



# Status Markers in Popular Music Across Six Countries: A Content Analysis of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Genre, and Capital in Music Lyrics

Luca Carbone<sup>1</sup> · Priscila Alvarez-Cueva<sup>2</sup> · Laura Vandenbosch<sup>1</sup>

Accepted: 27 May 2024

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2024

## Abstract

Music artists can be powerful sources of representation about what it means to have a high status. Previous literature has shown that artists display their high status by singing about economic factors, such as driving expensive cars. Yet, we do not know whether artists also showcase a high status in their lyrics by identifying with a particular social group and showing power via sexual objectification and subjectification. Considering the gender and ethnicity of the artists, this study analyzed 4117 popular lyrics on Spotify between 2016 and 2019 in six Western countries (US, UK, Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, Canada). A manual analysis of the lyrics showed that almost half (46%) of the songs depicted status in terms of economic capital (e.g., wearing jewels), 26% through social capital (e.g., knowing famous people), 16% through cultural capital (e.g., drinking champagne), and 6% through sexual objectification and subjectification (e.g., showing naked bodies on expensive cars). Most of these status representations were present in rap lyrics and among Black and Brown male artists. These findings offer new evidence and theoretical insights on the diffusion of neoliberal ideals of materialism, utilitarianism, hegemonic masculinity, and objectification in music lyrics and their potential reinforcement of racial-ethnic and gender hierarchies.

**Keywords** Music lyrics · Content analysis · Sexual objectification · Race · Gender

Music artists are often seen as important sources of reference and comparison to better understand oneself and others, especially concerning what it means to be successful and to have a high status (North & Hargreaves, 1999). In particular, luxurious goods, such as cars and jewels, are common indicators used by artists to signal their status, especially in music videos (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2014). These representations match with contemporary understandings of what is considered socially desirable in defining and evaluating individuals' worth and success, especially in Western countries (Mercado, 2019). Therefore, knowing how music artists portray status is crucial to understand the cultural references readily available to individuals to define their own and others' social positions (Shevy, 2008).

Several gaps exist in the literature on the display of status in music. First, most of the research on status portrayals in music has focused on videos and neglected lyrics. Popular music videos typically contain visible markers of status, such as luxurious objects (e.g., expensive cars or jewels) or sexualized and idealized bodies (e.g., partially naked slim and fit bodies; Alvarez-Cueva & Guerra, 2021; Hunter, 2011). Yet, these images do not appear in isolation but rather in conjunction with lyrics, which have a central role in the construction of the overall music narratives, including those about status (Neguț & Sârbescu, 2014). Second, the exclusive focus on luxurious products as markers of status in music literature ignores other factors that are crucial in everyday definitions of status, including more invisible social forms of capital (e.g., knowing influential people; Dijkstra et al., 2010) and power dynamics (e.g., sexual objectification; Aubrey & Frisby, 2011). Finally, previous quantitative studies on status representations have largely ignored how such representations depend on the artists performing them. Some research has documented the increasing pressures exerted on mainstream artists, especially by major labels (Arditi, 2019), in formulating gender and ethnoracial

✉ Luca Carbone  
luca.carbone@kuleuven.be

<sup>1</sup> School for Mass Communication Research, Faculty of Social Sciences, KU Leuven, Parkstraat 45, 3000, Leuven, Belgium

<sup>2</sup> Facultat d'Informació i Mitjans Audiovisuals, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

stereotypes to maximize industry revenues (Jenkins, 2011). This research suggests that ethnoracial and gender stereotypes are key factors in determining status markers for artists (Oware, 2016). This observation especially applies to artists working in the mainstream industry, as they are not expected to represent their authentic self as compared to underground artists (Belle, 2014).

For these reasons, status representations present in mainstream music lyrics may be likely to mobilize ethnoracial and gender stereotypes to associate certain artists with specific status markers (e.g., Black men as hypersexual; Herd, 2015). A systematic analysis of how mainstream artists with different ethnoracial and gender characteristics mobilize status representations is still lacking. Drawing from a Bourdieusian (i.e., status as the holding of different forms of capital) and intersectional framework, the current study examines the presence and prevalence of different categories of status across genres, and assess which status categories are represented by artists at different intersections of gender and ethnoracial positionalities. Such an analysis would advance insights on comparisons between status representations and the associated positionality of artists across genres and industries (e.g., mainstream vs. underground).

## Conceptualizing Status

Status is a key dimension guiding many social relationships (Ridgeway, 2014). In this article, we adopt a Bourdieusian framework by considering status as determined by the forms of capital that are available to individuals to define their standing in relation to others (Bourdieu, 1986). In its original formulation, status was conceived in terms of *Stände* (Weber, 2010), a word that ties affective (in its meaning of *social honors*, such as winning sport competitions) and economic (in its meaning of *estates*, such as owning large amount of wealth) resources to define one's social standing (Gane, 2005). From this perspective, status groups are defined as "marked out by different practices and modes of consumption" (Gane, 2005, p. 219). Focusing on this notion of *modes of consumption*, Bourdieu (1986) considered not only economic assets (i.e., economic capital, defined by the amount and prestige of material resources), but also lifestyles (i.e., cultural capital, defined by the amount and prestige of consumed goods), and social connections (i.e., social capital, defined by the amount and prestige of actual and potential acquaintances) as defining markers of status (Brubaker, 1985). In Bourdieu's reading, honor is not uniquely determined by economic resources, but also by the adherence to lifestyles that are considered prestigious and worthy of esteem and by the capacity to build durable and influential social networks (Flemmen et al., 2019; Trigg, 2001). Western societies are

characterized by materialistic values, assigning prestige to objects and activities that are considered luxurious and sophisticated (e.g., cars and jewels; Kasser, 2016). Having expensive hobbies (e.g., playing golf), buying luxurious clothes, or knowing influential people are often seen as markers of high status (Friedman & Reeves, 2020). In other words, Western societies are infused with beliefs that a high status depends upon the socio-cultural and economic resources available to acquire prestigious objects and a luxurious lifestyle.

Intersectional, feminist, and critical race perspectives further recognize that power structures are key in defining who has access to resources in the first place, and who and what is considered worthy of prestige and esteem (Ridgeway & Kricheli-Katz, 2013). More precisely, the multifaceted nature of status relies on the fact that its core aspects (i.e., honor, prestige, esteem) depend on intersecting axes of power, including one's economic, social, and cultural capital, but also depend upon one's social positionality, for example, along ethnoracial and gender axes (Ridgeway, 2014). In this perspective, status differentials are not only defined by material but also by symbolic resources, such as the perceived and enacted boundaries between different social groups and the different power allocated to them (Collins, 2000). For example, research at the intersection of gender and race in the U.S. has shown how income and health inequalities are tied to ethnoracial characteristics, such that Black and Brown people do not reap the same advantages as their White counterparts in terms of intergenerational mobility or health access (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008). Such ethnoracial inequalities are further entrenched by gender inequalities, which are generative of a double-gap for Black women who earn lower incomes and have increased chances of poverty compared to Black men and White women (Greenman & Xie, 2008). Similar patterns between socio-historically privileged and marginalized groups have been found at the intersection of class and gender (Thomas & Moye, 2015) as well as race and class (Williams et al., 2016).

In other words, an intersectional perspective considers status as the unequal distribution of social and material resources, as in a Bourdieusian framework, that depends upon socially constructed and intersecting axes of power relationships (Collins, 2000). In the study of status, intersectionality further advances a Bourdieusian framework by describing and explaining how intersecting axes of power "binds and sometimes freedoms" (Ridgeway & Kricheli-Katz, 2013, p. 295) the acquisition and uses of economic, cultural, and social resources. From this perspective, status can therefore be defined as a set of social expectations about one's and others' positions in society that are based on cultural beliefs about who and what is worthy of prestige and esteem (Ridgeway, 2014).

## Representation of Status in Music

### Forms of Capital

Recognizing the cultural nature and construction of status means focusing on the representations of status that are available to individuals in their socio-cultural context. In this regard, media are focal actors in the production of cultural narratives about status (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). Music, in particular, is a central source in the everyday lives of many people (North & Hargreaves, 1999). Music is further understood to portray representations about status (Eze, 2020), and often used as a source of status demarcation (Roy & Dowd, 2010). Most research on popular music content has focused on the materialistic presentation of status in terms of prestigious goods. For example, Primack and colleagues (2011) studied the placement of alcohol brands in U.S. popular lyrics. Alcohol brands were often represented in connection to luxury and wealth, as an attribution of prestige to those possessing them. The consumption of prestigious alcohol brands was further connected to positive rather than negative consequences (e.g., sex, happiness, see also Baksh-Mohammed & Callison, 2014). In these songs, having a high status means wearing (fashioned clothes), driving (fast vehicles), and consuming (liquors and other drugs) expensive products.

A materialistic focus has thus been examined in the music literature, both in lyrics and in videos. Such a focus is nevertheless limited in grasping the complexity of how status is achieved in everyday life. As defined within a Bourdieusian framework (Bourdieu, 1986), status is not only characterized by economic and cultural forms of capital, expressed through materialism and conspicuous consumption, but it is also characterized by social connections (e.g., mentioning influential people as friends and examples or notoriously negative people as enemies). The lack of empirical studies scrutinizing all the facets of status means that we do not know much about how status is depicted in popular music beyond typical representations of “bling bling” (Chari, 2016) and conspicuous consumption.

### Sexual Objectification and Subjectification

Beyond typical representations of status markers, content analytic studies of music (especially videos) have hinted at one specific expression of power dynamics, namely the sexual objectification of women (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Herd, 2015). Such sexual objectification needs to be defined in relation to subjectification.

**Sexual Objectification** Research has documented the ubiquity of music representations that sexually objectify women.

In particular, objectification has been defined as “degrading a human to the status of a physical thing” (Choi & DeLong, 2019, p. 1358; Nussbaum, 1995). Bartky (1990) further defined *sexual objectification* as occurring “when a woman’s sexual parts or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her” (p. 35; see also Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The concept of sexual objectification has been subsequently examined through a multitude of definitions and concepts (Choi & DeLong, 2019). Despite differences within each formulation, these perspectives align in seeing sexual objectification as a form of sexism (Ward, 2016) deriving from a patriarchal view of gender relationships that narrows women’s worth and value in order to maintain the gender hierarchy (Grower & Ward, 2021). As an expression of unequal power dynamics that are present in society at large, sexual objectification is a manifestation of status differentials that see men as inherently having a higher status because of their capacity to possess and dominate women.

**Sexual Subjectification** Media scholars have shown that female artists tend to present themselves as sexual objects, especially in their music videos (Karsay & Matthes, 2020). Postfeminist sensibilities have pointed at a potential need of re-articulation of such sexually objectifying representations in contemporary media productions in terms of *subjectification* (Gill, 2007). Accordingly, some (female) media producers are believed to depict sexual objectification not (only) as a result of an oppressive patriarchal ideology, but as a liberated counter-narrative (Choi & DeLong, 2019). Subjectification refers to those representations in which “women are not straightforwardly objectified but are portrayed as active, desiring sexual subjects who choose to present themselves in a seemingly objectified manner because it suits their liberated interests to do so” (Gill, 2007, p. 151). These representations may subvert power dynamics by recognizing self-determination and sexual agency to women’s representations of themselves, redefining the social distribution of power. In this article, we adopted the definition of Bartky (1990) for sexual objectification and of Gill (2007) for subjectification.

**Sexual Objectification and Subjectification as Potential Status Marker in Music** In relation to music, sexual objectification may be viewed as a manifestation of status differentials that builds on the unequal distribution of the representational power to depict or be depicted as sexual objects (Alvarez-Cueva & Guerra, 2021). Because of its persistence and pervasiveness, sexually objectifying representations of women have been documented in music videos especially among male (Karsay et al., 2018a), but also among female artists

(Aubrey & Frisby, 2011). Some scholars have also highlighted the subjectifying representations that some female artists are using in their music videos. For example, Alvarez-Cueva and Guerra (2021) showed how the Spanish singer Rosalia subverted previous representations of working-class women by combining images of “strength and ferocity [with] beauty, sensuality and femininity” (p. 15). In this way, the authors read Rosalia’s videos as subverting typical depictions of gender and class, because they “[reinforce] emotions and pride while maintaining their own ‘features’ that are now desirable” (p. 15).

Whether sexual representations are subjectifying or objectifying has been a contentious issue (Gill, 2017). Critics of postfeminist sensibilities have remarked that this content still relies on the broader patriarchal premise that women’s worth depends on their physical and sexual appearance (Whelehan, 2010). In this paper, we do not partake in this discussion but instead recognize that previous literature has mostly focused on measuring the diffusion and effects of sexually objectifying and subjectifying representations in music (e.g., Aubrey et al., 2017).

Yet, this literature has not distinguished between the use of sexually objectifying and subjectifying representations as mirrors of existing conditions or as status markers. That is, while all sexually objectifying representations mirror power relationships, not all these representations are necessarily framed in terms of resources to reinforce or diminish someone’s status. Artists might use sexually objectifying representations to mirror gender relations that are present in their environment but without the explicit intent of using gender to establish status hierarchies (Binder, 1993). Typical instances of such representations are, for example, the mentioning of transparent or unbuttoned clothes or a focus on sexual body parts, such as legs or breasts (Karsay et al., 2018a, b). In this case, sexually objectifying representations that only mirror existing gender relationships do not actively construct differences in status between men and women, so that being a man normatively implies having more power and status than being a woman. Clearly, these representations still define power relationships but through the reproduction of existing narratives rather than through their active and explicit use to showcase one’s high or low status.

Yet, other artists might use the same narrative to explicitly state their power position and serve as a performance of their status. Potential instances of such representations are, for example, the mentioning of sexual body parts (e.g., buttocks or breasts) or activities (e.g., sexual intercourse) associated with luxurious vehicles or expensive jewels. This difference emerges when considering sexual objectification in relation to what is generally used to grant status, namely material resources and conspicuous consumption. As argued by Wang and Krumhuber (2017), representations

of conspicuous consumption and sexual objectification are related by their common reliance on objectification. Objectified humans and human relationships are defined in transactional, de-personified, and instrumental terms in the same way in which money is used to exchange goods (Nussbaum, 1995). This connection is not only important to recognize the materialistic basis of sexual objectification, but also to insert sexual representations in a framework that is generally used to define status. Songs that sexually objectify women while representing materialistic images of wealth contextualize these sexual images into an imaginary of conspicuous consumption, primarily aimed to define status hierarchies through gender (Fasoli et al., 2018). Considering sexual objectification as a status marker, rather than solely as a mirror of existing misogynistic representations, helps clarify how music actively contributes to the definition of status hierarchies through the sexual objectification of women. It defines such status hierarchies as the product of objectification processes that connect sexual objectification and subjectification with status markers.

## Genre Differences

Previous research further showed variations in how status is differently represented in music genres, both visually and lyrically (Podoshen et al., 2014). Genres can be defined as (rather) stable sets of representations, techniques, and themes that aggregate artists and audiences together (Lena & Peterson, 2008). Different genres emphasize different markers of status, both in their videos and lyrics. Baksh-Mohammed and Callison (2014) showed that rap songs were significantly more likely to mention products (in general) and luxurious goods (in particular) compared to other popular genres, such as pop and rock. The prevalence of materialistic representations in rap music has been argued to rely on the newfound liberty that African Americans experienced in the post-slavery era. This period was characterized by consumerism and materialism as positive values representing status and success, an exclusive realm of the White majority until then (Davis, 1998). Being able to consume was therefore a new liberty that allowed previously stigmatized and enslaved communities to participate in socially widespread performances of status (Podoshen et al., 2014).

The academic literature on status representations in rap music has further focused on their antisocial messages. In particular, this genre is known for the prevalence of sexually objectifying representations in its lyrics and videos (Binder, 1993; Karsay et al., 2018a). While Frisby and Aubrey (2012) presented some variation across music genres, rap music has been consistently found as the music genre with the highest visual and lyrical prevalence of such representations (Flynn et al., 2016). As with materialism, past studies have linked

the origins of rap misogyny to typical features of the African oral tradition, characterized by “signifying” (i.e., exaggerated wordplay; Quinn, 2000) and “playing the dozens” (i.e., verbal dueling; Dixon & Linz, 1997). While most of the literature on rap has focused on the sexual objectification of women by male artists (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009), Chepp (2015) adopted a Black feminist perspective to trace the development of narratives about the sexualization of Black women rappers. Starting from its blues origins in the 1920s until the third-wave Black feminism in the 1990s, she noted how Black women rappers introduced a shift in rap representations of Black women’s sex and sexuality. Widely represented as “deviant and problematic ideologies of fear, shame, and restraint”, sexual objectification has been rearticulated by these artists as a “source of enjoyment, pleasure, pride, and liberation” (pp. 559–560). These representations are readily available in a culture that oversexualizes Black bodies and that has made available a large pool of stereotypical sexual scripts for Black or Latina women (e.g., gold diggers, divas, matriarch; Ross & Coleman, 2011) that are not equally present for White women (Arrizón, 2008).

Sexually objectifying and subjectifying narratives can also be suggested to occur in other genres, especially pop (Frisby & Aubrey, 2012; Karsay & Matthes, 2016), but also country music (Rasmussen & Densley, 2017), given their gendered messages. For example, the work of Lindsay and Lyons (2018) showed how representations of alcohol consumption, hegemonic masculinity, and consumerism are often connected in pop music videos as a way to maintain “imbalances in hegemonic gendered power relations” (p. 638). Similarly, as for rap music, misogyny and hegemonic masculinity are used as a way to assert status through representations of power differentials between men and women. Differently than rap, pop music is less bounded to a specific historical background that contextualizes the use of these narratives within race-specific systems of subjugation and emancipation. This does not mean that pop music, like any music genre, does not have any (many) racial histories (Schaap & Berkers, 2014). Pop music is characterized by boundary vagueness, mostly in terms of audience size (as measured, for example, by numbers of streaming or selling) and conventional fluidity (i.e., the constant change of coordinates about what is pop music, following popular tastes rather than genre-specific conventions; McKee, 2022). This means that, compared to rap or any other music genre, pop music is less bounded to genre-specific histories, including racial ones, and more strictly defined by audiences and artists’ characteristics and histories (McKee, 2022).

### The Social Positionality of Artists

Few studies have sought to understand the role of artists in the definition of what and who is honorable and worthy

of status. The concept of social positionality refers to the unique combination of artists’ characteristics (e.g., class, gender, race) and their intersections that distinguish each artist’s identity and history (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). Social positionality helps to understand the meanings and origins of the narratives presented in artists’ lyrics and videos (Lena, 2006) and the institutional context (e.g., labels) in which their music is produced (Roy, 2004). At the same time, it also helps to clarify the possible interpretations and meanings of their music from the side of audiences. For example, a similarity of characteristics between artists and audiences might signify a similarity of experiences and, consequently, a unique position to understand and decode the meanings of these artists’ narratives (Cohen et al., 2018).

This article contextualizes the performance of status narratives by looking at the social positionality of artists because the same narrative can assume a different meaning if performed by a male or female artist or by a White or Black artist. For example, the same sexually objectifying narrative can be seen as objectification when enacted by a man and as subjectification when enacted by a woman (such distinction is nevertheless problematic when considering the potentially contentious claim that subjectification is objectification in disguise; Aubrey & Frisby, 2011). An intersectional perspective is crucial in this literature as various music representations have been shown to depend upon artists’ social positionality, especially along race and gender lines (Karsay et al., 2018a). For example, Herd (2015) identified several narratives that typically differentiate sexually objectifying representations between male and female artists. While female rappers use sexual objectification to also promote “women’s rights to assert their own desires [and their] independence and economic prowess” (p. 579), male rappers tend to perform stereotypes “of the ‘Black buck’ that embody images of Black men as ‘tamed beasts’—wild, violent, unintelligent and hypersexual beings” (p. 581). Bound to industry decisions, mainstream music artists often perform representations that are frequently written for them by others, potentially reproducing stereotypical images tied to their gendered and racialized bodies for industry-related—rather than artistic—interests (Lena, 2006).

The literature on status representations in music has rarely looked at artists’ intersectional positionalities, leaving open the question of how artists with different social positionalities perform narratives about status. Answering this question helps addressing pressing societal issues of representation in the mainstream music industry. Recently, social movements such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter have exposed the systemic construction of gender and ethnoracial differences by remarking the unequal distribution of key resources, such as salary and job opportunities, and power structures, such as those enabling rape cultures and racial profiling (Gómez & Gobin, 2020). Mainstream media,

such as music, movies, and television, have been shown to further contribute to the formation of such differences, by their presentation of gender and ethnoracial stereotypes, and the subsequent internalization of these stereotypes among audiences (Jean et al., 2022). The current study further adds to this literature by investigating how popular music products tie status representations, defining who and what is worthy of prestige and esteem (Ridgeway, 2014), to the gender and ethnoracial characteristics of the artists performing them. Such a perspective enables further investigations into the individual (e.g., artists' beliefs) and institutional (e.g., industry pressures) dimensions of gender and ethnoracial stereotypes in mainstream products and their audiences.

## Current Study

To better understand how status is depicted in mainstream music lyrics, the current study consists of a content analysis of the 200 most streamed songs on Spotify between 2016 and 2019 in six Western countries (US, UK, Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada). We first inductively explored what categories are used in popular lyrics to define status in a sub-sample of songs and then deductively analyzed the sample of songs to better understand the presence and prevalence of different status categories across genres. Next, we descriptively assessed which status categories were represented by artists with different intersections of gender and ethnoracial positionalities to understand differences in the display of status narratives. By focusing on the representational power to sexually objectify and subjectify bodies as status marker, this study moves forward our understanding of how popular music establishes status differentials, defining who and what is worthy of prestige and esteem. Moreover, by providing a combined reading of status markers and the demographic characteristics of artists, this study advances our understanding of how popular narratives of success are embedded in ethno-racial and gender differences among their producers. This study will address the following research questions:

**Research Question 1a (RQ1a):** How are economic, cultural, and social forms of capital, and sexually objectifying and subjectifying narratives used in music lyrics as markers of status?

**Research Question 1b (RQ1b):** How frequently are each of these status categories used in the sample of music lyrics?

In addition, despite being composed by similar scripts and narratives, representations about status in terms of resources and sexual objectification and subjectification could vary between different genres because of the different histories that characterize them. To further investigate whether status representations are differently portrayed

across various music genres, we also addressed the following questions:

**Research Question 2 (RQ2):** Do status categories vary across music genres in the sample of lyrics and if so, how does the prevalence in status categories vary?

**Research Question 3 (RQ3):** Do representations of status vary across the intersectional axes of artists' gender and race in the sample of lyrics?

## Method

### Data Sources

This study employed three sources of data (data and syntax can be found on OSF at the following link: [https://osf.io/3bu5t/?view\\_only=0f78cd5af47c4ac0ad6b5c6b1b35a176](https://osf.io/3bu5t/?view_only=0f78cd5af47c4ac0ad6b5c6b1b35a176)). First, we used Spotify to extract song titles, artists, and music genres. Through the openly available website Spotify Charts, we considered the 200 most streamed songs every week between December 23rd, 2016 and December 27th, 2019 (for a total of 52 weeks \* 3 years = 156 weeks) in six Western countries (i.e., US, UK, Netherlands, Australia, Canada, New Zealand). These countries were selected because of their focus on individualism and materialism and wide support for neoliberal values around success (Gorodnichenko & Roland, 2011). Importantly, these countries are also where major music labels are located, defining a geographical context of music mainstream (Achterberg et al., 2011). Afterwards, Genius was used to extract the lyrics of each song. Finally, we used Wikipedia to extract information related to each artist. This study received ethical approval from the review board of the host university.

In total, we retrieved 187,200 songs that were the most streamed on Spotify in the countries and years under examination (200 songs for each country, in 52 weeks, in three years), 6701 of which were unique songs (i.e., not duplicated), and 5861 (87.46%) had lyrics present on Genius. This sample contained 4262 lyrics in English, 1371 in Dutch, 60 in Spanish, 16 in French, three in Maori, two in German and Turkish, and one in Italian and Swahili (see Table 3 for distribution of artists' country of origin). We uniquely considered the 4262 songs in English. After removing songs with the same Spotify ID, the final pool of songs consisted of  $n = 4117$  unique English songs. Music genres were extracted from Spotify, which provided a list of artist-specific music genres. To define the music genre of each song, the first author selected the most frequently cited music genres for that artist (i.e., if an artist has "rap", "rap pop", and "rock" listed, it would be assigned rap). When the genre was ambiguous (e.g., equal presence of multiple genres or with ambiguous labels, such as "Eurovision"), the genre definition was triangulated by the first author

through a web search (e.g., using music websites or Wikipedia). Among the 4117 songs, the distribution of music genres was as follows: rap (1861), pop (1545), rock (348), EDM (e.g., techno, dance; 196), country (92), R&B (36), highbrow (e.g., jazz, classical; 32), and latin (e.g., reggaeton, dancehall; 7).

Finally, we used Wikipedia to study the social positionality of the artist. Each human coder categorized the artists' ethno-racial characteristics by searching on Wikipedia for the name of the artist, and by looking at their complexion and self-assigned racial-ethnic affiliations (when present). Through this process, we retrieved information on the gender and race/ethnicity of the artists. Most artists were men (83.5%,  $n=3438$ ), some were women (16.2%,  $n=667$ ), and a few were gender non-conforming (e.g., intersex, non-binary; .7%,  $n=29$ ). We relied on previous research (Karsay et al., 2018a) to differentiate race into five categories: White (52.1%,  $n=2143$ ), Black/Brown (46.2%,  $n=1901$ ), Asian (1.7%,  $n=69$ ), Native/Indigenous (.1%,  $n=6$ ), and a category Unknown/Mixed for unidentifiable or mixed racial-ethnic categories (.09%,  $n=4$ ). We used the label Black/Brown to be inclusive of people with a darker complexion (i.e., Black skin) and of those with a lighter complexion (i.e., Brown skin). This label was not only characterized by skin color, but also by artists' self-assigned racial-ethnic identification and reflects the literature on race and ethnicity that warns against the use of terms like "people of color" for its "misleading universalism and racial divisiveness" (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2020, p. 115). Moreover, we did not use other commonly used terms in the related literature, such as "African American" for Black people, as not all the Black and Brown artists were African American, or "Caucasian" for White people, as not all White artists were from the geographical region of Caucasus. Such a categorization is further inclusive as the same artist could belong to multiple categories, such as being Black and Asian or White and Native/Indigenous. Finally, since the artists could potentially originate from any part of the world, geographically defined terms like "African American" or "Native Americans" would not have been accurate in capturing the ethno-racial affiliation of the artists. For these reasons, we opted for a categorization that builds from existing categorization of racial-ethnic identities, that is inclusive of Black and Brown people, and that is not geographically bounded.

### Codebook and Analytic Strategy

To answer the RQs, a codebook was first built by manually coding the sub-sample of lyrics informed by previous conceptualizations of status. This step was used to answer RQ1a. The coding procedure started with the first and second authors independently coding 20 songs, sharing results and possible contrasting opinions during the process to solve

potential terminological (e.g., about contextual meanings) and conceptual (e.g., metaphors) disagreements. Subsequently, the first author coded the remaining songs. The sub-sample consisted of 5% of songs for each music genre ( $n=213$  songs) and songs were meant to be added once the saturation point was reached, that is when no new categories could be detected from the coding of additional lyrics (Saunders et al., 2018). Saturation was reached before ending the codebook, so no new song was added and the final sub-sample for step 1 consisted of 213 songs. We followed a mixed deductive and inductive approach to construct the codebook (Baksh-Mohammed & Callison, 2014; Matthes & Kohring, 2008). Deductively, we relied on definitions of status used in past content analyses of music lyrics to identify forms of economic capital and cultural capital in the songs. Inductively, we detected previously unexplored subtypes of status categories in the sub-sample of popular songs ( $n=213$ ) to identify whether new categories for status were present. Subsequently, we manually coded the sample of lyrics ( $n=4117$ ), based on the categories identified in the previous step.

## Coding Categories

### Economic Capital

Economic status was deductively coded in terms of five categories of economic capital symbolized by luxurious goods portrayed in the songs (Baksh-Mohammed & Callison, 2014). These categories include: money/gemstones (e.g., diamonds, gold), vehicles (e.g., Ferrari, private jet), substances (e.g., alcohol, drugs), accessories (e.g., watch, telephone), and brands (e.g., Chanel, Adidas). For each category, no occurrence of the cue was coded as 0 and at least one occurrence of the cue was coded as 1. Each category was subsequently coded by distinguishing luxurious and non-luxurious cues. This was done based on the adjective with which the item was described in the song (e.g., lush and sumptuous for luxurious, ugly and fake for non-luxurious) or by the cost that was associated with the goods as determined by an Internet search (0 = *not luxurious*, 1 = *luxurious*; Primack et al., 2011).

### Cultural Capital

Cultural status was deductively coded in terms of four categories of cultural capital symbolized by luxurious activities portrayed in the songs (Baksh-Mohammed & Callison, 2014). These categories include: clothes (e.g., dress, Jordan shoes), travel (e.g., Maldives, Paris), food (e.g., caviar, cheeseburger), and activities (e.g., golf, shopping). For each category, no occurrence of the cue was coded as

0 and at least one occurrence of the cue was coded as 1. Each category was subsequently coded by distinguishing luxurious and non-luxurious cues. This was done based on the adjective with which the item and activity were described in the song (e.g., extraordinary and first-class as example adjectives that led to coding the item or activity as luxurious, boring and dull as example adjectives for coding it as non-luxurious) or by the cost that was associated with the goods and activities as determined by an Internet search (0 = *not luxurious*, 1 = *luxurious*).

### Social Capital

Social status was inductively coded in terms of two categories of social capital symbolized by comparison and knowledge between people. These categories included the elevation and upgrading of someone's status based on virtuous and positive comparisons or associations (e.g., with a notorious and talented celebrity) or on shameful and downgrading comparisons or associations (e.g., with a a disreputable and untalented public figure). For each category, no occurrence of the marker was coded as 0 and at least one occurrence of the marker was coded as 1.

### Sexual Objectification and Subjectification

Sexual objectification and subjectification status was inductively coded in terms of two categories of sexual objectification and subjectification symbolized by the use of sexually objectifying narratives in relation to status markers. These categories included the elevation and upgrading of someone's status based on the connection of sexually objectifying narratives with luxurious status markers (e.g., sexualization of someones' body parts in relation to money) or the downgrading of someone's status based on the connection of sexually objectifying narratives with non-luxurious status markers (e.g., sexualization of someones' body parts in relation to cheap jewels). For each category, no occurrence of the marker was coded as 0 and at least one occurrence of the marker was coded as 1.

### Interrater Reliability

Using the developed codebook, the first author and two human coders analyzed the sample of lyrics. Each coder was assigned, respectively 2108 (first author), 1474 (first coder), 735 (second coder) songs, including 100 randomly-selected common songs among coders used to establish inter-coder reliability. Coders were extensively trained by the first author before the coding tasks to discuss the codebook and the coding procedure, and to solve eventual inconsistencies in the coding process. Interrater reliability was established among three coders (see Table 1 for reliability values for

**Table 1** Reliability Measures of Status Categories

Status Category	GWET Coefficient (SE)	Krippendorff's Alpha
Money (L)	.81 (.05)	.79
Money (NL)	.95 (.02)	0
Vehicles (L)	.94 (.02)	.90
Vehicles (NL)	.86 (.03)	.37
Clothes (L)	.95 (.02)	.79
Clothes (NL)	.81 (.04)	.48
Substances (L)	.93 (.02)	.54
Substances (NL)	.76 (.05)	.73
Accessories (L)	.86 (.04)	.58
Accessories (NL)	.75 (.05)	.64
Travel (L)	.92 (.02)	.73
Travel (NL)	.85 (.04)	.20
Food (L)	.98 (.01)	.49
Food (NL)	.78 (.05)	.60
Activities (L)	.86 (.03)	.08
Activities (NL)	.75 (.05)	.59
Brands (L)	.79 (.05)	.71
Brands (NL)	.82 (.04)	.45
Ob(sub)jectification (upgrade)	.82 (.04)	.46
Ob(sub)jectification (downgrade)	.97 (.01)	0
Social capital (upgrade)	.75 (.05)	.64
Social capital (downgrade)	.95 (.02)	.52

each category). Once the inter-coder reliability reached an acceptable level (i.e., Gwet's AC1  $\geq$  .8; for a discussion about the improved performance of Gwet's AC1 over traditional measures of inter-coder reliability, see Wongpakaran et al., 2013), the coders started coding the main dataset.

Finally, we compared the distribution of these narratives across the gender and race-ethnicity of the artists. This step was used to answer RQ3. Two human coders (different from the ones in the previous step) were trained to extract the needed information from Wikipedia. Once the inter-coder reliability reached an acceptable level for all categories (i.e., Gwet's AC1  $\geq$  .8, see Table 2 for reliability values for each category), the coders started coding the remainder of the artists. To answer our RQ3, we conducted descriptive analyses to understand the gender and racial-ethnic distribution of artists performing different status narratives.

## Results

### Content Analysis of Subsample of Songs

RQ1a sought to identify which categories were used to define status in popular music lyrics by evaluating a subset



**Table 2** Reliability Measures Artists Categories

Status-Related Demographic Category	GWET Coefficient (SE)	Krippendorff's Alpha
Male	.99 (.01)	.96
Female	.99 (.01)	.96
Gender Non-Conforming	1.00 (.00)	1
White	.94 (.03)	.94
Black and Brown	.96 (.04)	.96
Asian	1.00 (.00)	1
Native/Indigenous	.98 (.01)	0
Unknown/Mixed	1.00 (.00)	1
Country of Origin	.91 (.03)	.85
Birth Year	.91 (.03)	.91

of the full sample of songs ( $n=213$ ). Together with the categories used in past studies related to economic (e.g., cars, jewels, and brands) and cultural (refined food, playing golf) forms of capital (Baksh-Mohammed & Callison, 2014; Primack et al., 2011), we identified two new categories, namely social forms of capital and sexual objectification and subjectification. Following the grounded theory principle of axial coding (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019), this step consisted of iteratively and recursively defining key markers of these potentially new categories, comparing the characteristics of these songs, gathering common elements among them, and defining a label for the new categories based on these commonalities. In particular, new categories for social capital were extracted when songs depicted the connection with famous or infamous people concerning the artist or someone the artist is referring to (Herman, 2006). Similarly, songs were considered as representing sexual objectification to define status when they sexually objectified or subjectified women's bodies (e.g., mentioning of sexualized body parts or sexual activities) in relation to wealth and luxury (e.g., expensive cars and jewels) (De Wilde et al., 2021).

The category related to social capital is symbolized by associations with or knowledge of famous people or fictitious characters to elevate (positive) or degrade (negative) one's own status or the status of others. Positive social capital was portrayed through the social network of the artist, as a representation of their social capital and milieu, or as a connection to figures with positive and desirable traits. Negative social capital was portrayed through remarks about other people's lack of connections, the low-status of their acquaintances, or as a connection to figures with negative and undesirable traits. For example, in the song "Ice Tray", the rap artist Quality Control sings "higher than Kurt Cobain" to create a positive association between his own drug use and high status (i.e., being high) and that of the famous frontman of the Seattle band Nirvana. Instead, in

**Table 3** Country of Origin for Artists, Full List

Country	Number of Artists
US	2207
England	829
Canada	300
Australia	210
Netherlands	91
New Zealand	58
Sweden	58
Germany	45
Scotland	35
Norway	29
Ireland	26
France	23
Cuba	18
Trinidad and Tobago	15
Jamaica	13
Korea	13
South Korea	13
Wales	12
Zealand	12
Morocco	9
Japan	8
Russia	6
Tanzania	6
Barbados	5
Denmark	5
Singapore	5
South Africa	5
Indonesia	4
Spain	4
Guernsey	3
Israel	3
Libya	3
Nigeria	3
Palestine	3
Belgium	2
Colombia	2
Finland	2
Iran	2
Italy	2
Kosovo	2
Samoa	2
Albania	1
Argentina	1
Austria	1
Brazil	1
Czech Republic	1
Czechoslovakia	1
Georgia	1

**Table 3** (continued)

Country	Number of Artists
Guatemala	1
Hong Kong	1
Iceland	1
India	1
Iraq	1
Iraq-Canada	1
London	1
Moldova	1
Poland	1
Portugal	1
Puerto Rico	1
Romania	1
Thailand	1
Turkey	1
Uk	1
Yemen	1

the song “Not Alike”, rap artist Eminem sings “Y’all music sound like Dr. Seuss inspired it”, indicating the incapacity of his rivals (“Y’all”) to rap (Dr. Seuss was an American author of children’s books who composed rhymes using basic rhyming schemes). In this way, the artist downgrades the status of his rivals by associating their rapping abilities to those of someone who is publicly known to write simple and child-like tales.

The status category on the sexual objectification and subjectification of women’s bodies occurred when women’s bodies (and its attributes) were shown in sexually objectified ways to elevate (upgrade) or degrade (downgrade) one’s own status or the status of others (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). Women’s bodies were presented together with representations of conspicuous consumption (e.g., jewels, cars) and treated as objects with different degrees of luxuriousness. In this way, the physical desirability of women’s body parts was defined by the connection with luxury and used to display one’s power and prestige (upgrade) or to mock someone else (downgrade). For example, in the song “New Patek”, rapper Lil Uzi Vert sings “Fuck that b\*\*\*\*\* in my new whip (skrrt)/Her ass so fat, can’t fit/Her ass so fat, it’s amazing (amazing)/Her ass so fat, it’s a miracle (miracle)”. In these verses, the artist connects images of wealth (i.e., “in my new whip”, meaning “in my new [luxurious] car”), with images of sexual violence and dominance (i.e., a whip being also an instrument of subjugation), and sexual objectification (i.e., “Her ass so fat”). Such sexual objectification represents a power dynamic (through terms indicating power like expensive cars, a whip, the representational power to objectify bodies) that is used to upgrade the artist’s status (positively connoted by the use of words such as “amazing” and “miracle”).

Sexually objectifying and subjectifying representations are not unanimously presenting women as passive objects, but are also used to empower and represent women’s agency over their own bodies. For example, in the song “WAP”, rap artist Cardi B sings “Make it cream, make me scream / Out in public, make a scene / I don’t cook, I don’t clean / But let me tell you how I got this ring [...] Never lost a fight, but I’m looking for a beating”. By displaying explicit scenes of sexual domination (e.g., looking for a beating, screaming), the artist alludes to the sexualized male gaze through which women are frequently portrayed in music. She also presents a position of power, in which she sings about her sexual desires and her ability to achieve a high status (i.e., never losing a fight, an expensive ring) without complying with traditional gender roles (i.e., cooking, cleaning). Such an explicit position of power and agency promotes a reading of the verses related to sexual scenes in terms of sexual agency and the reclaiming of a position that is typically appropriated by men rappers.

### Content Analysis of Full Sample of Songs

To answer RQ1b, we used the complete codebook to identify the status-related categories portrayed in the songs ( $n = 4117$ ). We also evaluated the distribution of these categories across music genres to address RQ2. All percentages below refer to the proportion of categories present out of the total sample of songs ( $n = 4117$ ). Moreover, each percentage represents the proportion of songs containing the specific category, summing up to 100% when considered together with songs that do not contain that category. For example, 46.4% of the songs included a marker of economic capital, which means that 53.6% did not include such markers.

#### Status Through Economic Capital

A total of 46.4% ( $n = 1910$ ) of the songs included a marker of economic capital. Specifically, we found portrayals of luxurious products in terms of money (37.6%,  $n = 1547$ ), luxurious brands (27.4%,  $n = 1130$ ), and luxurious vehicles (24.1%,  $n = 993$ ). Further, 62% ( $n = 2569$ ) of the songs referenced non-luxurious substances and accessories to transmit a sense of power and “socially unacceptable routes to success” (Dixon & Linz, 1997, p. 219) as a critique of societal rules. In these songs, status was defined by heavy consumption of non-luxurious substances (cheap alcohol and drugs, 36.7%,  $n = 1512$ ) or by non-luxurious accessories representing power (mainly guns, 25.7%,  $n = 1057$ ). Even though these last two categories were not luxurious, they were used to display power through ideals of hegemonic masculinity, such as aggressive competition, domination, and violence (Harrington, 2021). For example, the song “RERUN” by Quavo displayed the use of alcohol

in strict connection with hegemonic masculinity ideals of competition and domination, as represented by the capacity to drink large quantities of alcohol (“Bring your drink up, we can do some business [...] We can drink; we can drink up”). As such, artists not only represented a high status by luxury and wealth but also by the use of objects that were not necessarily displayed because of their price tags but defined a position of power and control through a hegemonic masculinity perspective.

### Status Through Cultural Capital

In total, 15.9% ( $n = 656$ ) of the songs had at least one representation of status in terms of luxurious cultural capital in relation to travels (11%,  $n = 453$ ), activities (6.95%,  $n = 286$ ), and food (2.24%,  $n = 92$ ).

### Status Through Social Capital

A total of 27.1% ( $n = 1116$ ) of the songs referred to social forms of capital to define status. Specifically, 26.2% ( $n = 1079$ ) of the songs mentioned other people or characters to upgrade someone’s status and 2.9% ( $n = 120$ ) mentioned other people and characters to downgrade someone’s status.

### Status Through Sexual Objectification and Subjectification

A total of 6% ( $n = 247$ ) of the songs used sexual objectification and subjectification to define status. In particular, 5.6% ( $n = 232$ ) of the songs used this category to upgrade their own or others’ status, while .5% ( $n = 19$ ) of the songs used it to downgrade their own or others’ status.

### Differences in Status Markers Across Genres

Overall, we found rap to be the genre most frequently featuring status markers. For a more precise reporting, we

disaggregate below the distribution of genres across each status category.

Economic forms of capital were mostly present in rap (36%,  $n = 1482$ ) and pop (7.9%,  $n = 325$ ), and less so in rock (1%,  $n = 41$ ), EDM (.9%,  $n = 37$ ), country (.4%,  $n = 16$ ), R&B (.07%,  $n = 3$ ), highbrow (.02%,  $n = 1$ ), and latin (.02%,  $n = 1$ ).

Cultural forms of capital were mostly present in rap (13.1%,  $n = 539$ ), and less so in pop (2.1%,  $n = 86$ ), EDM (.3%,  $n = 12$ ), rock (.2%,  $n = 8$ ), country (.1%,  $n = 4$ ), latin (.02%,  $n = 1$ ), and R&B (.02%,  $n = 1$ ).

When social capital was used to upgrade someone’s status, most representations were in rap (22.1%,  $n = 869$ ), and fewer in pop (2.9%,  $n = 119$ ), rock (.4%,  $n = 16$ ), EDM (.4%,  $n = 16$ ), country (.3%,  $n = 12$ ), and R&B (.1%,  $n = 4$ ). When used to downgrade someone’s status, most representations were in rap (2.6%,  $n = 107$ ), and fewer in rock (.5%,  $n = 21$ ), pop (.3%,  $n = 12$ ), and EDM (.02%,  $n = 1$ ).

Finally, when sexual objectification and subjectification were used to upgrade someone’s status, most representations were in rap (4.9%,  $n = 202$ ), and fewer in pop (.7%,  $n = 29$ ) and EDM (.02%,  $n = 1$ ). When used to downgrade someone’s status, rap was more prevalent (.4%,  $n = 16$ ), and pop less so (.1%,  $n = 4$ ).

To understand whether such differences were statistically significant, we conducted logistic regression analyses to predict the probability of various genres to feature status markers when compared to rap. Results from these analyses confirmed the descriptive differences across genres. As reported in Table 4, rap was the genre significantly more likely to feature status markers across all status categories as compared to other genres. The only non-significant differences were with country in relation to cultural capital and sexual objectification, highbrow in relation to social capital and sexual objectification, latin in relation to cultural and social capital, and sexual objectification, and rock and R&B in relation to sexual objectification. Such differences did not reach statistical significance probably because of the small sample size of genres featuring certain status categories.

**Table 4** Differences in Popular Music Representations of Status Across Genres

Genre	Economic capital		Cultural capital		Social capital		Sexual Objectification	
	Est. (SE)	<i>p</i>	Est. (SE)	<i>p</i>	Est. (SE)	<i>p</i>	Est. (SE)	<i>p</i>
Country	-2.78 (.27)	<.001***	-1.77 (.43)	<.001	-2.00 (.32)	<.001***	-16.54 (680.03)	.98
EDM	-2.79 (.19)	<.001***	-1.75 (.29)	<.001***	-2.43 (.26)	<.001***	-3.25 (1.01)	.001**
Highbrow	-4.80 (1.01)	<.001***	-14.67 (257.28)	<.001***	-15.57 (257.28)	.95	-16.54 (1153.05)	.99
Latin	-3.16 (1.08)	.004**	-.89 (1.08)	.41	-15.57 (550.09)	.98	-16.54 (2465.33)	.99
Pop	-2.68 (.08)	<.001***	-1.92 (.12)	<.001***	-2.40 (.10)	<.001***	-1.80 (.19)	<.001***
R&B	-3.76 (.61)	<.001***	-2.66 (1.02)	.009**	-2.84 (.73)	<.001***	-16.54 (1087.11)	.99
Rock	-3.40 (.18)	<.001***	-2.73 (.34)	<.001***	-2.92 (.25)	<.001***	-16.54 (349.65)	.96

Rap genre is the reference category

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 5** Proportions of Popular Music Representations of Status Across Artists' Social Positionalities (Numbers are %)

	Male	Female	Gender Non-Conforming	Total
<b>Economic capital</b>				
White	9.1	2.1	.1	11.3
Black and Brown	32.7	1.6	0	34.3
Asian	.9	0	0	.9
Native/Indigenous	.02	0	0	.02
Unknown/Mixed	.04	0	0	.04
Total	42.6	3.7	.1	46.4%
<b>Cultural capital</b>				
White	2.8	.5	0	3.3
Black and Brown	11.9	.4	0	12.3
Asian	.3	0	0	.3
Native/Indigenous	0	0	0	0
Unknown/Mixed	0	0	0	0
Total	15	.9	0	15.9%
<b>Social capital</b>				
White	5.4	.5	0	5.9
Black and Brown	19.9	.8	0	20.7
Asian	.4	.02	0	.4
Native/Indigenous	.05	0	0	.05
Unknown/Mixed	.02	0	0	.02
Total	25.8	1.3	0	27.1%
<b>Sexual Objectification</b>				
White	.7	.2	0	.9
Black and Brown	4.9	.1	0	5
Asian	.07	0	0	.07
Native/Indigenous	0	0	0	0
Unknown/Mixed	0	0	0	0
Total	5.7	.3	0	6%

### Differences in Status Markers Across Artists' Social Positionality

Table 5 presents the proportion and distribution of status markers across the gender and race-ethnicity positions of the artists. In total, 35% ( $n=1438$ ) of the songs with any reference to status categories were by Black/Brown male artists and Black/Brown male artists referenced the most variety of status markers. Representations of economic forms of capital (32.7%,  $n=1346$ ) were the most frequently featured in the lyrics by Black/Brown male artists, and interestingly, social forms of capital (19.9%,  $n=819$ ) were the second most represented category.

Among female artists, White artists were more frequently displaying status in terms of economic (2.1%,  $n=86$ ) and cultural (.5%,  $n=21$ ) capital and sexual objectification and subjectification (.2%,  $n=8$ ), while Black/Brown female artists were more frequently representing status in terms of success (.6%,  $n=25$ ) and social capital (.8%,  $n=33$ ).

**Table 6** Proportions of Artists with Different Social Positionalities Across Various Genres (Numbers are %)

	Male	Female	Gender Non-Conforming	Total
<b>Rap</b>				
White	7.4	0	0	7.4
Black and Brown	36.9	.2	0	37.1
Asian	.7	0	0	.7
Native/Indigenous	.07	0	0	.07
Unknown/Mixed	.02	0	0	.02
Total	45.1	.2	0	45.3%
<b>Pop</b>				
White	17.2	11.6	.7	30.5
Black and Brown	4.3	3.1	0	7.4
Asian	.8	.2	0	1
Native/Indigenous	.02	.05	0	.07
Unknown/Mixed	.05	.02	0	.07
Total	22.4	14.1	.7	39%
<b>Rock</b>				
White	8	.3	0	8.3
Black and Brown	.05	.2	.05	.3
Asian	0	0	0	0
Native/Indigenous	0	0	0	0
Unknown/Mixed	0	0	0	0
Total	8.1	.5	.05	8.7%
<b>EDM</b>				
White	4.5	.02	0	4.5
Black and Brown	.1	0	0	.1
Asian	.02	0	0	.02
Native/Indigenous	0	0	0	0
Unknown/Mixed	0	0	0	0
Total	4.6	.02	0	4.6%
<b>Country</b>				
White	2.1	.1	0	2.2
Black and Brown	.05	.02	0	.1
Asian	0	0	0	0
Native/Indigenous	0	0	0	0
Unknown/Mixed	0	0	0	0
Total	2.2	.1	0	2.3%
<b>R&amp;B</b>				
White	.1	.02	0	.1
Black and Brown	.4	.3	0	.7
Asian	0	0	0	0
Native/Indigenous	0	0	0	0
Unknown/Mixed	0	0	0	0
Total	.5	.3	0	.8%
<b>Highbrow</b>				
White	.5	.02	0	.5
Black and Brown	.2	.05	0	.3
Asian	0	0	0	0
Native/Indigenous	0	0	0	0
Unknown/Mixed	0	0	0	0

**Table 6** (continued)

	Male	Female	Gender Non-Conforming	Total
<i>Total</i>	.7	.1	0	.8%
<b>Latin</b>				
<i>White</i>	.05	0	0	.1
<i>Black and Brown</i>	.07	.05	0	.1
<i>Asian</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Native/Indigenous</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Unknown/Mixed</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	.1	.05	0	.2%

Representations about status among Asian artists were more frequently performed by male artists, especially in terms of economic forms of capital (.9%,  $n=37$ ), but also about social (.4%,  $n=17$ ) capital, success (.3%,  $n=12$ ), and cultural capital (.3%,  $n=12$ ). Asian female artists only featured representations about status in terms of social capital (.02%,  $n=1$ ).

Representations by Native or Indigenous artists were uniquely done by male artists, in terms of social (.05%,  $n=2$ ) and economic (.02%,  $n=1$ ) capital. As shown in Table 6, Black/Brown male artists in rap music (36.9%,  $n=1519$ ) were the most represented category across all genres, followed by White male pop artists (17.2%,  $n=708$ ), and White female pop artists (11.6%,  $n=478$ ), White male rock artists (8%,  $n=329$ ), White male rap artists (7.4%,  $n=305$ ), White male EDM artists (4.5%,  $n=185$ ), Black/Brown female pop artists (3.1%,  $n=128$ ), and White male country artists (2.1%,  $n=87$ ). All the remaining categories were represented less than 1% of the time.

As previously done for genres, we evaluated the statistical difference between the prevalence of status categories across artists with different social positionalities. To do so, we conducted logistic regression analyses to predict the probability of artists with different gender identities to feature status markers when compared to men as well as artists with different racial-ethnic identities to feature status markers when compared to Black and Brown artists. Results from these

analyses confirmed the descriptive differences across artists' social positionality. In particular, as reported in Table 7, men are the group most likely to feature status markers across status categories compared to women. Differences with gender non-conforming people were only significant in relation to economic markers, also probably because of the small sample size of artists in a specific combination of gender groups and status categories. Moreover, Black and Brown people are significantly more likely to feature status markers across all status categories especially when compared to White artists. Differences were statistically significant also when compared to Asian artists in relation to economic and social capital, and with Native or Indigenous artists in relation to economic capital. Other differences were non-significant, also probably because of the small sample size of artists in a specific combination of gender and racial-ethnic group and status categories.

## Discussion

The present article provides a comprehensive assessment of how status is represented in mainstream music lyrics. Overall, there was evidence for status being represented through luxurious forms of economic and cultural consumption across the songs. Almost half of the analyzed songs referenced luxurious products and almost one fifth of the songs referenced expensive hobbies, travels, or food. We also found that more than one quarter of the songs highlighted the importance of social connections to mark status. Finally, a small proportion of the songs used sexual objectification and subjectification to upgrade or downgrade someone's status based on the representational power to sexually objectify or subjectify women's bodies. Most of these representations were found in rap and pop music, although rap had by far the largest share across all status categories. In addition to how status was represented, we further contextualized these status markers by looking at two critical characteristics of

**Table 7** Differences in Popular Music Representations of Status Across Artists' Social Positionalities

	Economic capital		Cultural capital		Social capital		Sexual Objectification	
	Est. (SE)	<i>p</i>	Est. (SE)	<i>p</i>	Est. (SE)	<i>p</i>	Est. (SE)	<i>p</i>
<i>Artists' race</i>								
<i>Asian</i>	-.85 (.25)	<.001***	-.45 (.31)	.15	-.83 (.28)	.003**	-1.01 (.59)	.09
<i>Native</i>	-2.67 (1.10)	.01*	-13.56 (360.38)	.97	-.48 (.87)	.58	-12.49 (360.38)	.97
<i>Unknown/Mixed</i>	-.37 (1.23)	.77	-13.56 (509.65)	.98	-.48 (1.23)	.69	-12.49 (509.65)	.98
<i>White</i>	-2.35 (.07)	<.001***	-1.69 (.10)	<.001***	-1.85 (.08)	<.001***	-1.99 (.18)	<.001***
<i>Artists' gender</i>								
<i>Female</i>	-1.25 (.10)	<.001***	-1.23 (.17)	<.001***	-1.62 (.15)	<.001***	-1.24 (.28)	<.001***
<i>Gender Non-Conforming</i>	-2.44 (1.04)	.02*	-13.04 (254.83)	.96	-13.75 (254.83)	.96	-12.96	.98

Black and Brown is the reference category for artists' race. Male is the reference category for artists' gender

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

their performers, namely the gender and race-ethnicity of artists. In particular, we found that the large majority of all status markers was produced by Black/Brown men.

### Status as Economic and Cultural Capital

In line with previous literature, our findings generally highlight the centrality of economic capital and cultural capital (in the form of conspicuous consumption) in artists' performances of success and status (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2014). In popular music, to have a high status means to be rich and to lead an expensive lifestyle. The analyses showed that such representations, typically found in music videos, were also present in music lyrics. This is particularly interesting when considered in tandem with results from a recent meta-analysis showing the similarity of effect sizes between lyrics and videos in how music exposure is related to content-consistent beliefs (Carbone & Vandenbosch, 2023). Despite being generally considered as less impactful than videos (Marshall, 2019), music lyrics might actually be an important source for the definition of audiences' worldviews, although potentially through different mechanisms than videos. Our findings therefore call for more studies comparing the audience effects of status representations across music formats.

### Status as Social Capital

We further found that displaying social connections was a common way to define status. The importance of social connections has been previously represented in terms of homosociality ("individuals of the same-sex exhibiting strong social bonds toward one another in a non-sexual manner"; Oware, 2011, p. 26, such as through expressions of loyalty and mutual support) and community building (such as through political engagement and emotional expression; Epps & Dixon, 2017). Our study further shows that artists express status by comparing or associating individuals based on positive or negative characteristics, as exemplified by the lyrics in which Eminem associates his rivals to a public figure (Dr. Seuss) known for his child-like writing. This is a finding that potentially relates to existing literature indicating that music audiences tend to use their music preference to distinguish between ingroups and outgroups, for example to establish friendships (ter Bogt et al., 2013). In a similar fashion as their audiences, artists showcase the importance of actual and figurative social connections in the establishment of social hierarchies to define allies and rivals, ingroups and outgroups (ter Bogt et al., 2013).

Such findings open up questions about the display and the potential effects of neoliberal ideals of utilitarianism and disposability of social relationships in mainstream music (Bellah et al., 1985). That is, by showcasing

social relationships as a means to reaching a high status, mainstream music might promote the utilitarian idea that people are disposable and that social relationships are useful to the extent that they allow the attainment of a high status (Gillath & Keefer, 2016). Future research could further explore this idea by asking how audiences perceive such music representations and their implications for defining ingroups and outgroups.

### Status as Sexual Objectification and Subjectification

Our study further documented that sexual objectification and subjectification occurred in 6% of the songs when considered as status markers. This is a rather low percentage when compared to findings in previous research, documenting that sexual objectification typically occurs in 20% to 60% of the analyzed songs, both in lyrics and videos (Flynn et al., 2016; Karsay et al., 2018a; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009). Such discrepancy could be attributed to the specific focus adopted in this article in relation to sexual objectification and subjectification as status markers, which has not been distinguished in previous literature from other displays of sexual objectification. That is, while previous studies indicate that most popular songs contain sexual objectifying narratives, our study shows that only 6% of the analyzed songs use such narratives as explicit markers of status.

This finding warrants additional efforts to better understanding the context and reasons behind which artists, especially in rap, choose to display sexual objectifying narratives in their music. While all sexual objectifying narratives produce and reproduce unequal power relationships between their agents (typically male artists) and subjects (typically women), not all these narratives are actively used to establish status hierarchies. This could mean, for example, that when artists use sexually objectifying narratives without explicit connections to material possessions, they might do it to mirror existing conditions in which they have been living—as a critique of such conditions or as a display of their background to the wider public (Oware, 2011). Alternatively, they could use such narratives to comply with genre- and industry-specific requests and expectations to become famous, tying forms of hegemonic masculinity with genre- and industry-specific representations (Oware, 2014). A clearer understanding of the reasons behind the adoption of sexually objectifying narratives is warranted to better disentangling the establishment of ethno-racial and gender hierarchies as actively constructed by artists or as promoted by industry-specific pressures.

### The Social Positionality of Artists

When looking at the social positionality of artists, we found that the majority of representations about status

was performed by Black/Brown male artists, especially in rap music. To better understand such representations, it is important to contextualize them within the music realm that constituted the focus of this article, namely the mainstream music popular on Spotify. Mainstream music has often been conceived as the showcase of commercial interests (Belle, 2014). Rap music, in particular, conceives the mainstream as the realm of inauthenticity, an arena for corporate interests to maximize revenues by exploiting racial and gender stereotypes (McLeod, 1999). In an age of globalized music industry and streaming platforms (Hodgson, 2021), platforms such as Spotify might have broadened the audiences to rap music, simultaneously providing artists and major labels with more possibilities to tailor their narratives to specific publics (Evans & Baym, 2022). The tailoring of music narratives to specific publics, for example Black artists tailoring their rap music to be liked by White audiences, has frequently implied the mobilization of stereotypically gendered and racialized representations of status (e.g., expensive jewels) and power (e.g., hypermasculinity) (Oware, 2016). Such use of racial stereotypes has been explained by the need to maximize corporate profit at the expenses of the communities that performing artists belong to (Oware, 2014). For example, Stuart (2020) showed how young Black male rappers from Chicago employed streaming platforms to depict hyperviolent representations of their lives to attract more White listeners (unaware of the inauthenticity of such representations), to increase revenues.

Our findings might hint at similar dynamics through which mainstream music artists represent status through widely available scripts about hegemonic masculinity (i.e., sexual objectification) and racial stereotypes (i.e., hypersexuality of Black and Brown male artists). Indeed, sexually objectifying status markers were mostly depicted by men, indicating typical hegemonic masculinity ideals of men's dominance through competitiveness, strength, and power over women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Moreover, these status markers were mostly depicted by Black/Brown men, reproducing widely held beliefs about Black men as hypersexual and hyperviolent (Herd, 2015). In this regard, recent research has pointed out how mainstream music artists are increasingly constrained in their creative efforts by market pressures and industry contracts that define commercial success in terms of materialistic, rather than artistic, considerations (i.e., hits are those able to maximize revenues; Arditì, 2019). The mobilization of widely held stereotypes about gender and race are therefore considered in this literature as established means to quickly maximize corporate profit (Stuart, 2020). As such, the rap representations presented in this article should not be generalized to the genre as a whole, but only to a certain type of mainstream rap that is popular in Western countries. Such a perspective calls for a closer focus on the institutional forces that might promote

specific hegemonic and racialized masculinity representations of status within mainstream rap.

## Limitations and Future Research Directions

We recognize three main limitations of this study. First, we do not know if the artists themselves wrote the lyrics of their songs or whether the lyrics and the status markers referenced correspond with the actual beliefs of the artists. This choice was guided by the interest in status representations that are popular in the mainstream music industry, where artists are not always in control of their products, for example because of copyright enclosure (Arditì, 2019) or the direction of lyrics written for profit maximization (Belle, 2014). Future research is needed to disentangle the relationship between artists' beliefs expressed in the songs they sing and their personal beliefs about status, for example by analyzing interviews or documentaries where mainstream artists have more freedom to express their voice.

Second, we considered key markers of status as defined in the previous literature about status, specifically through a Bourdieusian (i.e., status as an individual's access to different forms of capital) and intersectional (i.e., status as the differential access to forms of capital based on gender and racial-ethnic characteristics) perspective that accounts for the forms of capital held by individuals with different positionalities. Yet, status and success can more generally be considered as concepts related to what it means to live a good life (Rosa, 2016). In this article, we looked at what is *represented* as desirable, which can differ from the actual beliefs held by artists about the good life. Future studies might therefore adopt a broader perspective about status in terms of a good life by studying, for example, moral norms present in music representations (e.g., homosociality and community building; Oware, 2011) rather than implicitly assuming that some representations (e.g., expensive cars and jewels) necessarily refer to normative stances and desirable values. Such a focus would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how success is represented in music, allowing to compare the prevalence of various success markers (e.g., friendship, family, wealth) vis-à-vis each other. Such an effort would further allow to better contextualize the relative importance of success markers typically studied in content analyses of music products (e.g., materialism and misogyny) in relation to other aspects that contribute to a good life (e.g., friendship and love; Epps & Dixon, 2017).

Third, we gathered together various micro-genres (e.g., "pop rap") in the definition of artist-specific genres. This was done to simplify the analysis, which would have otherwise included a list of micro-genres, such as "rap pop", "rock rap", or "pop country" that would have been difficult to analyze and distinguish. Moreover, considering the full list of micro-genres would have meant that two different

artists would have been coded as belonging to different genres even when listing “rap pop” and “pop rap” among their genres. In this case, the difference between the two would have been minimal and difficult to assess. Nevertheless, considering the large number of genres listed on Spotify (the website Every Noise at Once lists 6291 unique genres on Spotify) future research might want to further refine and theorize about differences between specific micro-genres (e.g., “drill rap” and “conscious rap”) to provide more accurate accounts of genre-specific representations of status.

## Practice Implications

Beyond the theoretical contributions of this research in expanding our understanding of status representations in mainstream music through an intersectional lens, our results have important implications for psychological practitioners, activists, instructors, and counselors, especially for those working with adolescents. First, this study might help to better understand the current wave of mental ill-being that is increasingly affecting contemporary youth worldwide (Bor et al., 2014). Adolescents are living in societies that increasingly value individual responsibility and materialism, at the detriment of more communitarian and solidaristic values (Anniko et al., 2019). These values are potentially detrimental for mental health, leading to feelings of performance pressure and perfectionism (Curran & Hill, 2019). Moreover, hegemonic forms of masculinity and racial stereotypes have been shown to negatively affect the mental health of youth, especially of boys and young men (Wong et al., 2017). By showing the wide presence of materialistic and utilitarian values in mainstream music content, a medium that is frequently consumed by youth (Hird & North, 2021), this study provides evidence about central sources from which adolescents form status beliefs that could negatively impact their mental health. Moreover, music artists are key sources of inspiration for youth and could be important role models for their psycho-social developments (Ivaldi & O’Neill, 2008). By showing that these materialistic and utilitarian status markers are mostly depicted by Black/Brown male artists, our study can help psychological practitioners and counselors to better inquire into the role models popular among adolescents, finding potential contributors to their ill-being in the media they are consuming such as in the music lyrics of their favorite artists (Karsay et al., 2018b; Zhang et al., 2009).

Second, this research informs the work of policymakers, industry, and activists in developing awareness and interventions campaigns on topics related to gender and ethno-racial stereotypes, social solidarity, and materialism. A key sector in which the results of this study can be applied is within the music industry itself. An increasing body of

literature is reporting the detrimental effects that a highly competitive and precarious career has on musicians’ well-being (Loveday et al., 2022). As our study shows, music artists work in a music industry in which success is heavily framed in terms of material accomplishments, as well as through values related to utilitarian connections, hegemonic masculinity, and racial stereotypes. In this mainstream music context, artists are therefore pressured to achieve increasingly high standards of success (i.e., more money and more power) and to rely on themselves for their accomplishments (Musgrave, 2023). This context is straining for artists themselves, who are increasingly cancelling their tours, taking long breaks to recover from exhausting working conditions, and reporting high levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout (Loveday et al., 2022). By showing that mainstream music content is ripe with the same materialistic and utilitarian narratives held responsible for artists’ mental ill-being, our study can be used to promote awareness among artists and to further bargain more attention to mental health issues in the music industry and their audiences, as recently documented in IFPI (2023).

## Conclusion

This study finds that mainstream music represents status through economic, social, and cultural markers, and through sexual objectification and subjectification to a lesser degree. Our results showed that Black/Brown male artists are most likely to display such status markers. These findings provide scholars and practitioners with empirical evidence and theoretical insights about the diffusion of neoliberal ideals of materialism, utilitarianism, hegemonic masculinity, and objectification within music lyrics. Studying the distribution of status representations in the content of music lyrics is relevant for understanding how these representations reinforce racial-ethnic and gender hierarchies within the music industry and in society more generally, especially among youth who are the most fervent consumers of music (IFPI, 2023). Future research is needed to further explore how status narratives within music are gendered and racialized and the potential impact on the social and mental well-being of music artists and their audiences.

**Funding** This research was funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (number 852317).

**Data Availability** Data and syntax can be found on OSF at the following link: [https://osf.io/3bu5u/?view\\_only=0f78cd5af47c4ac0ad6b5c6b1b35a176](https://osf.io/3bu5u/?view_only=0f78cd5af47c4ac0ad6b5c6b1b35a176).

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Ethical Approval** This study received ethical approval from the review board of the host university, KU Leuven.



**Conflict of Interest** No conflicts of interest are to be declared.

## References

- Achterberg, P., Heilbron, J., Houtman, D., & Aupers, S. (2011). A cultural globalization of popular music? American, Dutch, French, and German popular music charts (1965 to 2006). *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55(5), 589–608. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211398081>
- Alvarez-Cueva, P., & Guerra, P. (2021). Rosalía's kaleidoscope in the crossroads of late modernity. *Catalan Journal of Communication and Cultural Studies*, 13(1), 3–21. [https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs\\_00036\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs_00036_1)
- Anniko, M. K., Boersma, K., & Tillfors, M. (2019). Sources of stress and worry in the development of stress-related mental health problems: A longitudinal investigation from early- to mid-adolescence. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping*, 32(2), 155–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2018.1549657>
- Arditi, D. (2019). Music everywhere: Setting a digital music trap. *Critical Sociology*, 45(4–5), 617–630. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920517729192>
- Arrizón, A. (2008). Latina subjectivity, sexuality and sensuality. *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 18(3), 189–198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07407700802495928>
- Aubrey, J. S., & Frisby, C. M. (2011). Sexual objectification in music videos: A content analysis comparing gender and genre. *Mass Communication and Society*, 14(4), 475–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2010.513468>
- Aubrey, J. S., Gamble, H., & Hahn, R. (2017). Empowered sexual objects? The priming influence of self-sexualization on thoughts and beliefs related to gender, sex, and power. *Western Journal of Communication*, 81(3), 362–384. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2016.1257822>
- Baksh-Mohammed, S., & Callison, C. (2014). “Listening to Maybach in My Maybach”: Evolution of product mention in music across the millennium's first decade. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 20(1), 20–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2013.829162>
- Bartky, S. L. (1990). *Femininity and domination: Studies in the phenomenology of oppression*. Routledge.
- Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., and Tipton, S. M. (1985). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*. University of California Press.
- Belle, C. (2014). From Jay-Z to Dead Prez: Examining representations of Black masculinity in mainstream versus underground hip-hop music. *Journal of Black Studies*, 45(4), 287–300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934714528953>
- Binder, A. (1993). Constructing racial rhetoric: Media depictions of harm in heavy metal and rap music. *American Sociological Review*, 58(6), 753–767. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095949>
- Bor, W., Dean, A. J., Najman, J., & Hayatbakhsh, R. (2014). Are child and adolescent mental health problems increasing in the 21st century? A systematic review. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 48(7), 606–616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867414533834>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.
- Brubaker, R. (1985). Rethinking classical theory: The sociological vision of Pierre Bourdieu. *Theory and Society*, 14(6), 745–775.
- Burkhalter, J. N., & Thornton, C. G. (2014). Advertising to the beat: An analysis of brand placements in hip-hop music videos. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 20(5), 366–382. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2012.710643>
- Carbone, L., & Vandenbosch, L. (2023). A meta-analysis of studies examining the effect of music on beliefs. *Communication Research*, 51(1), 28–55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00936502231163633>
- Chari, T. (2016). Fame without fortune: Discursive constructions of bling in urban grooves music. *Muziki*, 13(1), 19–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18125980.2016.1182378>
- Chepp, V. (2015). Black Feminism and Third-Wave Women's Rap: A Content Analysis, 1996–2003. *Popular Music and Society*, 38(5), 545–564. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2014.936187>
- Choi, D., & DeLong, M. (2019). Defining female self sexualization for the twenty-first century. *Sexuality and Culture*, 23(4), 1350–1371. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S12119-019-09617-3>
- Cohen, J., Weimann-Saks, D., & Mazor-Tregerman, M. (2018). Does character similarity increase identification and persuasion? *Media Psychology*, 21(3), 506–528. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2017.1302344>
- Collins, P. H. (2000). Gender, Black feminism, and Black political economy. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 568(1), 41–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271620056800105>
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, 19(6), 829–859. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>
- Curran, T., & Hill, A. P. (2019). Perfectionism is increasing over time: A meta-analysis of birth cohort differences from 1989 to 2016. *Psychological Bulletin*, 145(4), 410–429. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000138>
- Davis, A. Y. (1998). *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism. Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. Penguin Random House.
- De Wilde, M., Carrier, A., Casini, A., & Demoulin, S. (2021). The drawback of sexual empowerment: Perceiving women as emancipated but still as sexual objects. *Sex Roles*, 84(9–10), 626–643. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S11199-020-01192-4>
- Dijkstra, J. K., Cillessen, A. H. N., Lindenberg, S., & Veenstra, R. (2010). Basking in reflected glory and its limits: Why adolescents hang out with popular peers. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 20(4), 942–958. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00671.x>
- Dixon, T. L., & Linz, D. G. (1997). Obscenity law and sexually explicit rap music: Understanding the effects of sex, attitudes, and beliefs. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 25(3), 217–241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909889709365477>
- Epps, A. C., & Dixon, T. L. (2017). A comparative content analysis of anti- and prosocial rap lyrical themes found on traditional and new media outlets. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 61(2), 467–498. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2017.1309411>
- Evans, J. M., & Baym, N. (2022). The audacity of clout (chasing): Digital strategies of Black youth in Chicago DIY hip-hop. *International Journal of Communication*, 16, 2669–2687. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/18433/3784>
- Eze, S. U. (2020). Sexism and power play in the Nigerian contemporary hip hop culture: The music of Wizkid. *Contemporary Music Review*, 39(1), 167–185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2020.1753479>
- Fasoli, F., Durante, F., Mari, S., Zogmaister, C., & Volpato, C. (2018). Shades of sexualization: When sexualization becomes sexual objectification. *Sex Roles*, 78(5–6), 338–351. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S11199-017-0808-1>
- Flemmen, M., Jarness, V., & Rosenlund, L. (2019). Class and status: Reply to comments. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 70(3), 924–926. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12671>

- Flynn, M. A., Craig, C. M., Anderson, C. N., & Holody, K. J. (2016). Objectification in popular music lyrics: An examination of gender and genre differences. *Sex Roles, 75*(3–4), 164–176. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0592-3>
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T.-A. (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 21*(2), 173–206. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x>
- Friedman, S., & Reeves, A. (2020). From aristocratic to ordinary: Shifting modes of elite distinction. *American Sociological Review, 85*(2), 323–350. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122420912941>
- Frisby, C. M., & Aubrey, J. S. (2012). Race and genre in the use of sexual objectification in female artists' music videos. *Howard Journal of Communications, 23*(1), 66–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2012.641880>
- Gane, N. (2005). Max Weber as social theorist: "Class, status, party". *European Journal of Social Theory, 8*(2), 211–226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431005051764>
- Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist media culture. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 10*(2), 147–166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549407075898>
- Gill, R. (2017). The affective, cultural and psychic life of postfeminism: A postfeminist sensibility 10 years on. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 20*(6), 606–626. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417733003>
- Gillath, O., & Keefer, L. A. (2016). Generalizing disposability: Residential mobility and the willingness to dissolve social ties. *Personal Relationships, 23*(2), 186–198. <https://doi.org/10.1111/per.12119>
- Gómez, J. M., & Gobin, R. L. (2020). Black women and girls & #MeToo: Rape, cultural betrayal, & healing. *Sex Roles, 82*(1–2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01040-0>
- Gorodnichenko, Y., & Roland, G. (2011). Individualism, innovation, and long-run growth. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 108*(supplement\_4), 21316–21319. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1101933108>
- Greenman, E., & Xie, Y. (2008). Double jeopardy? The interaction of gender and race on earnings in the United States. *Social Forces, 86*(3), 1217–1244. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.0.0008>
- Grower, P., & Ward, L. M. (2021). Differentiating contributions of self-objectification and self-sexualization to young women's sexual agency. *Body Image, 38*, 63–71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2021.03.005>
- Harrington, C. (2021). What is "toxic masculinity" and why does it matter? *Men and Masculinities, 24*(2), 345–352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X20943254>
- Herd, D. (2015). Conflicting paradigms on gender and sexuality in rap music: A systematic review. *Sexuality and Culture, 19*(3), 577–589. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-014-9259-9>
- Herman, B. D. (2006). Scratching out authorship: Representations of the electronic music DJ at the turn of the 21st century. *Popular Communication, 4*(1), 21–38. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15405710pc0401\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15405710pc0401_3)
- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2006). Bourdieu, the media and cultural production. *Media, Culture and Society, 28*(2), 211–231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443706061682>
- Hird, E., & North, A. (2021). The relationship between uses of music, musical taste, age, and life goals. *Psychology of Music, 49*(4), 872–889. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735620915247>
- Hodgson, T. (2021). Spotify and the democratisation of music. *Popular Music, 40*(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143021000064>
- Hunter, M. (2011). Shake it, baby, shake it: Consumption and the new gender relation in hip-hop. *Sociological Perspectives, 54*(1), 15–36. <https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2011.54.1.15>
- IFPI. (2023). *Global music report 2023*. Retrieved June 19, 2023, from <https://globalmusicreport.ifpi.org>
- Ivaldi, A., & O'Neill, S. A. (2008). Adolescents' musical role models: Whom do they admire and why? *Psychology of Music, 36*(4), 395–415. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735607086045>
- Jacobson, D., & Mustafa, N. (2019). Social identity map: A reflexivity tool for practicing explicit positionality in critical qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 18*, 160940691987007. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919870075>
- Jean, E. A., Neal-Barnett, A., & Stadulis, R. (2022). How we see us: An examination of factors shaping the appraisal of stereotypical media images of Black women among Black adolescent girls. *Sex Roles, 86*(5–6), 334–345. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-021-01269-8>
- Jenkins, T. S. (2011). A beautiful mind: Black male intellectual identity and hip-hop culture. *Journal of Black Studies, 42*(8), 1231–1251. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934711405050>
- Kalunta-Crumpton, A. (2020). The inclusion of the term 'color' in any racial label is racist is it not? *Ethnicities, 20*(1), 115–135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796819884675>
- Karsay, K., & Matthes, J. (2016). Sexually objectifying pop music videos, young women's self-objectification, and selective exposure: A moderated mediation model. *Communication Research, 47*(3), 428–450. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650216661434>
- Karsay, K., & Matthes, J. (2020). Sexually objectifying pop music videos, young women's self-objectification, and selective exposure: A moderated mediation model. *Communication Research, 47*(3), 428–450. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650216661434>
- Karsay, K., Matthes, J., Buchsteiner, L., & Grosser, V. (2018a). Increasingly sexy? Sexuality and sexual objectification in popular music videos, 1995–2016. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 8*(4), 346–357. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000221>
- Karsay, K., Matthes, J., Platzer, P., & Plinke, M. (2018b). Adopting the objectifying gaze: Exposure to sexually objectifying music videos and subsequent gazing behavior. *Media Psychology, 21*, 27–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2017.1378110>
- Kasser, T. (2016). Materialistic values and goals. *Annual Review of Psychology, 67*(1), 489–514. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-122414-033344>
- Lena, J. C. (2006). Social context and musical content of rap music, 1979–1995. *Social Forces, 85*(1), 479–495. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2006.0131>
- Lena, J. C., & Peterson, R. A. (2008). Classification as culture: Types and trajectories of music genres. *American Sociological Review, 73*(5), 697–718. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240807300501>
- Lindsay, S., & Lyons, A. C. (2018). "Pour it up, drink it up, live it up, give it up": Masculinity and alcohol in pop music videos. *Men and Masculinities, 21*(5), 624–644. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X17696189>
- Loveday, C., Musgrave, G., & Gross, S.-A. (2022). Predicting anxiety, depression, and wellbeing in professional and nonprofessional musicians. *Psychology of Music, 51*(2), 508–522. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356221096506>
- Marshall, L. (2019). Do people value recorded music? *Cultural Sociology, 13*(2), 141–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975519839524>
- Matthes, J., & Kohring, M. (2008). The content analysis of media frames: Toward improving reliability and validity. *Journal of Communication, 58*(2), 258–279. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.00384.x>
- McKee, A. (2022). 'Popular culture' in popular culture: Academic and vernacular usage. *Annals of the International Communication Association, 46*(1), 19–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2022.2046127>
- McLanahan, S., & Percheski, C. (2008). Family structure and the reproduction of inequalities. *Annual Review of Sociology, 34*(1), 257–276. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134549>
- McLeod, K. (1999). Authenticity within hip-hop and other cultures threatened with assimilation. *Journal of Communication, 49*(4), 134–150. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02821.x>
- Mercado, A. (2019). Mediated images of success: Hegemonic media representations and social justice. *Communication Teacher, 33*(2), 94–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2018.1500701>

- Musgrave, G. (2023). Musicians, their relationships, and their wellbeing: Creative labour, relational work. *Poetics*, 96, Article 101762. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2023.101762>
- Negut, A., & Sârbescu, P. (2014). Problem music or problem stereotypes? The dynamics of stereotype activation in rock and hip-hop music. *Musicae Scientiae*, 18(1), 3–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864913499180>
- North, A. C., & Hargreaves, D. J. (1999). Music and adolescent identity. *Music Education Research*, 1(1), 75–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461380990010107>
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1995). Objectification. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 24(4), 249–291. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.1995.tb00032.x>
- Owari, M. (2011). Brotherly love: Homosociality and Black masculinity in gangsta rap music. *Journal of African American Studies*, 15(1), 22–39. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-010-9123-4>
- Owari, M. (2014). (Un)conscious (popular) underground: Restricted cultural production and underground rap music. *Poetics*, 42, 60–81. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2013.12.001>
- Owari, M. (2016). “We stick out like a sore thumb ...”: Underground White rappers’ hegemonic masculinity and racial evasion. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 2(3), 372–386. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649215617781>
- Podoshen, J. S., Andrzejewski, S. A., & Hunt, J. M. (2014). Materialism, conspicuous consumption, and American hip-hop subculture. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 26(4), 271–283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08961530.2014.900469>
- Primack, B. A., Nuzzo, E., Rice, K. R., & Sargent, J. D. (2011). Alcohol brand appearances in US popular music. *Addiction*, 107(3), 557–566. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2011.03649.x>
- Quinn, E. (2000). “Who’s the Mack?”: The performativity and politics of the pimp figure in gangsta rap. *Journal of American Studies*, 34(1), 115–136. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875899006295>
- Rasmussen, E. E., & Densley, R. L. (2017). Girl in a country song: Gender roles and objectification of women in popular country music across 1990 to 2014. *Sex Roles*, 76(3–4), 188–201. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0670-6>
- Ridgeway, C. L. (2014). Why status matters for inequality. *American Sociological Review*, 79(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122413515997>
- Ridgeway, C. L., & Kricheli-Katz, T. (2013). Intersecting cultural beliefs in social relations. *Gender & Society*, 27(3), 294–318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243213479445>
- Rosa, H. (2016). Resonanz: Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung Resonance: A sociology of the relationship to the world. Suhrkamp.
- Ross, J. N., & Coleman, N. M. (2011). Gold digger or video girl: The salience of an emerging hip-hop sexual script. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 13(2), 157–171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2010.520741>
- Roy, W. G. (2004). “Race records” and “hillbilly music”: Institutional origins of racial categories in the American commercial recording industry. *Poetics*, 32(3–4), 265–279. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.POETIC.2004.06.001>
- Roy, W. G., & Dowd, T. J. (2010). What is sociological about music? *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36(1), 183–203. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.012809.102618>
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893–1907. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8>
- Schaap, J., & Berkers, P. (2014). Grunting alone? Online gender inequality in extreme metal music. *Journal of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music*, 4(1), 101–116. [https://doi.org/10.5429/2079-3871\(2014\)v4i1.8en](https://doi.org/10.5429/2079-3871(2014)v4i1.8en)
- Shevy, M. (2008). Music genre as cognitive schema: Extramusical associations with country and hip-hop music. *Psychology of Music*, 36(4), 477–498. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356080809384>
- Stuart, F. (2020). *Ballad of the bullet: Gangs, drill music, and the power of online infamy*. Princeton University Press.
- ter Bogt, T. F. M., Keijsers, L., & Meeus, W. H. J. (2013). Early adolescent music preferences and minor delinquency. *Pediatrics*, 131(2), e380. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2012-0708>
- Thomas, M., & Moye, R. (2015). Race, class, and gender and the impact of racial segregation on Black-White income inequality. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 1(4), 490–502. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649215581665>
- Trigg, A. B. (2001). Veblen, Bourdieu, and conspicuous consumption. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 35(1), 99–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.2001.11506342>
- Vandenbosch, L., & Eggermont, S. (2012). Understanding sexual objectification: A comprehensive approach toward media exposure and girls’ internalization of beauty ideals, self-objectification, and body surveillance. *Journal of Communication*, 62(5), 869–887. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01667.x>
- Vollstedt, M., & Rezat, S. (2019). An introduction to grounded theory with a special focus on axial coding and the coding paradigm. In G. Kaiser & N. Presmeg (Eds.), *Compendium for early career researchers in mathematics education* (pp. 81–100). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15636-7\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15636-7_4)
- Wang, X., & Krumhuber, E. G. (2017). The love of money results in objectification. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 56(2), 354–372. <https://doi.org/10.1111/BJSO.12158>
- Ward, L. M. (2016). Media and sexualization: State of empirical research, 1995–2015. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 53(4–5), 560–577. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2016.1142496>
- Weber, M. (2010). The distribution of power within the community: Classes, stände, parties. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 10(2), 137–152. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X10361546>
- Weitzer, R., & Kubrin, C. E. (2009). Misogyny in rap music: A content analysis of prevalence and meanings. *Men and Masculinities*, 12(1), 3–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X08327696>
- Whelehan, I. (2010). Remaking feminism: Or why is postfeminism so boring? *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 9(3), 155. <https://doi.org/10.35360/njes.234>
- Williams, D. R., Priest, N., & Anderson, N. (2016). Understanding associations between race, socioeconomic status and health: Patterns and prospects. *Health Psychology*, 35(4), 407–411. <https://doi.org/10.1037/hea0000242>
- Wong, Y. J., Ho, M.-H.R., Wang, S.-Y., & Miller, I. S. K. (2017). Meta-analyses of the relationship between conformity to masculine norms and mental health-related outcomes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 64(1), 80–93. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000176>
- Wongpakaran, N., Wongpakaran, T., Wedding, D., & Gwet, K. L. (2013). A comparison of Cohen’s Kappa and Gwet’s AC1 when calculating inter-rater reliability coefficients: A study conducted with personality disorder samples. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 13, Article 61. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-13-61>
- Zhang, Y., Dixon, T. L., & Conrad, K. (2009). Rap music videos and African American women’s body image: The moderating role of ethnic identity. *Journal of Communication*, 59(2), 262–278. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01415.x>

**Publisher’s Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Springer Nature or its licensor (e.g. a society or other partner) holds exclusive rights to this article under a publishing agreement with the author(s) or other rightsholder(s); author self-archiving of the accepted manuscript version of this article is solely governed by the terms of such publishing agreement and applicable law.