular popular music artists may claim to explain for us how popular music ‘works’ at a cultural level, but equally important in this respect is an engagement with the aesthetic practices and value judgements (sic) of music audiences themselves” (Bennett 2008:425). This study contributes to sociology of music by exploring the themes in rap and reggae and illuminating subcultural differences. However, consumers should be aware of the themes and the accompanying values in the music they consume. This will become increasingly important as artists from different countries collaborate

with American artists on songs and may bring their distinct cultural values into these collaborations.

FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study examined popular music, future studies can examine “underground” rap music: “advances in the production of popular music and its delivery to audiences has prompted the creation of strategies and spaces of resistance on the part of popular music creators and consumers who regard themselves as ‘operating under the radar’ of the commercial music field” (Bennett 2008: 420). The *Billboard* charts are only a measure of mainstream American consumption and the underground audience may be fundamentally different. Another key issue is distinguishing between the rappers who perform the music and the people who write the songs for them. One would assume that the artists endorse the views of the writers but this should be tested empirically through interviews. This same issue may occur in songs where there are multiple artists or collaborations. As a marketing strategy, artists may collaborate with other artists who have different values, in order to increase their commercial visibility.

Although there may not be Jamaican charts comparable to *Billboard*, it would be useful to examine local reggae music charts. This will give insight into the different marketing strategies and Jamaican consumption of reggae music. Perhaps the reggae music that is popular in Jamaica is different from the reggae music that dominates American charts. However, future research should explore the possible subgenre differences in both reggae and rap music. Future research should also examine which themes are associated within each genre.

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