Hip Hop Consumption and Masculinity

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[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/12504/gender/v08/GCB-08

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This paper looks at the nature of masculinity within the Hip Hop subculture, a subculture firmly rooted in consumer based objects of music, clothes and symbols. In particular, this study investigates how the symbolic nature of Hip Hop consumption can serve as a vehicle by which young white men can achieve a desired level of masculinity. Furthermore, this paper identifies and describes the role of fantasy in Hip Hop consumption and how young men construct themselves as masculine through such fantasies. Using an ethnographic methodology the researcher found that Hip Hop culture is a gender salient male enclave where masculinity is enacted by members. The performance of gender is enacted through the performance of being ‘hard’, the repression of feminine traits, and the crossing over into African American Vernacular English. Such performances limit female Hip Hop membership de facto. Hip Hop members often use sexist, and homophobic taunts, but not as attacks on females or homosexuals, but to feminise the other, and hence masculinise oneself. Finally, it was found that gangster rap is often consumed as a fantasy in which teenage males can forge strong masculine gender identities, gender identities that they find difficult to assume at school, at work, or in a family context. The fantasies essentially fall into one of two categories: the pimp fantasy, and the gangster fantasy.

**INTRODUCTION**

The Hip Hop culture revolves around four key activities: rapping, graffiti art, breakdancing and DJing. It originated in the South Bronx area of New York City during the early 1970s, and articulated the values and attitudes of the urban inner-city youth (Rose 1994). During the 1980s, Hip Hop became more than just a culture, but also a profitable commodity, with Hip Hop music, fashion, and entertainment consumed across the world. Although no hard demographic study has ever been conducted on Hip Hop’s consumers by race (Neilsen SoundScan, the premier reference source on music sales does not break down its over-the-counter totals by race), it is estimated, and often cited that 70 percent of US Hip Hop sells to white consumers (Kitwana 2005). Hence, young white men are the primary consumer of the various performances of black masculinity and the almost pornographic images of African American women found in mainstream Hip Hop (Neal 2004a). In the case of young white males, Hip Hop represents a space where they can work through the idea of how their masculinity can be lived. The next section undertakes a selective review of the literature regarding gender identity, masculinity and consumption, male enclaves, heroic masculinity and the consumption of fantasy. The paper then presents the research objective, method and the qualitative findings, before drawing some conclusions.
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Gender Identity

For the purpose of this study we will use ‘sex’ to refer to an individual’s biological sex and ‘gender’ to refer to psychological features associated with biological sex that are socially constructed (Butler 1990; Butler 1993). Gender is the cultural definition of behaviour defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time. Hence, gender is a set of cultural rules that may be applied at a subcultural level (Palan 2001). These cultural rules are enacted time and time again, and the iteration of these performative gestures establishes our gender identities (Butler 1990; Butler 1993). The iterative nature of this performance is what differs this construction of identity from the theatrical roles proposed by Goffman (1959).

Gender identity is the degree to which an individual identifies him or herself with masculine and feminine personality traits (Fischer and Arnold 1994; Palan 2001). Masculinity and femininity are not polar opposites on a single dimension but are separate constructs that one can assume with varying degrees of intensity (Caru, Cova, and Tissier-Desbordes 2004). Hence, an individual may identify him or herself with both masculine and feminine traits to varying degrees (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999). Masculine traits include dominance, independence, self-confidence, assertiveness, strength, virility and ambition. In contrast feminine traits include emotional, affectionate, yielding, submissive, gentle, dependent, and gullible (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999).

While an individual is not likely to change the essence of his or her gender identity, in a gender relevant situation, beliefs and behaviours will be gender-based because of the salience of gender in that situation (Palan 2001). Hence, the measurement of gender identity may produce different results in a gender relevant situation relative to a situation where gender is irrelevant (Gould 1996; Patterson and Hogg 2004). Furthermore, a small-scale qualitative study by Patterson and Hogg (2004) suggests that gender identity is more salient in a public situation as opposed to a private situation. That is, in a public setting, young males feel that they have to perform their masculinity, and act as a male is expected to, and subsequently they will only consume masculine products, whereas in a private setting they are more likely to consume products inline with their actual self-concept.

While the subject of gender has been widely researched by consumer behaviour scholars, it is mainly feminine roles, differences between men and women, gender biases, or sex differences that are emphasised (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999). The following section investigates the small but growing body of literature on masculinity and consumption.

Masculinity and Consumption

Men’s role in western society and the image of men has undergone radical changes in recent years. Many roles traditionally associated with men and masculinity, are now being performed by women. Technical developments have decreased the difficulty of numerous tasks, and physical strength has lost much of its utility for society. Moreover, the evolution of economy from industry to services has favoured the rise of women in professional circles. As women are now increasingly educated and working, the traditionally masculine role of ‘bread winner’ has become effeminate. Hence, new societal practices and conventions are perpetually challenging ways in which men can assume
masculinity (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999).

Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes (1996) suggest that the gap between traditional masculinity and the modern breadwinner role has produced an identity crisis that men have tried to resolve through consumption. That is, in the absence of assuming a masculine role at work or at home, men are undertaking masculine identity projects through the consumption of symbolic products, services and leisure (Holt and Thompson 2004). Several consumer research studies support this notion. For example, in their consumer ethnography Schouten and McAlexander (1995) enact their own masculinity by becoming bikers, rebellious man who live for the freedom of the open road, while Sherry et al. (2001) contend that the themed restaurant and bar chain ESPN Sport Zone appeals to men in large part because it creates a place of fun that allows men to compete and enact their masculinities.

Male Enclaves

According to Caru et al. (2004), masculinity can only be enacted in the presence of other men. That is, in order for men to assume a masculine identity, they need to spend time with other men in enclaves that exclude strong feminine identities and are dedicated to the rituals of masculinity. Along with the demise of the traditional breadwinner role, many traditional enclaves of masculinity have virtually vanished (i.e. hunting, men’s clubs and golf courses that bar women). In modern society men share their masculinity in places where passions that are mainly shared by men are enacted (for example, where a team sport like rugby or football is being played, or where subcultures like motor racing or Hip Hop meet). Sharing a male oriented passion or a group activity also serves the function of precluding many women. Although women are not completely absent from these modern bastions of masculinity they are relatively marginalised and are constantly positioned at the periphery (Caru et al. 2004).

Heroic Masculinity

Holt and Thompson (2004) discuss what they describe as the American ideology of heroic masculinity. This ideology is made of three masculinity models – the breadwinner, the rebel, and the man-of-action hero. The man-of-action hero resolves the inherent weaknesses in two other prominent models, the bread winner and the rebel. In the breadwinner model one becomes a man through the act of achieving. However, men who are part of the establishment are often seen as cowardly and broken men. In the rebel model one becomes a man through the act of rebelling. However, because rebels threaten the status quo and challenge societal institutions, they are often portrayed as dangerously antisocial outlaws who pose a moral threat to their communities. ‘More warrior than father, more seducer than husband, more class clown than serious worker’ the rebel figure is personified by the Hip Hop Gangster, ‘such as found in the rap music of Tupac Shakur and Wu Tang Clan and popular feature films such as Boyz in the Hood’ (Holt and Thompson 2004, 428).

Consuming Fantasy

The consumption of fantasy experiences has been studied by consumer researchers in a variety of settings including Las Vegas, Hawaii, the Disney Amusement Parks, luxury hotels and seaside resorts. Such fantasy environments typically evoke playful activities and attitudes and create a climate of escape, pleasure and relaxation (Belk and Costa 1998). Alternatively, Belk and Costa (1998) studied the mountain man, who re-enacts a frontier myth by fleeing civilisation and domesticity (at least for a little while) and embracing the uncivilised and wild.
These mountain men embrace the liberating opportunity to play a wildly different character whose behaviour bears little resemblance to their everyday life. That is, by consuming this fantasy, these mountain men are able to enact the freedom and independence that they cannot find in their ordinary lives.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY**

While many critics have attacked Hip Hop for its sexist, misogynistic, and homophobic content, very few have bothered to ask what it is about this genre that drives millions of young men around the world to listen to the music. For Hip Hop in the 21st century is an industry, and like any modern day industry, if the consumers didn’t like the product, it would cease to exist. While not a quantitative investigation into all the motivations for the consumption of Hip Hop, this study does intend to develop an understanding of the role masculinity plays in the consumption of Hip Hop. In particular, this study investigates how the symbolic nature of Hip Hop consumption can serve as a vehicle by which young white men can achieve a desired level of masculinity (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999). Furthermore, we intend to identify and describe the role of fantasy in Hip Hop consumption and how young men construct themselves as masculine through such fantasies.

This study of the Hip Hop consumption and masculinity was conducted using three principal methods of ethnographic research: participant observation, informal conversations, and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Ethnography was chosen as this approach can yield better insights into the way people interact with brands than more modernist approaches (Goulding 2003). The participant observation and informal interviews took place between June 2002 and June 2005. Extended presence and participation in the field allowed the researcher to ‘learn the language’ of those under investigation, and to experience life as one of the subjects (Elliot and Jankel-Elliot 2003). A local Hip Hop DJ who was an acquaintance of the researcher facilitated initial entry into the Hip Hop culture in Australia and the researcher accompanied the gatekeeper and a number of his friends to around a 100 Hip Hop nights held across the researcher’s home city, and around Australia. Becoming a member of a subculture generally means entering as an aspiring member and undergoing a process of socialisation whereby subcultural capital is obtained (Thornton 1995). Hence, the nature of the ethnographic process was evolving, which allowed the researcher to interact with different elements of the subculture and to experience the signifying practices of Hip Hop consumption as an insider.

During the course of the study, which formed part of a larger research project on the symbolic consumption of subcultures, 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews with both soft-core and hard-core members of the Australian Hip Hop culture were undertaken. The researcher utilised guided introspection to obtain the necessary data: as he had obtained membership status himself, a good rapport with the interviewees was established, and hence the information was of quality (Elliot and Jankel-Elliot 2003; Shankar 2000). This technique was chosen as it has been found to be particularly useful when cultural categories are under investigation (McCracken 1988; Wells 1993).

Interview transcripts, along with field notes were imported into Nudist for coding. Selective coding was used to synthesise and relate data to the conceptual topic of interest - masculinity. After the initial analysis of the data the researcher was then compelled to
investigate literature regarding black masculinity in African American Hip Hop such that more detailed conclusions regarding masculinity in the Australian Hip Hop culture could be formed.

KEY FINDINGS AND THEMES

Black Masculinity in African American Hip Hop

Academics have explored how street life-oriented, African American men organise meaning around their masculinity, particularly in the face of perpetual social injustices (Payne 2006). In Payne’s (2006) study African American men offered stories of how they use Hip Hop to craft or construct their masculinity in the face of blocked educational and economic opportunities. These young men expressed a particular obligation to “stand up and be a man” with the intent of providing for and keeping their family together to the best extent that they could (Payne 2006). However, due to societal changes the role of ‘bread winner’ has become feminised, and due to their economic circumstances, the role of ‘bread winner’ has not been an option for many African American men for many years, which has had a tremendous impact on the way in which they construct their masculinity.

Kelly (1996) and Rose (1994) argue that supporting one’s family is no longer a measure of manhood for street-life oriented African American males, but (hetero)sexual promiscuity is. Hence, black women are seen as mere sexual objects and heteroexual conquest free of commitment is prized much more than marriage, which in some cases is even viewed as emasculating. In addition to sexual promiscuity, masculinity is also associated with power, aggression and violence. Being a man therefore, means standing up for oneself at all costs, and retaliating if anyone humiliates or disrespects you.

Other scholars (i.e. McLeod 1999; Stephens 2005) have traced the overt performance of masculinity within Hip Hop as a necessary enactment to be part of the culture which is central to remaining authentic – one of the cultures key values (Arthur 2006). McLeod’s (1999) article examines claims of authenticity within Hip Hop culture. He found six claims of authenticity; a social-psychological dimension, a racial dimension, a political-economic dimension, a social-locational dimension, a cultural dimension, and a gender-sexual dimension. In regards to the gender-sexual dimension he suggests Hip Hop members must be seen as ‘being hard,’ that is, to display masculine attributes, and to never be seen as ‘being soft,’ that is, to display feminine traits. The notion of ‘selling out’ or ‘going commercial’ is associated with ‘being soft’ and hence feminises the artist and creates a perception that they are no longer authentic.

As such many Hip Hop artists who have mainstream success need to reaffirm their masculinity in other ways. As such, they often espouse themes of killing, the use of guns, the use and dealing of drugs, sexism, misogyny and homophobia (Hutchinson 1999). These themes are often exaggerated and invented boasts, but important cultural and emotive resources for scripting a particular, powerful masculine identity. For example, Eminem’s track ‘97 Bonnie & Clyde’, a murder fantasy toward his girlfriend, generated much controversy for its violent and misogynistic imagery (Stephens 2005). These complaints were probably justified considering the market for this music is adolescent males, the very group that statistically commits the most hate crimes (Stephens 2005). However, as a white rapper, Eminem must constantly enact his ‘realness’ by performing ‘hardness’. Though
Eminem is white, his poor economic background, affiliation with and acceptance by black artists and hypermasculine behaviour validate his social-locational and racial ‘realness’. His often explicit depictions of violence, misogyny, homophobia and hostility toward pop singers rhetorically position him as a resistant to mainstream culture and hence, not ‘soft’, even though his success is largely attributable to white, suburban teenage audiences (Stephens 2005).

Gender Performance in Australian Hip Hop

While young white men in Australia don’t face the same race and poverty related problems as street-life oriented African American men in the US, many of them identify with Hip Hop culture. Motivated by fun, friendship and self-expression Australian Hip Hop also provides a place where these young men can define their masculinity. In particular many of the young men who participated in this research study considered themselves unfit misfits; certainly not jocks that could fit easily into standard male sporting enclaves. As a male enclave, the Australian Hip Hop culture is perhaps best described as neo-tribal: dispersed and loosely organised, and hence rarely, if ever, experienced in its totality (Maffesoli 1996). Limited in time and space these gatherings also provide the security to leave behind everyday gender identities much like how the Whitby Goth Festival provided Goulding et al.’s (2003) Goth’s an opportunity to escape their quotidian genders.

When Hip Hop culture is enacted in Australia the situation which arises is one in which gender identity is extremely salient. As an offshoot of the African American form this is to be expected. However, due to the current lack of opportunities to perform masculine identities in the current work place (or school), and the fact that Australian Hip Hop culture predominantly appeals to teenage males, a very critical stage in terms of identity formation, the gender salience is exacerbated. In this male enclave many young men perform their masculinity by being ‘hard’ and ‘thug’ like. A successful performance of masculinity contributes to an individual’s accession up the subcultural hierarchy, although other forms of subcultural capital do play a more significant role. Performing masculinity involves the repression or masking of cultural signs of femininity. One of the most common ways for young men to do this is to shave their head. Another way is to cross into African American Vernacular English when speaking. Bucholtz (1999) argues that the use of African American Vernacular English can give the impression one has physical strength, is physically violent, and hyper (hetero)sexual.

One of the simplest ways to perform masculinity is through acts of aggression and or violence. Although in my three years in the field I was never once involved in a fight, I was at the beginning of the socialisation process, very much intimidated (however, this feeling passed after I realised that much of the masculine performances were exactly that, a performance, and in general I found most Hip Hop members very friendly and willing to help). Take for example, the following field notes from a Hip Hop night I attended during my first month in the field:

The place was dark dingy and full of guys. You could smell the testosterone in the air. I tried not to look too many dodgy characters in the eyes.

Or from one of my informants:

C: Yeah last time I went there, or the time before, I almost got into three fights man, just walking in... the crowd is fucking so angry.
Although the above scenarios are extreme examples, they do illustrate the nature of Hip Hop culture in Australia as a male enclave where masculinity is regularly performed. A place where women rarely exist and those who do are generally placed at the margins. Because of this, women are rarely taken seriously as members of the culture. Take the following female members perceptions for example:

*G*: I think you can’t overlook the fact that a female presence in a majority male occupation... can lead to men reacting badly to women’s presence...We’re often seen as “some rapper’s girlfriend” or “just there to sleep with MC’s.”

My observations in the field agree with the above statement. In fact, as I progressed deeper into the culture I too could be charged with having “she must be some rapper’s girlfriend” thoughts. However, my observations also suggest that many of the women at the periphery of the culture do dress extremely provocatively, and hence perpetuate these stereotypes. This of course, does make it extremely hard for women who actually do desire to actively participate in the culture. In response, my observations suggest that many female artists in the Australian Hip Hop culture who are respected by men are those who have enacted masculine traits.

In need of a space to call their own and secure from the sexism so prevalent in Hip Hop, a group of females who are interested in participating in Australian Hip Hop culture created a forum entitled “Ladies in Hip Hop” on an Australian Hip Hop website. This forum acted as a place where direct and legitimate criticism of the sexism in Hip Hop could be discussed, however it was often reduced by men to “bitching” or complaining as a way of containing descent. For example, a male web forum member writes about the “Ladies in Hip Hop” forum:

*P*: Already we have a website for Australian Hip Hoppers, no doubt a minority. Having a place for the girls to hang out is cool but when you look at the site they bitch, moan, complain, fight, threads get locked. It is seriously crap.

The same forum has even been hijacked by male Hip Hop members on the several occasions with posts that have been made for no other reason but to annoy the girls so that they know their subservient place within the culture. For example, a post in the girl’s forum was made by a male forum member entitled “Keeping your bitches in line” which listed the best ways for a man to control one’s girlfriend.

According to Guevara (1996) the masculine qualities of Hip Hop performance is what keeps many females from becoming participators. This is reinforced in the following quote by a female Hip Hop participant:

*G*: I think women are easily put off by what they see on the outside of Hip Hop. That it is primarily a ‘battle culture’ that cuts down the weak and focuses on very masculine habits and achievements. I don’t think that ethos attracts women in vast numbers.

This masculine environment keeps Hip Hop as a male only enclave and also restricts the entrance to other man who may be too insecure with their masculinities to take the first step.

Feminising the Other

Hip Hop culture and music is often criticised for promoting sexism and misogyny throughout the world. With tracks like 2 Live
Crew’s “Me So Horny” and Dr. Dre’s “Bitches Ain’t Shit” it is perhaps too easy a target (Neal 2004b). However, sexism in Hip Hop has been gravely exaggerated by the mainstream press. The music is rich, complex, and multifaceted and the style and subject matter ranges from obsessive sexism, to the politically intelligent, from gangster-style storytelling, to Christian rap (Rose 2004). Within Australian Hip Hop sexist and misogynistic lyrics are rare (although they do exist). However, lyrics that feminise the other are abundant particularly in freestyle performances, and are even often made as comments in ordinary conversation.

Take for example the following lyrics from the battle track “Simmy the Gravy Spitter” by the Hilltop Hoods:

You couldn’t battle me with that lame rhyme,
You couldn’t come hard with two women at the same time,
You walk in the club dipped in jewels and Versace,
Only gay guys wear that much gold, ask Liberace.

These masculinist narratives are essentially verbal duels over who is the most masculine MC around. In the first line we see Suffa MC of the Hilltop Hoods accuse his competitor’s rhymes of being weak and effeminate by being lame. In the next line, he directly takes a swing at his competitor’s masculinity and sexual prowess, claiming that he would not be capable of ejaculating with an erection even if two women were involved. The third line is an attack on his competitor’s consumption habits. The wearing of jewels and high end mainstream fashion such as Versace is perceived as inauthentic by the Australian Hip Hop culture as you are pretending to be something you are not (i.e. African American) (Arthur 2006). Furthermore, it associates the competitor with mainstream Hip Hop artists who wear this fashion, and are considered as ‘being soft’ as they have gone commercial. The final line again feminises Suffa’s competitor by associating him with a homosexual. These lyrics are not meant as literal descriptions of homophobia, they do however illustrate the playful use of language within Hip Hop (Kelley 1996).

Stephens (2005) argues that the use of homophobic terms in Hip Hop is more appropriately termed genderphobia than homophobia. He argues that Hip Hop artists use homophobic language to critique gender behaviour, not sexual orientation. That is, Hip Hop members often espouse homophobic rhetoric, but these taunts are usually directed at male rivals as a way of stripping them of their manhood, and mocking their masculinity and strength. Hence, within Hip Hop, heterosexual people are often victims of taunts such as ‘fag’, ‘gay’, and ‘poof’. Free and Hughson (2003) found similar rhetorical use of the terms amongst football hooligans. Participators in the Australian Hip Hop culture are very much aware of the emasculating ability of such taunts. Take the following insight, again from G:

G: It is still acceptable in most cases, to the majority of listeners, for a male MC to diss another male for being ‘gay’ or a ‘fag’. This is casual homophobia, but it’s allowed. Why? Because it defines for the listeners and the rapper what it means ‘to be a man’. This gay epithet is used countless times because it is a useful shorthand way to assert that ‘a real man’ is tough, never weak, is staunch and never a sook, and fucks, and is never fucked.

This type of discourse feminises the other, strips them of their masculinity, while it masculinises oneself in front of other men.
Homophobic rhetoric is not the only way to emasculate another. Sexist taunts based on female genitalia (i.e. pussy, etc) are also used to label those who are feminine. These performances are scripted within the institutional structure of the Australian Hip Hop subculture (as in Celsi, Rose and Leigh’s (1993) skydiving community). However, there is another Hip Hop consumption experience that is not necessarily literally enacted. That is, the consumption of the Hip Hop fantasy. These dramas are as much created in the consumer’s imagination as they are scripted by others.

Consuming Hip Hop Fantasy

The US form of Hip Hop that is commonly known as gangster rap attracts many young white male listeners for whom the ghetto is an imagined place of adventure, unbridled violence, and erotic fantasy, a mythic alternative to the boredom of the suburban bedroom (Kelley 1996). While arousing playfulness and escapism, much Hip Hop music allows the listeners to consume the fantasy of living a more masculine life. These fantasies are created by the participants themselves through the interpretation of music, lyrics, music videos, films and television programs (Belk and Costa 1998). In these fantasies teenage boys can forge strong masculine gender identities, gender identities that they can not possibly assume at school, at work, or at home. These fantasies partly explain why the quasi-ethnographic ghetto raps of NWA and the like have obtained huge white male followings. The fantasies essentially fall into one of two categories (or they can be a combination of both): the pimp fantasy, and the gangster fantasy.

The Pimp Fantasy. Teenage boys sexual desires are often kept in check by teenage girls and their parents rules. Nevertheless, a boy can dream, and the fantasy of being a pimp is common amongst Hip Hop fans. The pimp has become a hero of Hip Hop world, a man with a harem of women, lots of money, and big cars. Many artists boast about their sexual prowess, and promiscuity in their rhymes, and in 2005, 50 Cent released the hit single P.I.M.P., an ode to pimping. The pimp fantasy is appealing to young men as it turns matriarchy on its head. In the pimp fantasy, young men can be the ultimate dominator, they can use force to keep their women in line, they can treat women like dirt and they will keep coming back. Basically, this fantasy is the antithesis of everything that they will ever be able to do, and the only place they can enact it is in their imaginations, while listening to gangster albums, or watching MTV.

The Gangster Fantasy. Many teenagers’ masculine desires can be enacted by violent fantasy. Take for example the Warhammer (a battle oriented re-enactment game) enthusiasts in Park and Deshpande’s (2004) study. These young men were attracted by violent imagery, and in essence were acting out their own masculine fantasies albeit in a very safe manner. Teenage fans of gangster rap are also consuming the fantasy of being in a violent adventure. As gangster rap treats crime as a mode of survival and as a form of rebellion, it idealises violence and criminal activity and hence the villain becomes a very appealing character (Kelley 1996). These characters are so appealing to young men that the record sales of artists immediately after being involved in any real life gangster scenarios are always extraordinarily high (such as the sales of Snoop Dogg’s Doggy Style after he was arrested for murder) as it confirms these artists as ‘real’ gangsters. The most ‘gangster’ of all Hip Hop artists at the present time is 50 Cent: big-framed with oft-showcased biceps, abs, and tattoos as well as his trademark bullet-proof vest, pistol, and iced crucifix. 50 has dealt drugs, conducted crimes, been imprisoned, been stabbed, and
most famously of all, been shot nine times. Of course, such experiences have become 50's standard rhetoric and are the sign posts of consumer fantasy that help a teenager visualise and fantasise scenarios. 50’s most recent release sold over 1 million units in the US in four days (Kitwana 2005), his latest album "The Massacre" was No. 1 in the US for six weeks and at one time he had four current top 10 hits, the first artist to do so since the Beatles. Since then he has since released a feature film “Get Rich or Die Tryin” along with the associated game “50 Cent: Bulletproof” available on PS2, X-Box and PSP. Hence, teenage males who wish to consume the gangster fantasy can now also do it at the cinema or on their PlayStation from the safety of their bedrooms.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that Hip Hop culture is a gender salient male enclave where masculinity is enacted by members. The performance of gender is enacted through the performance of being ‘hard’, the repression of feminine traits, and the crossing over into African American Vernacular English. Such performances limit female Hip Hop membership de facto. Hip Hop members often use sexist, and homophobic taunts, but not as attacks on females or homosexuals, but to feminise the other, and hence masculinise oneself. Finally, it was found that gangster rap is often consumed as a fantasy in which teenage males can forge strong masculine gender identities, gender identities that they can not possibly assume at school, at work, or at home. The fantasies essentially fall into one of two categories: the pimp fantasy, and the gangster fantasy.

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