Rap Music: Differences in Derogatory Word Use Between Mainstream and LGBTQ Artists

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating differences in derogatory word use between heteronormative rap artists and rap artists identifying with LGBTQ norms. A list of six profane words to be content analysed was constructed. These words were divided into three subcategories: those generally related to men (*dick* and *nigga*), women (*bitch* and *pussy*), or language in general (*fuck* and *shit*). The study examines the frequency of these derogatory words in randomly selected rap music and investigates how these frequencies differ in mainstream and LGBTQ artists' song lyrics. A content analysis of four randomly selected songs each from ten randomly selected mainstream artists and ten randomly selected LGBTQ artists was conducted. Two hypotheses that were derived from the literature (Wilson, 2007; Monk-Turner & Sylvertooth, 2008) were tested. It was expected that (1) general profanity (the use of *fuck* and *shit*) would occur most frequently in the lyrics of both mainstream and LGBTQ artists and that (2) derogatory words directed at women would not be as frequent in the lyrics of LGBTQ artists as in mainstream rappers' lyrics. On the contrary, the data show that profanities aimed at women occur more frequently in LGBTQ artists' lyrics. The data also show that general profanity is most common in LGBTQ artists' lyrics but not in the lyrics of mainstream artists, where profanities aimed at men was most frequent. However, there were several factors which affected the validity of the study. The issue of whether profane words are always used in a derogatory way in the songs or not is a big methodological shortcoming of the study in terms of accuracy. Furthermore, the small sample size indicates that one should be cautious about stating generalisations based on tendencies seen in the data.

Keywords: Rap music, LGBTQ norms, profanities, gender differences

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

Much of the literature on rap music assumes such music contains violent and misogynistic lyrics. In 2008, Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth carried out a content analysis of frequently heard words in selected rap music in order to better understand differences in the use of derogatory words between female and male rap artists. The authors believed that it was critical to go back to the source and listen to the music before exploring possible deleterious effects of rap lyrics. Their data showed that the use of general profanity (that is profane words related to language in general and not aimed at a particular gender) was most common in rap lyrics followed by profane words aimed at men. Monk-Turner & Sylvertooth conclude that the way in which gender differences emerge in rap artists' lyrics is a neglected area of research and that future work that addresses these differences would add much to what is known about rap music.

Seven years have passed since their article was published and, indeed, today the entire music industry has undergone tremendous change. A development in recent years with particular interest for this study is the emergence of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) hip hop scene. Heterosexual identities and practices are almost without exception seen as the norm against which all sexualities are judged and heteronormativity is the term used by queer theorists to refer to this practice (Coates, 2004, p. 219). This notion of heteronormativity inevitably defines homosexuality as 'other' and underpins homophobia (Coates, p. 219). Coates notes that homophobia, apart from clearly having a huge impact on homosexual experience, also affects the identities of heterosexuals, for example straight men who live in fear of being perceived as unmanly or even homosexual (pp. 219-220, citing Kimmel, 2000, p. 238). According to many researchers, the lyrics of mainstream rap music can be argued to impose heteronormativity. For example, Chiu (2005) suggests that the commodification of hip hop might have created an image where there is simply no place for homosexuality (p. 25). White (2010) notes that heteronormativity and heterosexism is apparent through the high percentage of explicit and implicit heterosexual acts conveyed in rap music (p. 74). Jeffries (2011) notes the problems with celebrating the products of masculinity as a driving force in hip hop culture, namely sexism, homophobia, and the reification of race/gender/class hierarchies (p. 116). It would be of much interest to see whether the lyrics of LGBTQ rap artists differ in this respect. A study that points in that direction is Wilson (2007), in which Deep Dick Collective (D/DC), a rap crew of African American gay men, is interviewed. Their lyrics intentionally avoid the sexually provocative element in hip hop music that degrades and objectifies femininity and promotes violence against women (p. 133).

One could also expect differences between mainstream rap artists and LGBTQ rap artists in the ways in which they construct their identities, ideas about gender roles, attitudes toward misogyny, violence and sexual permissiveness, and slang words used to describe and address women.

Nevertheless, when discussing LGBTQ rap, it is important to keep in mind that it is not a free-standing musical genre of its own. LGBTQ rap is a part of rap music where the artists happen to identify with LGBTQ norms, challenging mainstream hip hop identity conventions. Many of these artists' ultimate goal is mainstream success and acceptance (Battan, 2012).

1.1 Aims and Scope

The aim of this study is to address differences in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap music artists compared with mainstream rap music artists with respect to profanity.

For this study, a random selection of an equal number of LGBTQ and heteronormative rap artists and songs will be made in order to gain an unbiased sample. Within both of these groups of artists gender will be evenly represented. Then a content analysis of the selected songs will be carried out. This study will follow Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth (2008) in their methodology, including the use of their method to construct a list of profane words to be content analysed. Their list consists of six profane words. They are divided into three subcategories: those generally related to men (*dick* and *nigga*), women (*bitch* and *ho*), or the language in general (*fuck* and *shit*). While it can be argued that some of these words are not particularly derogatory within the context of rap music, Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth maintain that they are seen as derogatory by society at large.

Based on a review of the literature, the following research question was posed: Do LGBTQ rap artists make use of their artistic platform in order to problematise heterosexuality and challenge prevailing gender norms in their lyrics by avoiding profanity aimed at perpetuating heteronormativity and profanity aimed at women in particular, or do they stick to traditional themes in rap lyrics, thus imposing heteronormativity? The next subsection will present the hypotheses.

1.2 Hypotheses

- General profanity can be expected to occur most frequently in the lyrics of both mainstream and LGBTQ rap artists, in accordance with the results of Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth.

- Results that show that the analysed profane words directed at women are not as frequent in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap artists as in the lyrics of mainstream rap artists can be expected.

A review of the literature that forms the basis for this study will be presented in the next section.

2 Literature Review

The musical genre hip hop has travelled a long way from its origins in the Bronx back in the 1970s. Today it is a global phenomenon and a successful corporate enterprise predominantly controlled and consumed by whites (Jeffries, 2011, p. 20). The most prominent artists are still African American though, and, especially since the music can be argued to perpetuate stereotypes of blacks, this raises questions about how these shifts in audience demographics and in racial dynamics affect our understanding of contemporary hip hop. Do African American listeners interpret hip hop differently from Caucasian listeners? Jeffries (2011) answers these questions focusing on the fans rather than the industry or media, and offers an examination of how hip hop works in people's everyday lives. His findings include both a correspondence between racial identity and hip hop identity and a sensitivity to the ways African American people are portrayed in and affected by commercial hip hop representations among African American, but not Caucasian, respondents (p. 194).

Jeffries' analysis notes the problems of celebrating the products of masculinity as a driving force in hip hop culture, namely sexism, homophobia, and the reification of the race, gender and class hierarchy (p. 116). He finds the need for recognising and addressing these problems associated with hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy, regardless of how political criticisms (for example, feminist critiques) of hip hop culture are expressed. Unexpectedly, he finds that the potential to come to terms with these issues is already present within the hip hop culture "as the need for love, care, empathy, and interpersonal connection is clearly manifest [in lyrics] on even the most thugged-out albums" (p. 116). However, in his interviews with hip hop fans, he finds a number of problematic issues. The respondents' unwillingness to tie representations of women in rap lyrics to a larger system of gender oppression "certainly speaks to a lack of feminist analysis" (p. 159). He also finds that representations of African American women's sexuality in the context of hip hop is subjugated to male desires at best and completely discounted at worst (p. 159).

In his conclusion, Jeffries notes that one of the strongest points that can be drawn from his data is that degrading and marginalising women is a clear trend in contemporary mainstream hip hop: "Heterosexual male supremacy exerts a powerful force within hip-hop communities, and respondents I spoke with are both effects and producers of this phenomenon" (p. 197).

This is supported by Chiu (2005), who asks himself: "Why is hip hop and rap so *straight*? Where are all the gay and lesbian artists hiding?" (p. 23). Chiu employs a content analysis of hip

hop, rap and R&B lyrics and aims at more deeply exploring the connections between hip hop and rap, sexism and homophobia and children and teens. He looks at the implications of sexism and homophobia within the hip hop culture and how it affects young hip hop fans in terms of identity constructions of themselves as well as of others.

Chiu offers some possible reasons for why it is commonly conceived that the African American communities in the United States are more homophobic than is the case with any other community (p. 25). One reason he suggests is that slavery has caused African American men to devalue themselves and deny themselves manhood. Mirroring America's traditional fear and hatred of homosexuality is for African American men suggested to be an attempt to recapture this denied masculinity and "to live up to the mould of what a 'real' man should be like; a mould prescribed by a white society" (p. 25). Another possible reason given by Chiu is that poverty and racism brought African American people together in tight-knit communities where family was central. Because of the hostile racial climate outside these communities and because of already existing anti-homosexual tendencies in society, African American people who happened to be homosexual may have felt that they had to suppress their homosexual identities in order to sustain their acceptance in the African American communities.

Homing in specifically on hip hop culture, it is suggested that the reason why homosexuality is excluded is the commercialisation of rap music where the commodification of rap, hip hop and the notion of 'Blackness' might have created an image where there is simply no place for homosexuality (p. 25).

Accordingly, much of the literature on rap music assumes such music imposes heteronormativity and contains violent and misogynic lyrics. Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth (2008) carried out a content analysis of frequently heard words in selected rap music in order to better understand differences in the use of derogatory words between female and male rap artists. The authors believed that it was critical to go back to the source and listen to the music before exploring possible deleterious effects of rap lyrics (p. 2). Their work examined the frequency of six profane words in randomly drawn rap music and how this differed between female and male artists. In order to gain an unbiased sample of rap artists the authors took an inventory of the rap artists carried at a large music store. This was done by hand and designated the gender of the rap artist. Their sample was limited to single artists and further restricted to artists who had been in the industry for at least three years and thus "survived the initial test of time and […] earned an established reputation in the industry" (p. 4). Once they had selected the sample of the songs, an initial list of possible words to be content analysed was constructed. First, they examined the work of one male artist, selecting the eight

profane words that were heard most frequently. Then, this process was replicated for a female artist. Paring both lists, Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth could focus their analysis on the frequency of the six profane words that were present on both the initial lists. The selected profane words were divided into three subcategories, those generally related to men (*dick* and *nigga*), women (*bitch* and *ho*), or the language in general (*fuck* and *shit*). A content analysis of 180 randomly drawn songs from 18 randomly drawn artists was conducted. They expected that male artists would use more profane words compared to female artists, and also found male artists to be significantly more likely than female artists to use profanity in their lyrics. They also expected more profanity, by both male and female artists, to be directed at women. Contrary to expectations, their data showed that the use of general profanity (that is profane words related to language in general and not aimed at a particular gender) was most common in rap lyrics followed by profane words aimed at men. Except for *ho* and *fuck*, which occurred more frequently in songs by male rap artists, the authors found quite similar levels of derogatory word usage for both male and female artists. They conclude that the way in which gender differences emerge in the lyrics of rap artists is a neglected area of research and that future work that addresses these differences would add much to what is known about this genre (p. 7).

Frisby (2010) notes that much of the research on music asserts that rap music contains more slang and more profane and misogynic lyrics than any other genre (p. 12). She conducts a content analysis of the lyrics of pop, R&B, hip hop/rap, country, rock, alternative, folk and Latin music in order to gain a better understanding of similarities and differences in the use of derogatory words identified in these genres. Her main goal is to examine the presence of derogatory words used with respect to women depending on three variables: genre, gender, and ethnicity. Her findings suggest that hip hop/rap music contains more slang and misogynistic derogatory nicknames than found in any other musical genre and that male artists' lyrics contain more slang and misogynistic derogatory nicknames than female artists' lyrics (pp. 16-17). Her line of reasoning concerning the selected words for her content analysis follows that of Adams and Fuller (2006) and Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth. The terms 'bitch' and 'ho' are argued to describe a certain type of woman and the images these words produce perpetuate negative stereotypes about women (Adams & Fuller, p. 953). While some might argue that these words are not always derogatory (or meant to be derogatory) especially within the context of rap music, research maintains that these words are often perceived as offensive by society at large (Monk-Turner & Sylvertooth, p. 4). Perhaps the most extensive discussion on this matter is provided by Jeffries (2011) in his section on the word *nigga*. In 2007, the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) took a

dramatic stance against the use of the word when they arranged a symbolic burial of the word (p. 164). Jeffries notes that the meaning of this term is argued to be dependent of context and determined by the adjective or possessive that precedes it (for example *my* nigga, *real* nigga). However, Jeffries notes that the word is always an identity claim even if such a claim is not the intentional focus of the specific rap or speech act (p. 165). The argument that the use of *nigga* is African American people's way of taking back the the word and changing its meaning from the original racial insult to a positive term of endearment (p. 168) is refuted by Jeffries: "Controversy arises, however, when this rhetorical boundary-making practice occurs publicly, in realms where *nigger/nigga* can be decontextualized and reinterpreted by those who fall outside the lines of the n-word community" (p. 170). Jeffries concludes that the public/private distinction emerges as a key consideration with respect to when and where the word is used (p. 170).

White (2010) examines the extent to which the theme of homophobia is present in rap and reggae music and if homophobic lyrics are prevalent in these genres. By analysing the lyrical content in rap songs for homophobia, her study fills a gap in the literature. In order to gain a greater understanding, White content coded the lyrics of songs that had words and phrases related to several other themes as well (for example heterosexual acts, female and male anatomy, degradation of women, material wealth, threat of incarceration, illicit drugs, etc.). Through a content analysis her study also seeks to answer whether the lyrics in these genres are explicit or implicit. This is of importance because these genres have gained a large audience throughout the world, an audience that might not be aware of the actual meaning of the lyrical content as both genres are so complex in their vocabulary. For example, some listeners may be unaware of homophobic content because they simply do not understand the slang or dialect used. However, her findings do not show that homophobia is common in rap lyrics, though heterosexism was pervasive throughout the genre (p. 58). She concludes that heteronormativity and heterosexism is apparent through the high percentage of explicit as well as of implicit heterosexual acts conveyed in both rap and reggae music. The power dynamics and gender relations between the sexes are revealed by the degradation of women and the frequent references to female anatomy contained in the lyrics (p. 74).

The central question posed by Dibben (1999) is how ideology in music is made material and the extent to which listeners are allowed to produce their own meanings (p. 331). Dibben argues that music participates in constructions of femininity and that it not only has social content but that it can also encourage listeners to adopt a position towards this content (p. 332). Semiotic analysis and Adornian critical theory are the two approaches used by Dibben to analyse both how ideologies of femininity are made material in music as well as how music itself can encourage listeners to

adopt a particular subject position towards these ideologies (p. 333). This line of reasoning is similar to that of Adams and Fuller (2006) when they argue that misogynistic rap can have a defining gender relation effect (which will be discussed in more detail below).

Analysing constructions of 'Girl Power' in the Spice Girls' music video 'Say You'll Be There', Dibben provides an interesting discussion on the dilemma of many female artists, including female rappers. Dibben finds that the pop group Spice Girls uses the notion of 'Girl Power' to offer an empowering image of female identity but at the same time this concept sustains patriarchal constructions of femininity by catering to the male gaze (p. 344). Her analysis highlights a paradoxical situation in which contradictory meanings are available to the listener; for example, while the Spice Girls' clothing supposedly signifies freedom of expression and confidence in sexual identity, the signification of such clothes can also be read as signs of sexual availability, maintaining female oppression (p. 348).

Oware (2009) employs a content analysis of 44 songs taken from the Billboard charts between 1992 and 2000 and finds that the majority of female rap artists had themes of female agency and empowerment present in their lyrics. These themes were tabulated from the songs in the content analysis. Other themes that emerged were bravado (an aspect of rap with its roots in toasting, a part of African American oral traditions, p. 791), alcohol and drug consumption, and dissin' (the act of verbally insulting an opponent, p. 792). However, a majority of the songs examined also had women who self-objectified, self-exploited, and used derogatory words such as *bitch*, a word that figuratively translates as a demeaning and derogatory term targeted toward women (p. 796), when referring to other women. These contradictory messages are found to nullify the empowering messages conveyed by female rappers, reproducing and upholding male hegemonic notions of femininity (p. 787). These findings reinforce those of Dibben (see above).

Adams and Fuller (2006) examine the use and effects of misogynistic ideology in gangsta rap. Gangsta rap is a subgenre of hip hop music with a lyrical focus on gang life or, more generally, life in the ghetto from the perspective of a criminal (Kubrin, p. 435). They trace a connection between misogyny in gangsta rap and how African American women have been characterised throughout history. They argue that "[misogyny] in gangsta rap is the promotion, glamorization, support, humorization, justification, or normalization of oppressive ideas about women" (p. 940). However, they do point out that misogynistic ideas expressed in music are not something invented by rap music but rather have always been a part of the music industry. They argue that the reason for the persistence of these ideas, and for why misogynistic rap music has been allowed to flourish, is that they generate wealth for some of the artists and for the industry as a whole (p. 940).

In their article, Adams and Fuller outline three possible effects misogynistic rap can have: the devaluation effect (that is misogyny in rap music serves to support the ideological and social systems that place African American women at the bottom of the social order), the defining gender relation effect (that is the potential shaping force that misogynistic rap may have on how young people view themselves and the relations between sexes), and the desensitization effect (that is misogynistic music serves as a means to desensitise individuals to sexual harassment and violence toward women, pp. 952-953). Though rap music is not by any means innocent of reproducing misogynistic ideas, Adams and Fuller conclude that "The ultimate burden of responsibility must be placed on the social structures of society and the dominant culture, which created, supports, and makes this ideology viable. Only through challenging and changing these aspects of social life will misogynistic ideology be able to be dealt with in a realistic and truthful manner" (p. 954).

Gangsta rap is also under the microscope in Kubrin (2005). She explores the connection between social and structural conditions and gangsta rap. She notes that gangsta rap is considered the most controversial style of the rap genre with issues raised with its misogyny, nihilism and excessive use of profanity (p. 435). Many of the rappers in her study sample (she conducted a content analysis of over four hundred rap songs from 1992 to 2000) were raised in extremely disadvantaged communities but, with the commodification of rap music, she notes that more and more rappers come from diverse backgrounds, including middle-class communities and an increasing number of female rappers. Therefore, she notes, of interest for future research is whether this changing composition of rappers, given varied racial, socioeconomic, and gendered backgrounds, will influence the lyrical content in rap songs (p. 454).

A response on this matter is given by Wilson (2007) who utilises ethnographic methods in his study. He interviews Deep Dick Collective (D/DC), a rap crew of African American homosexual men belonging to the then newly emerging culture in the hip hop community called homo hop. Homo hop is a multiethnic and multiracial movement among LGBTQ rappers and emcees, and shrugs aside labels such as 'out,' 'closeted,' and 'queer'. The movement validates the experience of members of the hip hop community that are sexually different, regardless of how they might identify in the larger society (p. 138). Wilson notes that even in research that finds a resistant strand within the culture of hip hop among women who deconstruct sexism, challenge male patriarchy, and develop feminist activism, there had been a hesitancy to dialogue with LGBTQ artists, who develop "queer" consciousness in hip hop communities (pp. 117-118). Therefore, his study investigates the role of LGBTQ hip hop artists in creating social change in order to address this hesitancy in social research toward studying the contributions and political activism of these artists (p. 118). Wilson

argues that hip hop's political advocacy for African American youth focuses merely on race and neglects to take into account the changing identities, multiple voices, and varied needs emerging within the hip hop community (p. 118). Wilson finds politics, through hip hop culture, that builds political consciousness from a diversity of identities, based on race, sexuality, and class (p. 119). Drawing on the theatrical performances of PomoAfroHomos (meaning Postmodern African-American Gay Men) between 1990 and 1995, which created dialogue about race, gender, and same-sex love in the African-American and LGBTQ communities using postmodern theory taking fragmented identities and reconstituting them, the social activism of D/DC is about reconstituting fragmented identities, marginalised within both a Caucasian hegemonic LGBTQ movement as well as within a heterosexist hip hop social movement (pp. 119-120). PomoAfroHomos were in turn inspired by common progressive movements such as feminism and African American cultural arts (p. 124). Some of their inspiration for shaping an African American homosexual identity emerged in reflection and in critique of the 1990s hip hop culture and the gangsta rap group NWA (Niggaz Wit Attitudes) in particular (p. 124).

A question posed by D/DC is how hip hop can be "pro-black" and at the same time look strangely at other social groups' identities, labelling them as odd or queer, especially since African American identity itself has been looked at strangely (p. 131). In their lyrics it becomes evident that their political fight is for silenced and disempowered people of multiple and varied social identities (p. 132). D/DC fights for an inclusive identity politics within the hip hop culture by merging identities of "hip hop," "black gay," and "queer". Their socially conscious rap does have its restrictions surrounding conversations about sexuality: "As socially and politically conscious rappers, their "queer" rap intentionally avoids the sexually provocative, erotic element in hip-hop music that degrades and objectifies femininity, promotes violence against women, and tolerates rape cultures" (p. 133).

Wilson concludes that "[D/DC] presents to hip-hop and to other progressive movements of change a willingness to admit that within these movements there are limitations when it comes to identity, requiring constant self-critique and reexamination" (p. 137).

This review of the literature has pointed to many implications of misogynistic lyrics and derogatory word use in rap music, such as the perpetuation of stereotypes of African American people and the degradation and marginalisation of women, along with the urgent need to address these issues. However, findings also suggest that some progress might be found within the ever changing landscape of rap music, for example, the emergence of new subgenres and styles in which practitioners might want to distance themselves from the prevailing notions of heteronormativity,

hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy associated with mainstream rap. Based on these findings from the literature review, the method used for this study, including material, data, method of analysis, and validity and reliability, will be presented in the next section.

3 Method

The aim of this study is to address differences in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap music artists compared with mainstream rap music artists with respect to profanity. The study followed Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth (2008) in their methodology including their process of constructing a list of profane words to be content analysed (see section 3.2 for an account of what this involves). Two hypotheses derived from the literature were tested. First, general profanity (as opposed to profanity directed at a particular gender) was expected to occur most frequently in the lyrics of both mainstream and LGBTQ rap artists, in accordance with the results of Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth. Second, results that show that the analysed profane words directed at women are not as frequent in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap artists as in the lyrics of mainstream rap artists were expected, following Wilson (2007). The study rested on a content analysis of frequently heard profanities in randomly selected rap music in order to better understand differences in the use of derogatory words between mainstream and LGBTQ rap artists, following Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth. However, instead of differences between male and female rap artists' lyrics, this study's main focus was on differences between mainstream and LGBTQ rap artists' lyrics with respect to profanity. However, gender differences among artists were also considered to ensure equal representation of both genders in both mainstream and LGBTQ artist groups.

3.1 Sample Selection

For this study, a random selection of an equal number of LGBTQ and heteronormative rap artists and songs was made. In order to gain an unbiased sample of rap artists, an inventory was taken of popular rap artists represented on HotNewHipHop's list of artists. HotNewHipHop is probably the most popular online hip hop community with over eight million unique users monthly. Their list of artists is in order of popularity; the more views an artist's profile gets, the higher up on the list the artist is positioned. Ten artists were randomly selected from this list to represent mainstream rap artists. Ten artists were also randomly selected from a pool of 25 artists clearly identifying themselves with LGBTQ norms. A complete list of rap artists that identify with LGBTQ norms probably does not exist. However, there are several smaller lists available in the music press and in newspaper features (Battan, 2012; Collins, 2013; Harris, 2014; Jones, 2014; Shorey, 2015a; Shorey, 2015b). For the present study a fairly extensive list was therefore put together by compiling these lists, in addition to personal knowledge, exposure to and familiarity with the research subject.

To further tie these rappers to the LGBTQ hip hop scene, links to interviews with the artists retrieved mainly from YouTube are provided. Subjects discussed in these interviews include sexuality and homophobia. Gender was evenly represented in each group in order to avoid bias in this respect. Thus, the total sample consisted of 20 rap artists. The lists of artists obtained are presented in an Appendix. The sample was limited to single artists because Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth maintain that there is a real difference between solo artists compared to artists who are part of a group (p. 4).

Next, four randomly drawn songs from each artist were selected; these songs were no older than from 2012 as this is a synchronic study. Thus, the total sample consisted of 80 randomly drawn songs from these 20 artists. The program MusicMatch Jukebox Basic 10 was used to select the 80 songs. This program allows one to search and randomly retrieve songs from artists' back catalogues. "Skits", "interludes", "intros" and "outros" frequently occur on rap albums. They are typically short tracks with conversation, not "proper" songs. Tracks like these did come up among the songs selected by the program. In those cases, they were replaced with the next song that came up.

3.2 Method of Analysis

First, a list of profane words to be content analysed was constructed, replicating Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth's process. This was done in order to increase validity since LGBTQ rap was beyond the scope of their study. This list of words was constructed by first examining five songs each of two randomly selected mainstream artists (in addition to the ten that were selected for the actual study), one of them male and the other female. By selecting the derogatory words that occurred most frequently in these ten songs, an initial list of eight possible words were formulated. Then this process was replicated for two randomly selected LGBTQ artists, one male and one female (also in addition to the ones that were selected for the actual study), paring both lists to one list of the six most frequently occurring derogatory words in these 20 songs, given that these words were found on both the initial lists. Assuming there had not been six words in common on both lists, an equal number would have been picked. This definitive list of words was divided into three subcategories: those generally related to men, women, or general profanity (words such as *fuck* and *damn* that cannot be linked to one single gender). A question that might arise in this respect is whether one can be sure that the word *nigga* refers to men. This question is not addressed by Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth, but in many cases the context in which *nigga* occurs makes it clear that it refers to men. For example, in YG's song 'My Nigga', he raps: "Fucked my first bitch, passed her to my nigga / Fuck them other niggas cause I'm down for my niggas". Furthermore, according to Urban

Dictionary's (2015) top definition of *nigga*, the meaning of the word is "black man". However, these two bars by YG pose another question which is how one can be sure that *nigga* is really used in a derogatory sense when used as an in-group reference. In many instances it does not seem to be used in a derogatory way, at least not in the sexually derogatory way which analysed profanities aimed at women are. Following Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth, all instances of *nigga* were coded as derogatory, which is a significant limitation to this study in terms of internal validity.

For their content analysis, Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth coded the number of times each of the selected words occurred in four randomly drawn songs by each artist. Next, their count was re-coded into two categories: whether the word occurred in the lyrics of the song one or more times compared to none at all. Another re-code included three categories: whether or not the word occurred 0 times, 1-3 times, or 4 or more times. The present study did not follow Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth in this process. Instead, all instances of the six coded words in four randomly drawn songs by each artist were first counted to obtain the raw numbers of the derogatory words. Next, the normalised frequencies of the words were calculated by dividing the number of occurrences with the total number of words for that group of artists. For example, if one wants to see whether the word *bitch* occurs more frequently in songs by female or male rappers, one first has to divide the total number of instances of *bitch* in the sample's 40 songs by female artists with the total number of words in those songs in order to obtain the normalised frequency. Then this process has to be replicated for the sample's 40 songs by male artists before comparisons can be made between the normalised frequencies. It might be the case that the average number of words per song differs considerably across artist groups which could bias the results if one only accounted for the raw counts of the derogatory words. By normalising frequencies of the words, internal validity thus increases.

In order to see whether support for this study's hypotheses could be found, the frequency of the selected words coded as general profanity was, within both groups of artists, compared to the frequency of the words coded as profanity directed at a particular gender. Also, the number of times words coded as profanity directed at women could be heard in the lyrics of mainstream rap artists was compared to the number of occurrences of these words in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap artists.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

A study's validity concerns the accuracy of the research question, the data collected and the conclusions drawn, relating to the data and the analysis used in the research (Denscombe, 2010, p.

143). Internal validity can be described as the confidence that can be placed in the cause and effect relationship in a study. A study's aim is to eliminate potential confounding variables and to isolate irrelevant factors ruling out alternative causes that could explain the results. A confounding variable can adversely affect the relation between the independent variable, in the present study whether the artists are heteronormative or identify with LGBTQ norms, and the dependent variables, the use of different derogatory words. Every other possible factor, that is confounding variables, should be eliminated or controlled. If this is not the case, the researcher may analyse the results incorrectly and the results may show a false correlation between the dependent and independent variables. In this study, whether the rap artists are heteronormative or if they identify with LGBTQ norms is supposed to be the only independent variable; gender is controlled across groups, thus removing gender as a possible confounding variable. However, there is always the risk of unseen confounding variables, for example age or ethnic origin.

Evaluating the methods that were used in the present study to collect the data, the sample may have been biased to the extent that it only represented mainstream artists recognised by HotNewHipHop and other music communities may have different artists represented. The way in which the pool of LGBTQ artists was constructed, compiling several lists in addition to relying on personal knowledge, exposure to and familiarity with the LGBTQ hip hop scene, is also a limitation to this study in this respect. Other researchers may come to other conclusions regarding which words can be counted as derogatory. Furthermore, whether a profane word is always used in a derogatory way in the songs should be open for different interpretations and should be dependent on the context in which the word is found. This issue has been addressed in several articles (see the literature review in Section 2) with rather diverse conclusions. This is a significant limitation in terms of accuracy and also affects internal validity. If the internally valid results of a study can be held to be true for other cases (for example different rap artists) as well, then they can be deemed to have some external validity, that is they can be generalised in a valid way (Denscombe, p. 143).

For the purposes of the present study, mainstream and LGBTQ rap music were examined in its entirety with no regard to subgenres. Therefore, the results may not be generalisable to all the different subgenres, which may affect external validity negatively. The relatively small amount of data may also affect external validity negatively in that it might be hard to draw general conclusions from the results.

Internal reliability refers to the consistency within the analysis of the data collected, that is whether another researcher would come to the same conclusions on reanalysing the data (Denscombe, p. 144). In this respect a possible limitation to the present study can be found when

coding the derogatory words as different types of profanity. Depending on the context the words are found in, they can be interpreted differently. For example profanity directed at men may serve a different function in the transsexual/queer community based on the identity of the speaker. Following the principle guidelines set up by Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth, this study also aims at accounting for such differences since the focus is on differences between heteronormative and LGBTQ rap artists' lyrics. However, it is possible that other researchers might categorise the words differently, which is a limitation to this study.

External reliability refers to the study's replicability, that is, whether subsequent analyses of the data collected by following the same method would obtain similar results (Denscombe, p. 144). The present study aims to clearly describe all processes involved in order to ensure external reliability.

A discussion of the results of the content analysis will be presented in the next section.

4 Results and Discussion

The aim of this study is to address differences in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap artists compared with heteronormative rap artists with respect to profanity. It is hypothesised both that (1) derogatory words related to language in general can be expected to occur most frequently in the lyrics of both mainstream and LGBTQ rap artists and that (2) the analysed derogatory words directed at women are not as frequent in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap artists as in the lyrics of mainstream rap artists.

Following Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth's method (2008), a list of frequently occurring profanities has been constructed and a content analysis of randomly selected rap songs has been carried out. The results point to a consistency in the use of derogatory words in the lyrics of rap music; seven years after the Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth study, the same derogatory words are mostly the ones which occur most frequently. Thus, the list of profane words to be content analysed in this study is quite similar to the list in Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth's study. The only difference is that *ho* is replaced with *pussy*; otherwise the lists are identical. When this study's list was constructed, initially five songs each for one female (Iggy Azalea) and one male (Rick Ross) mainstream artist were examined in order to formulate an initial list of possible words. Both these artists and their songs were randomly selected. Eight words were selected from this initial list. These words were selected because they were heard most frequently in the works of these two artists. They were: *bitch*, *nigga*, *fuck*, *shit*, *damn*, *pussy*, *ho* and *dick*. Table 1 indicates normalised frequencies of profane words in the initial word selection process. Frequencies were normalised by dividing the number of occurrences of a particular word with the total number of words for each group of artists.

Table 1. Normalised Frequencies of Profane Words by Group in the Initial Word Selection Process

Word	Normalised Frequency		
	Mainstream Artists	**LGBTQ Artists**	**Total**
Dick	0.0000	0.0028	0.0013
Nigga	0.0078	0.0014	0.0050
Total for Men	**0.0080**	**0.0043**	**0.0064**
Bitch	0.0080	0.0099	0.0088
Pussy	0.0009	0.0014	0.0011
Ho	0.0005	0.0002	0.0004
Total for Women	**0.0094**	**0.0116**	**0.0104**
Fuck	0.0058	0.0078	0.0067
Shit	0.0036	0.0040	0.0038
Damn	0.0011	0.0002	0.0007
Total General	**0.0105**	**0.0121**	**0.0112**

Following Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth, the derogatory words were divided into three subcategories: those suggested to generally relate to men (*dick* and *nigga*), women (*bitch, pussy* and *ho*), and those which relate to language in general, that is general profanity not related to a particular gender (*fuck, shit* and *damn*). Then, this process was replicated for one randomly selected female (Brooke Candy) and one randomly selected male (Bry'Nt) artist identifying with LGBTQ norms. The eight derogatory words that were most frequently heard in the works of these artists were the same as in the works of the mainstream artists. To obtain a joint list of derogatory words to be content analysed, both lists were merged into one list of the six words that occurred most frequently in the examined songs. This was done by dividing each list (mainstream and LGBTQ) into words generally related to men, women, or language in general, in ranked order of frequency. The most frequent words in each subcategory were the same across groups with the exception that *dick* occurred more frequently than *nigga* in the lyrics of the LGBTQ artists and not the other way around as in the lyrics of the mainstream artists (see Table 1). However, those words were the third (*nigga*) and fifth (*dick*) most frequently occurring words when the total amount of profanities were counted, so both words earned their spots on the final list of words to be content analysed. The most frequent profanities from both lists were: *dick* and *nigga* (generally aimed at men), *bitch* and *pussy* (generally aimed at women), and *fuck* and *shit* (related to language in general).

After the initial word selection process, a content analysis of these six words was carried out on the 80 songs comprising the data to be analysed. Table 2 presents normalised frequencies of profane words in the sample's 80 songs, divided into mainstream and LGBTQ artists. Frequencies were normalised by dividing the number of occurrences of a particular word with the total number of words for each group of artists.

Table 2. Normalised Frequencies of Profane Words in Songs by Mainstream and LGBTQ Rap Artists

Word	Normalised Frequency		
	Mainstream Artists	**LGBTQ Artists**	**Total**
Dick	0.0005	0.0005	0.0005
Nigga	0.0160	0.0068	0.0119
Total for Men	**0.0165**	**0.0073**	**0.0124**
Bitch	0.0080	0.0082	0.0081
Pussy	0.0010	0.0032	0.0019
Total for Women	**0.0090**	**0.0114**	**0.0101**
Fuck	0.0072	0.0106	0.0087
Shit	0.0059	0.0058	0.0059
Total General	**0.0131**	**0.0164**	**0.0146**
All Words	0.0386	0.0351	0.0370

Considering the results, the coded words that occurred most frequently in the content analysis were *nigga* (with a normalised frequency of 0.0119, that is 1.19 percent of the total number of words in the sample's 80 songs was made up of the word *nigga*), *fuck* (0.0087), *bitch* (0.0081) and *shit* (0.0059) (see Table 2). *Pussy* (0.0019) and *dick* (0.0005) were considerably less frequent. Thus, profane words expressed toward language in general (*fuck* and *shit*) were heard more frequently (1.46 percent of all words) in the sample than words expressed toward a particular gender (1.24 percent were profanities related to men and 1.01 percent were profanities related to women), corresponding with the results of Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth. However, these results were not the same in both groups (mainstream and LGBTQ) of artists.

In accordance with the results of Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth, it was hypothesised that there would be more occurrences of general profanity (the use of *fuck* and *shit*) than profanities aimed at

a specific gender in both mainstream and LGBTQ rap artists' lyrics. When the frequency of the selected words coded as general profanity (*fuck* and *shit*) was compared with the frequency of the words coded as profanity directed at a particular gender, it was found that this hypothesis was not supported by the data. In the group of mainstream artists, profanities directed at men were heard more frequently than both profanities directed at women and profanities related to language in general. *Fuck* had a normalised frequency of 0.0072 in the songs by mainstream artists and *shit* 0.0059. Thus, 1.31 percent of the total number of words in the songs by mainstream artists were coded as general profanity (see Table 2). Words coded as profanities directed at women (*bitch* and *pussy*) had a lower normalised frequency 0.0090, but words coded as profanities directed at men (*dick* and *nigga*) had a higher normalised frequency of 0.0165. A possible reason for this might be the small sample size. One of the randomly selected songs for the group of mainstream artists were YG's 'My Nigga' in which he makes excessive use of the word *nigga*. This word appears no less than 121 times in this song. No other derogatory word in the sample occurred as frequently in the same song.

It was hypothesised that profanities related to language in general and not aimed at a particular gender would be heard the most in both mainstream and LGBTQ group of artists. The data did not support the claim that general profanities occurred more frequently in the lyrics of mainstream artists. However, looking at the same numbers for the lyrics of the sample's 40 songs by LGBTQ artists, the data did support the claim that general profanities were the most frequent for this group (see Table 2). *Fuck* had a normalised frequency of 0.0106 and *shit* 0.0058. Thus, 1.64 percent of the words in the songs by LGBTQ artists were made up of profanities related to language in general compared with 1.31 percent in the mainstream group. Profanities directed at men had a normalised frequency of 0.0073 and profanities directed at women 0.0114.

Table 3 presents normalised frequencies of profane words in the sample's 80 songs, grouped by gender and sexual orientation. Frequencies were normalised by dividing the number of occurrences of a particular word with the total number of words for each of the four groups.

Table 3. Normalised Frequencies of Profane Words in Songs by Female Mainstream, Male Mainstream, Female LGBTQ and Male LGBTQ Rap Artists

Word	Normalised Frequency			
	Female Mainstream Artists	Male Mainstream Artists	Female LGBTQ Artists	Male LGBTQ Artists
Dick	0.0002	0.0008	0.0007	0.0004
Nigga	0.0106	0.0215	0.0081	0.0054
Total for Men	**0.0108**	**0.0223**	**0.0087**	**0.0057**
Bitch	0.0064	0.0097	0.0114	0.0048
Pussy	0.0007	0.0012	0.0008	0.0057
Total for Women	**0.0071**	**0.0108**	**0.0122**	**0.0105**
Fuck	0.0065	0.0079	0.0136	0.0075
Shit	0.0057	0.0062	0.0073	0.0042
Total General	**0.0122**	**0.0141**	**0.0209**	**0.0117**
All Words	0.0301	0.0472	0.0418	0.0279

Interestingly, in the lyrics of LGBTQ artists, profanities aimed at women were more frequent than profanities aimed at men, and not the other way around as in the lyrics of mainstream artists. These results were the same across gender groups; both male and female LGBTQ artists were more likely to use derogatory words directed at women rather than at men unlike mainstream artists, who were more likely to use derogatory words aimed at men. It may be that female homosexual artists adopt heterosexual male norms while male homosexual artists adopt heterosexual female norms. It may also be that male homosexual rappers refer to other male homosexuals as *bitch* instead of *sweetie* or *honey*, as an address term free of any misogynistic intent (Livingston, 2013). In any case, gender differences that the data showed could be found in mainstream rappers' lyrics in this respect do not seem to carry over to LGBTQ rappers, which is interesting. However, heterosexual male rappers are also known for applying the word *bitch* to men, in this case as a derogatory word for a subordinate. A well-known example of this is the classic gangsta rap song 'Bitches Ain't Shit' (1992) in which Dr. Dre raps: "I used to know a bitch named Eric Wright / We used to roll around and fuck the hoes at night", referring to his former friend Eazy-E, who was also a member of the group N.W.A.. In one of the songs in this study's sample, 'Tear The House Up' (2014), queer rapper Zebra Katz raps: "I'm that bitch that does it like that […] I ain't gotta say it cuz bitch i get it done"

referring both to himself and others as *bitch*. This poses the question whether one could be sure that the coded words for this study are always used in a derogatory way in the songs, which is a significant limitation to this study in terms of internal validity. However, when drawing any general conclusions about tendencies from this data, one should recall that the sample size is not big. This reduces both the internal and the external validity of the results.

For this study, it was also hypothesised that there would be fewer occurrences of profanities directed at women in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap artists than in the lyrics of mainstream rap artists. When the frequency of the selected words coded as profanity directed at women (*bitch* and *pussy*) in the lyrics of mainstream artists was compared with the frequency in the lyrics of LGBTQ artists it was found that this hypothesis was not supported by the data. Only 0.90 percent of the words in the 40 songs in the sample by mainstream artists was considered derogatory towards women (see Table 2). The corresponding number for LGBTQ artists was in fact higher, at 1.14 percent. Once again, a possible reason for this drawback could be the small sample size. In one of the randomly selected songs for the group of LGBTQ artists, Fly Young Red's song 'Throw That Boy Pussy', the word pussy appears 46 times. However, Fly Young Red is a male artist and profanities directed at women were even more frequent in the lyrics of female LGBTQ artists. *Bitch* and *pussy* had a normalised frequency of 0.0122 in their lyrics, compared to 0.0105 for male LGBTQ artists (see Table 3).

Instead, the biggest difference across groups of mainstream and LGBTQ artists was found in the use of derogatory words directed at men. Mainstream artists' lyrics had a normalised frequency of 0.0165 for these words (see Table 2). The same number for LGBTQ artists was 0.0073, which is less than half, so the difference is considerable. In particular male LGBTQ artists were found to use these words sparsely, with a normalised frequency of 0.0057 (see Table 3). This might be another example of male homosexual artists adopting heterosexual female norms, using words such as *bitch* and *pussy* instead of derogatory words aimed at men, both when addressing someone of the same sex and sexual orientation in a derogatory sense and as terms of endearment.

Differences in the overall use of derogatory words were also found between mainstream and LGBTQ artists. Comparing mainstream and LGBTQ groups, songs by male mainstream artists displayed the highest normalised frequency of profanities in this study; 4.72 percent of the lyrics in this sample's 20 songs by male mainstream artists were comprised of derogatory words (see Table 3). The second highest number of profanities were found in the lyrics of female LGBTQ artists; derogatory words had a normalised frequency of 0.0418 in their songs. The corresponding numbers for the other two groups were 0.0301 for female mainstream artists and 0.0279 for male LGBTQ

artists. The fact that female LGBTQ artists were found to use derogatory words to this extent might also point to female homosexual artists adopting heterosexual male norms. Nevertheless, mainstream artists were slightly more likely to use derogatory words in their lyrics, as 3.86 percent of the words in this sample's 40 songs by mainstream artists were profanities, while 3.51 percent of the words in the songs by LGBTQ artists were derogatory (see Table 2).

Gender differences also emerged. Male mainstream artists were more likely to use the words *dick* and *nigga* (in the lyrics of the sample's 20 songs by male mainstream artists, 2.23 percent of the words were comprised of profanities directed at men) than *bitch* and *pussy* (1.08 percent) (see Table 3). This was also the case in the lyrics of female mainstream artists. However, female mainstream artists used all coded words in this study to a lesser extent than male mainstream artists. These results correspond with those of Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth. Derogatory words aimed at men had a normalised frequency of 0.0108 and at women 0.0071 in the lyrics of female mainstream artists.

Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth's data did not support their hypothesis that gender differences in the overall use of derogatory words would emerge when analysing rap lyrics. This was also the case in the present study. Table 4 presents both raw numbers and normalised frequencies of profane words in the sample's 80 songs, grouped by gender. Frequencies were normalised by dividing the number of instances of a particular word with the total number of words for each group.

Table 4. Word Counts and Normalised Frequencies of Profane Words in Songs by Female and Male Rap Artists

Word	Word Count	Normalised Frequency	Word Count	Normalised Frequency
	Female Artists		**Male Artists**	
Dick	8	0.0004	12	0.0006
Nigga	191	0.0094	280	0.0144
Total for Men	**199**	**0.0098**	**292**	**0.0150**
Bitch	176	0.0087	146	0.0075
Pussy	15	0.0007	62	0.0032
Total for Women	**191**	**0.0094**	**208**	**0.0107**
Fuck	197	0.0097	150	0.0077
Shit	130	0.0064	103	0.0053
Total General	**327**	**0.0162**	**253**	**0.0130**
All Words	717	0.0354	753	0.0387

The total number of derogatory words heard in the lyrics of this sample's female artists was 717, corresponding to 3.54 percent of all words in these lyrics (see Table 4). Compared to the corresponding number for male artists, 753 or 3.87 percent, there do not seem to be large gender differences in the overall use of profanities in rap lyrics.

This study has focused solely on differences in derogatory word use between mainstream and LGBTQ rappers. However, according to Shorey (2015b), LGBTQ rap differs from mainstream rap in many other aspects, for example in sonic influences and cultural image repertoires. Lyrically, many rappers who are queer feel comfortable with addressing queer sex in their music, a topic which seems to still be taboo everywhere else (ibid, 2015b). This should imply that a larger number of profane words such as *dick* and *pussy* occur in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap artists. However, any sizeable differences between LGBTQ and mainstream groups in this respect were not found apart from male LGBTQ artists' use of *pussy* (see discussion on the song 'Throw That Boy Pussy' above). LGBTQ rap also has its own set of slang and linguistic tricks (ibid, 2015b) but to address this was beyond the scope of this study. The list of profane words to be content analysed for this study were more or less the same as in Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth's seven years old study despite the fact that this study also addressed LGBTQ rap. In this study's sample of songs, LGBTQ artists made use

of the same derogatory words as mainstream artists. However, there *are* occasional examples of the fact that the use of derogatory words in rap music might be subject to change. For example, in Le1f's hit single 'Boom' (2014), he addresses his own queerness in a number of different ways, for example, calling himself and other homosexuals *banjee* (something like "young urban gay with swag"), *batty boy* (Jamaican slang term for homosexual men) and *LGBT cutie* (pun on LGBTQ).

However, there were several factors which affected this study. When the content analysis was carried out it became evident that the word *ho* occurred more frequently than *pussy* despite the fact that this word had not made the list of derogatory words to be content analysed in the study's initial stage when this list was constructed. This list was constructed from the work of just four randomly selected artists (two from each group of artists, with gender evenly represented). This might point to a drawback of the method employed. That is, not accounting for the frequency of the word *ho* in rap lyrics might have skewed the results and the overall picture of the use of profanities in rap music. Therefore, in future research it could be wise to include more derogatory words in the content analysis and to make use of a much larger sample of songs. It might be hard to draw general conclusions from this study's results because of the small sample size, which may have affected both internal and external validity negatively.

Other potential drawbacks of the method employed might include the way in which the derogatory words were accounted for. The present study was based on Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth. However, they did not normalise frequencies in their study. Instead they counted sums of profanities, dividing the derogatory words into categories depending on whether they had occurred 'none', 'one to three', or 'four or more' times in the song. If their study contained any equivalents to YG's 'My Nigga' (with 121 occurrences of the word *nigga*), it did not affect the results to the same extent because profanities in any such song would only be accounted for as occurring four or more times using their methodology. Another example related to this issue can be taken from the present study. According to Table 2, the word *bitch* is used to more or less the same extent in the lyrics of mainstream artists (with a normalised frequency of 0.0080) and LGBTQ artists (0.0082). However, another way of presenting the results of the present study's content analysis would show that the word *bitch* never appeared in 48 percent of the songs by LGBTQ artists. As *bitch* was absent in only 25 percent of the songs by mainstream artists it would suggest that the word is more widely used by mainstream artists. This would imply that differences between mainstream and LGBTQ groups of artists in this respect might exist after all. Nevertheless, perhaps the biggest methodological shortcoming of the present study in terms of accuracy arises from the uncertainty concerning whether these profane words are always being used in a derogatory way in

the songs or not. This issue has been addressed by many scholars (see the literature review in Section 2) with differing and to some extent contradictory conclusions. For example, different types of artists may use profane words differently. Sometimes this seems to be the case even for the same artist and in the same song, as was implied in the discussion of the song 'Tear The House Up' above.

In the present study it was hypothesised that (1) general profanity would occur most frequently in both mainstream and LGBTQ rappers' lyrics, and that (2) derogatory words aimed at women would be less frequent in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap than in mainstream rap. None of the hypotheses were supported by the data. Employing another method might lead to different outcomes. Therefore, one should be cautious about stating generalisations based on tendencies seen in the data. In the next section a summary of this study will be presented.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to address differences in the lyrics of LGBTQ rappers compared with heteronormative rappers with respect to the use of profanity. It was hypothesised that (1) derogatory words coded as relating to language in general as opposed to relating to a specific gender could be expected to be heard the most in both mainstream rappers' and LGBTQ rappers' lyrics, and that (2) derogatory words coded as profanities directed at women would occur less frequently in the lyrics of LGBTQ rappers compared to mainstream rappers' lyrics.

The method employed involved a content analysis of frequently heard profanities in rap music. First, a list of these frequently heard profane words was constructed. This was done by examining five randomly selected songs each from one male and one female mainstream rap artist. By selecting the profane words that occurred most frequently in these songs, an initial list of eight possible words was formulated. Then this process was replicated for one male and one female LGBTQ rap artist. By merging both lists, a final list of the six most frequently occurring profanities in these 20 songs was constructed. Following Monk-Turner and Sylvertooth (2008), these words were divided into three subcategories: those generally related to men, women, or general profanity (words such as *fuck* and *damn* that cannot be linked to one single gender). For the actual content analysis, ten mainstream rappers and ten LGBTQ rappers were randomly selected. To avoid gender bias, an equal number of male and female artists were randomly selected from both groups of artists. Then four songs each from these artists were randomly selected and examined by counting every instance of the six derogatory words in the lyrics. The frequencies of the derogatory words were normalised by dividing the number of occurrences with the total number of words for that group of artists so that comparisons between groups could be made in a valid way. In order to see whether support for this study's hypotheses were found, the frequency of the selected words coded as profanities related to language in general were compared to the frequency of profanities directed at a particular gender, within both groups. Also, the number of times words coded as profanity directed at women could be heard in the lyrics of mainstream rap artists was compared to the number of occurrences of these words in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap artists.

None of the hypotheses were found to be supported by the data. The data did support the claim that general profanities were the most frequent for LGBTQ rappers, but this was not the case for mainstream rappers. Also, it was not found that there were fewer occurrences of profanities directed at women in the lyrics of LGBTQ rap artists than in the lyrics of mainstream rap artists. On the

contrary, more derogatory words directed at women were heard in the songs by LGBTQ artists than in the lyrics of mainstream artists. Furthermore, unlike mainstream artists, who were more likely to use derogatory words aimed at men, in the lyrics of LGBTQ artists, profanities aimed at women were more frequent than profanities aimed at men. These results were the same across gender groups and can perhaps be explained by homosexual artists adopting heterosexual norms. This speculation could also possibly explain the fact that the biggest difference across groups of mainstream and LGBTQ artists was found in the use of derogatory words directed at men. In particular male LGBTQ artists were found to rarely use these words, which might be an example of male homosexuals adopting heterosexual female norms, using words such as *bitch* and *pussy* instead of derogatory words aimed at men.

However, there were several factors which affected the validity of this study. The issue of whether these profane words are always used in a derogatory way in the songs or not is perhaps the biggest methodological shortcoming of the present study in terms of accuracy. The fact that employing another method might lead to different outcomes should indicate that one should be cautious about stating generalisations based on tendencies seen in the data. Furthermore, the small sample size may have affected both internal and external validity negatively. Therefore, in future research it could be wise to include more derogatory words in the content analysis and to make use of a much larger sample of songs.

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Appendix: Mainstream and LGBTQ Rap Artists Selected for this Study

Mainstream artists:

2 Chainz, DeJ Loaf, Future, Iggy Azalea, J. Cole, Kevin Gates, Nicki Minaj, Rapsody, Rick Ross, Tiffany Foxx, Tink, YG.

LGBTQ artists:

Angel Haze, Brooke Candy, Bry'Nt, Cakes Da Killa, Fly Young Red, JenRo, Junglepussy, Le1f, RoxXxan, Solomon, Temper, Zebra Katz.