‘Nostalgia is a seductive liar’:
A discourse analysis on the female role and sexuality within music videos

Emma Columbine

Supervised by: Geoff Bunn
March 2011
‘Nostalgia is a seductive liar’:
A discourse analysis on the female role and sexuality within music videos

ABSTRACT

Recent research by Gill (2008) claims that women within the media are being presented as powerful, sexually active and independent women. Gill uncovered three common figures women used to express these characteristics; the hot lesbian, the midriff and the vengeful women. The current research claims these figures could be seen to have a double meaning, and are being used to exploit female sexuality, and are the result of heteronormative boundaries.

A discourse analysis of numerous female music videos was undertaken in order to investigate these assertions. The findings showed that Gill’s research failed to notice the importance of binaries and that many other characters are used by women in order to sell. It also showed that heteronormativity appears to be the barrier, preventing women from being seen as empowering, and the images of irony and nostalgia may reveal the females desire to revert back to a traditional role.

It was suggested that future research should consider a way to surpass the heteronormative desire, and one way to do this maybe through using a masculinised woman.

Future work should also explore the prevailing feelings of nostalgia, with consideration of the role heteronormativity will play, in determining how women will present themselves in society.

KEY WORDS: Heteronormativity | Sexuality | Exploitation | Nostalgia | Satire
Introduction

The opinions of what is and what makes gender have been debated for some time, but the word ‘power’ appears to play a significant part in how gender is perceived. Foucault (1976) believed that humans were the object of power, and it was this power that determined individual behaviours and provenance. By this Foucault understood the categorisation as a female to signify a weak, emotional and irrational person, who was incapable of the abilities of man. Foucault's description is relevant for the current research, because modern society likes to believe men and women are now equal. However, the depictions of women in modern media, such as music videos, demonstrate the exploitation of the female sexual role, rather than the other attributes that contribute to her character. Considering the history of feminism it is surprising that such depictions exist, as they were meant to stop the exploitation and sexual representations of the female body. Walter (1998) believed that feminism was there to embrace anybody who agreed with the equality between man and woman. However, Butler (1999) supports Foucault’s view; her belief is that it is not what or who a woman is that creates her, but it is what she does that makes her a woman. Butler’s views imply personality is irrespective of gender, and suggests it is more of what she can do for a man that makes a person a woman. Butler’s work is useful to understand the overt sexualisation of modern female musicians. Women within modern society continue to use their body and sexuality to their advancement, and this can be seen in the work of the media. Recent findings by Gill (2008) are able to demonstrate the exploitation of sexuality.

Gill (2008) looked into the advancement of the female character in advertising. Gill noticed that the portrayal of women as passive objects serving the male desire had declined. Women were now being presented as active creatures that were independent and sexually powerful. Gill discovered three themes that were predominant in the advertising; the ‘midriff’, the ‘vengeful woman’ and the ‘hot lesbian’. These figures were noticed as providing a new method of representing women as powerful and in control sexually. Gill’s research fails to consider the double meanings that these themes could provide. This research intends to address how these themes can be seen to weaken women. The research will take into consideration that there is not just three consistent themes that are dominant within female promotion. The research will expand upon Gill’s work by viewing a different method of advertising; the female role within music videos. This method of advertisement should shed light on any additional figures used by the women to exploit their sexualisation. The research will consider how the imposed hetreornormative rules, act as a barrier to progression for women.

Heteronormativity is a term developed by Warner (1993), and refers to a set of lifestyle norms, and the natural roles people fall into in life. Hence, gender identities are formed and people take on positions based on biological sex. Its belief is that heterosexual relations is the normal sexual orientation, thus sexual and marital partnerships should be between man and woman. This is supported by Chambers (2003) who states that when heteronormativity is believed to be the norm in society, then it is this that provides the demands, expectations and constraints on individuals. However, Rubin (1993) takes a negative approach to heteronormativity, believing it
creates a 'sex hierarchy', where heterosexual relations are good and anything beyond this such as homosexual activity is bad. Heteronormativity is an imperative factor in this study, as it will enable the conceptualisation of Gill’s finding of ‘the hot lesbian’, and the contradictory design this figure presents. It will also convey whether the musicians' creativity and promotion is limited by heteronormative rules.

In contrast, queer theory challenges the above heteronormative ideas, as it focuses on any sexual activity or identity that fits with deviant categories. Halperin (1997) states ‘Queer is by definition, whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence’. Essentially, queer theory suggests sexuality and gender is not fixed, they cannot be labelled, as numerous characteristics make it up, and no single characteristic is wrong. This theory is relevant for the current study due to its opposing opinions of heteronormativity, making it possible for alternative dispositions to be considered. It can be a force of irony against the stereotypical and historical views presented by heteronormativity, and may suggest a way of progression beyond the heteronormative barrier.

The boundaries imposed by heteronormativity have been evident throughout the music industry, as Railton (2001) describes how the industry was restricted in the 1960s and 1970s. Females at this time played no role in music; they were marginalised, and only seen as figures of sex. Today the female musician is overly sexual, with the focus on their physicality rather than the actual music. The spotlight is on the image of the musician; the females body, their clothes and how they move. The down side to Railton’s work is that it places too much focus on how men dominate society, thus excluding those women that have power. The current research will address the gender inequality, but also recommend ways of developing an image that presents an empowered woman. Railton’s work makes a significant contribution to the current research, as it shows women have become successful in society by using sex. This new empowering sexual character is another means of fulfilling the male aspiration, and conforms to heteronormative guidelines, reinforcing the need to uncover a method that surpasses heteronormative needs.

Based on the above conclusions it would seem that it is necessary to go beyond a sexualised character in order to represent power. However, it is not just the confines of heteronormativity that stand in the way. It is important to consider the different media outlets that are obstructing development. Newspaper articles have a way of manipulating evidence in order to illustrate a story they want society to believe. Mazzerella & Pecora (2007) found that newspaper articles in America, in the 1990s, collected and edited stories on the lives of females, in such a way that made them appear as if they were a social problem. The intelligent editing of quotes and themes, and the selective topics covered, displayed girls as weak and vulnerable. This shows the media can construct an image that has the power to influence an entire culture. If newspapers are able to influence a country's perception of gender, then it is possible for musicians who have greater international fame, to persuade the audience into a new sexualised female role. The current study will consider the sexualisation of the modern musician, and how such presentations form a model of how women should be.
Work by Todd (2010) supports this research into sexualisation, and the influence that the media has on creating gender. Todd interviewed a former music producer, and extracted the opinion that the music industry today was all about sexualisation. They believed the lyrics were full of metaphors for sex, the dance routines and costumes are tools to create a sexualised figure. This claim further reinforces the work of Railton above, and shows that modern culture is sexualising youngsters, and this is developing into a new acceptable character in society. This would seem to prevent progression beyond the stereotypical views of women, because this form of media reinforces the behaviour and publicises it as acceptable and desired, and people do not like to be deviant thus, heteronormative rules will continue.

In addition to this, further consideration of the effects on the audience is important, as it will influence weather this behaviour will continue, or if progression will be embarked upon. Greeson & Williams (1986) considered the power of the audience’s reaction. They exposed adolescents to MTV for less than an hour, and found that they were more likely to approve of pre marital sex, than those participants who were not exposed. It is clear evidence that the music videos must be focused on sexual behaviour, for an individual’s attitudes towards sex, to be influenced. Support for these findings can be found in the work of Kistler (2010). Kistler exposed individuals to hip hop videos with varying degrees of sexual imagery, and measured their acceptance of rape myth, gender attitudes, sexual permissiveness and the objectification of women. Kistler found that those individuals in the highly sexualised viewing group had stereotypical attitudes towards women, expressed greater objectification towards women and were more accepting of rape, than those in the lower sexualised group. This again shows that exposure to such sexual imagery creates narrow minded and stereotypical views of women based on their sexual nature. The problem with Greeson & Williams and Kistler’s research is that they used student participants. These are a limited population who are more highly sexualised than other members of the public. It is possible such views are their general opinions at the time due to the nature of their maturity. An older sample population may produce different results which are not as sexually orientated as the younger generation. The current research will take an objective approach to the music videos eliminating any population generalisation issues. Their research can also be criticised by Sprankle (2009) who exposed undergraduate students to an uncensored sexually explicit song, a censored sexually explicit song, a non sexual song or no music. Sprankle found that there was no impact on the individual’s sexual attitudes in any of the conditions. This challenges the idea that sexually explicit music and videos influence the attitudes of the audience, and their sexual nature, therefore suggesting that compliance with heteronormativity may no longer be as important to musicians, and there are methods that can be used to deviate from their restrictions.

It is evident from the research that women in the media are presented as figures of sexual promiscuity, that serve the fantasy of men. Women are restricted by the heteronormative rules which have been opposed on the whole of society. This research will expand on the work presented by Gill (2008), but seek new characters, which may establish a connection with or contradict Gill’s findings. It aims to provide
an innovative perspective on this topic, in order to initiate a new outlook on the modern woman.

Method

In order to analyse the features within music videos, the technique of discourse analysis will be used. Discourse analysis originated from Harris (1952). It is used as a method for analysing events, such as written or spoken word, as well visual scenes and aims to uncover their meanings. This research will involve observing numerous music videos, a method used by Pardun & Mckee (1995) to determine the effects of the imagery, and the presence of significant features. They used a content analysis to look at the religious and sexual imagery in rock music videos. They recorded 160 music videos, at various times in the day and each video varied in length. The videos were then coded for religious and sexual references, and found that religious imagery is significant in the videos, and more likely to occur with sexual imagery than without. Turner (2005) also used a content analysis, to determine the sexual content of music videos from stations such as MTV, MTV2 and VH1. Turner then recorded music videos for 2 hours, each week day, between 6am and 8am, for 5 weeks, between December 2004 and January 2005. The research discovered that sexual content and other categories such as wealth, violence and substances, appear frequently in music videos. Additionally, Zhang, Dixon & Conrad (2009) analysed representations of the female body image in rap videos, using a 2005 countdown of the most popular videos. Apple I-tunes was also used as a way of determining which music videos they could categorize as rap videos. It was revealed that exposure to thin ideals had no effect on black women’s body image. Those with a stronger ethnic identity associated the thin ideals with less body satisfaction, less drive for thinness and lower bulimia tendencies. The current research will employ the video analysis method which is described above, but due to the advancements of modern technology the use of the video streaming website www.youtube.com is a more efficient method than video recording.

Selection criteria

Furthermore, the videos being used for analysis have been selected due to the success of the artist. Articles from the website www.pollstar.com demonstrate the reasons for using the artist Lady Gaga, as she had one of the top five albums of the last year, and was one of the biggest selling artists. The article also indicates that the musician Beyonce who will be looked at, has been a huge success digitally, and Britney Spears whose videos will also be used was one of top ten biggest artists of the last decade. In addition to these two musicians the solo singer Christina Aguilera
will be looked at, as www.billboard.biz shows she was the second biggest selling artist of the decade, and female mega star Rihanna, who had the longest running number 1 single in the last 25 years in the UK with Umbrella, will be used.

**Thematic analysis categories**

The analysis of the videos will begin by using a critical discourse analysis by Wodak & Meyer (2001), which features six prominent factors, useful to provide a thorough discourse analysis. Context was the first factor, which is where a general description of what the music video is about will be considered. Then the surface of the text will be looked into, allowing for the focus on the image of the musician to be looked at. The third component is the rhetorical means of the work. This is where the reasoning for the video will be measured, and will look into how the story they are revealing is being portrayed. Content and ideological statements will be taken into account, allowing for the role of society to be measured, and how they are conveying the position of women and the use of sexuality. The fifth factor will pay attention to other peculiarities of the text, such as any reoccurring issues that arise, and any hidden characters. Finally, the analysis will involve looking at the overall discourse and message of the video. This will take into account any aspect of the video, such as the costumes, the lyrics, the story and the characters exposed.

The research will then progress by seeking the figures described by Gill (2008). The observation will look for the three key female characters Gill discovered. The first of these characters is the ‘midriff’. This is seen as the sexually powerful female and is named so, due to the fashion for exposing this part of the body. The second character to be searched for is the ‘vengeful woman’. This is seen as a way of constructing women as feisty, in power and control. The final figure to be observed is the ‘hot lesbian’, and is seen as a way of creating new feminine representations. The analysis will then progress by seeking any other common themes in the videos, and notes will be taken about any prominent features.

Rybaki & Rybaki (1999) measured a variety of cultural approaches that would provide an insight into the analysis of the music video. Ideological models were considered, specifically feminism, and this will be the approach taken when examining the music videos in this project. Based on their feminist model, the analysis will look at the gender orientation that the acts present, and the cultural ideals of masculine and feminine behaviours. It will also seek to uncover any evidence of one gender being devalued, and if there are signs visually or verbally that the female is diminished. Finally, those features which are culturally valued by society will be taken account of, and whether they are presented in a masculine or feminine way.
Another, important factor in the analysis of these videos will be the rhetorical view of language, looking at the process of binaries by Billig (1991). This is when the perception of the world is based on counter and alternative views. Billig sees people as ‘motivated language users’. In this sense a person’s views about a specific topic will be produced by having the opposing view in mind. Thus, the current research will be considering the binaries that can be found in the music videos.

Moreover, the research will consider both positive and negative themes that occur within the music videos. Elliot, Jones, Benfield & Barlow (1995) used a discourse analysis to uncover features of sexuality in advertising. There method involved considering both the dominant negative themes that occur such as objectification, as well as the positive themes, such as the equality of the sexual representations. This technique will be employed in the current study, enabling the research to determine any sexual stereotypes that are used which could be demoralising women. It will also take into consideration that sexuality could be used as a positive tool, creating symbolic worth towards the female character and the music industry. This will allow for the research to take account of both sides of the female sexuality argument. Gee (2000) believed that discourse analysis makes it possible to reveal the language that works alongside socially situated activities. Discourses were systems built on numerous things such as behaviours, values and roles that were given to specific people. In this sense the results of the discourse will be able to give a clear and thorough insight into the social construction of female sexuality, the values women now represent, and the obstacles they need to overcome.

The proposed research could be placed in the journal for feminism and psychology. This is an appropriate selection, as it is focused on the female role, and how they are currently presenting themselves and being observed by society. A submission into this journal would provide a useful insight into the progression or inhibition that women today face. It can highlight any heteronormative issues which maybe acting as a barrier, and suggest ideas for women’s development, beyond the stereotypical images of the past.

As the research is looking at the discourse in modern music videos, there are no participants involved as in other methods. Therefore, no serious ethical issues will be caused by this research (see Appendix 1 and 2 for ethics forms) However, reflexivity will be a matter due to the use of discourse analysis, and this will be resolved in a reflexivity section.

Results
The analysis revealed a number of important findings. Evidence to support Gill’s (2008) research themes were found, but at the same time new characters were noticed, that show ambivalence to Gill’s work. ‘The nostalgic or ironic female role’ then the binary of ‘masculine positions’ and ‘male fantasy characters’ were the most interesting findings. Also, the important issue of heteronormativity was uncovered.

Gill’s Figures.

Each of the viewed videos revealed one or more themes pronounced by Gill (2008). The ‘midriff’ can be seen in Lady Gaga’s *Telephone* video (3:18), Rihanna’s *Hard* video (1:55) and *Te amo* (0:17). Beyonce’s *Why don’t you love me* (0:57), *If I were a boy* (1:54), Christina Aguilera’s videos; *Dirty* (0:42), *Candy man* (1:27) and *Not myself tonight* (0:15) and Britney Spears videos; *Toxic* (0:19), *Womanizer* (0:21) and 3 (0:54). The ‘midriff’ is used as a sexual tool in each of these videos. It provides a focus on the musician’s body and sexuality, and can be seen as a method used to sell their music. The ‘hot lesbian’ theme was found in Lady Gaga’s *Telephone* (1:57), Rihanna’s *Te amo* (1:38), Christina Aguilera’s *Not myself tonight* (0:42, 1:10) and Britney Spears 3 (2:18). This theme provides a more complex image; it can be seen as a challenge to heteronormative customs, but at the same time serves a male fetish. The third theme of ‘the vengeful woman’ was seen in Lady Gaga’s *Telephone* (6:05) and Britney Spears *Toxic* (3:08). This theme suggests power on the part of the woman, because they are turning the tables on the men, and providing them with what they deserve. However, the execution of the revenge can be seen to present women as weak. In both videos revenge is undertaken by using poison, this is seen as a cowardly method and often associated with food preparation, an area that is strongly connected with women.

Nostalgic/ Ironic female role

Lady Gaga is presented in a traditional female role in the video *Telephone*. She is seen in the kitchen (6:19) which is an area usually connected with women, due to food preparation and the role of a traditional housewife. The ‘let’s make a sandwich’ routine (6:35) appears to be a parody of the conventional female role (http://aubreylondonpinup.com/the-glorious-1950s-housewife/), as her actions and behaviour seem robotic, as if they are under the control of someone else. The transparent apron worn with it’s distance from Lady Gaga’s body, could also be understood to mirror the entrapment of women in society. Her appearance in this scene is also subdued and doll like and demonstrates a subversive female. Similarly, in Britney Spears video *If you seek Amy*, the 1950s housewife image emerges
(2:46). The character is seen with a baked pie, and is painted in an image of the perfect household, as she exits the house to join her husband and two children in front of the media. It suggests that she has to hide who she really is from the outside world. The media are shown the image that society wants to see and demands of women.

This character is further reinforced by Beyoncé’s portrayal of the traditional role in *Why don’t you love me?* She is seen undertaking conventional tasks (1:28- 1:40) such as cooking, cleaning and washing, whilst being dressed in stilettos and a seductive leotard. The whole image serves what men call for in a woman, the sexual suggestiveness and the domesticated wife. The image diminishes women, as they are reduced to this image of service. This serving nature is also promoted in Beyoncé’s *If I were a boy* (0:26) and Britney Spears’s *Womanizer* (0:20) where they both serve the man breakfast, he just sits and waits. Similarly in Spears video *Toxic* she is presented as a air hostess and attends to a plane of men, and in *Womanizer* is presented as a waitress who serves men (1:42).

**Masculine positions**

The musicians taking on masculine roles is a binary opposite to the traditional female role they are also presented in, but is a common reoccurring theme in these videos. In *Telephone* Lady Gaga is found in a prison (0:00- 4:39) which is a masculine setting. All the characters are females, but they are seen to be fighting. This is a role reversal for females to be presented in such an aggressive environment, this is an area television usually avoids. It hints at women being strong, tough and aggressive suggesting an air of power. However, they are dressed in just underwear which focuses the attention back to the female’s body. Likewise, Rihanna undertakes role reversal in the video *Hard*. She is presented as the chief soldier (0:06), all the male soldiers mimic her and follow her orders. This would appear to place her in a position of power, but she is dressed in just knickers and a jacket (0:14) which is sexually suggestive. The use of the gun (1:27) by Rihanna is a phallic symbol and could reinforce the idea that her control is over the male sexual desires. Other, masculine roles that were visible were in Christina Aguilera’s *Dirty*. She takes on the position of a biker (0:17) and a fighter (2:42). The fighter again implies strength, aggression and power, but once again she is presented in a revealing manner keeping the focus on her body and attention to sexuality. Also, in Britney Spears’ *Toxic* video she takes on an action focussed heroine, as she is seen strolling by explosions (2:01), dodging laser attacks (2:21) and having incredible physical strength (3.00) as she throws a man across the room with just one hand. All of these features demonstrate physical strength and power, and the heroine is usually a character that is looked up to and
admired suggesting a more hierarchical pose for women. However, these actions are once again undertaken whilst dressed in a sexually appealing manner. Britney is presented head to toe in leather and her midriff is on show, hence, she diminishes the powerful temperament previously created.

**Fantasy characters**

A number of desirable figures have been revealed in the videos of modern musicians. In *If you seek Amy* by Britney Spears, she is surrounded by women dressed as cheerleaders (1:50), in *Toxic* Britney is presented as an air hostess (0:10). In Christina Aguilera’s *Candy man* she is presented as a pilot (1:52) and a sailor (0:09). There is also evidence of numerous male sexual obsessions, occurring in the videos. There is the dominatrix image (4:11) in *Why don’t you love me* by Beyonce, S & M images (0:15, 0:37) in *Not myself tonight* by Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears makes implications of a sexual orgy occurring in *If you seek Amy* (0:15, 0:36, 0:42).

**Gender (feminist) issues**

The analysis was also seeking to discover the gender issues that were emerging in these videos. The cultural ideals of men and women appear to be served in these videos. Men are presented as powerful and strong, and shown in positions that require courage and are admired by people (Beyonce- *If I were a boy* (0:39), Rihanna- *Hard* (3:07)). The men are also seen to hold an elevated hierarchical place compared to women, such as in Britney Spears’ *Toxic*, the man is presented as a pilot (0:05), the female is the air hostess serving men (0:27). Additionally, men are presented as sexual predators, which are seen negatively (Britney Spears – *Womanizer* (0:43), *If you seek Amy* (1:47), Christina Aguilera- *Dirty* (0:38/1:23), *Candy man* (0:00-0:23) and Lady Gaga (6:04- 6:11)).

Women on the other hand were seen to be reduced to two key features in the video, which fit with the cultural ideals that have become expected of women. They were presented as the traditional housewife or in a position that serves men. They are seen in positions of nurture, care and love, exhibiting them in a domesticated role (Beyonce- *why don’t you love me* (1:28- 1:40) and *If I were a boy* (0:26), Britney Spears- *Womanizer* (0:20), *If you seek Amy* (3:31) and *Toxic* (0:10) ). The women are seen as the home-maker, carer and the one that maintains the household. Alternatively, the female is displayed as a sexual being, and appears to supply men with the fetishes and desires they require (Christina Aguilera- *Not myself tonight* – (0:15), *Candy man* (1:52), *Dirty* (0:42). Britney Spears- *Toxic* (0:10), *If you seek Amy*
(0:36), Rihanna –Hard (1:51) and Beyonce Why don't you love me (4:11)). This feeds the cultural ideals that are expected of women, as models of service for men’s needs.

**Discussion**

The results are in line with the previous work of Gill’s. However, it went further in revealing the characters being used to exploit sexualisation, and considered the varying meanings such figures portray. The findings also demonstrated the limitations that are in place, preventing progression from heteronormative desire.

The themes originally uncovered by Gill proved to be tools that degraded, rather than empowered women. The ‘hot lesbian’ could be seen as defiance against heteronormativity, and imply an element of power as suggested by Gill (2008). However, the ‘hot lesbian’ has a desirable edginess, due to the experimentation of two women being intimate; it feeds and titillates a male’s desire. This creates a dominant spotlight on the females’ sexuality, and devalues attention paid to other characteristics. Women are reduced to sexual objects, despite its deviance against heteronormative rules, (as described by Chambers (2003) and Warner (1993)) it still serves a male fetish. Furthermore, the presentation of the ‘vengeful woman’ provides no sign of female empowerment; it is seen as a weak response to pain, due to the way it was implemented. All of Gill’s themes seem to highlight the sexual promiscuity of women and their conformity to heteronormative rules. The focal point of the music videos was the females physicality rather than the music. Thus, females within the media are not empowering creatures, they are condemned by the restrictions of man’s ideals, and they are reinforcing these roles into society, by influencing their audiences.

In addition to this, the three themes revealed by this research, indicate that Gill’s work did not go far enough in unveiling the characters used in advertising. When considering the nostalgic/ ironic female role, it appears to account for the housewife of the 1950s and 1960s. These housewives were portrayed in a mechanical way, because of the hierarchical position that men held over them. When studying Lady Gaga’s Telephone video, the routine seems to reflect the past power issues, and displays the confinement and ordered life that women live. The use of satire is reflective of queer theories ideas of rebelliousness, and challenges the stereotypical views of the past and gendered sexuality. These findings challenge the work of Kistler (2010) and Greeson & Williams (1986) who believed that music videos portrayed stereotypical images of women, and it was this that accounted for viewers’ attitudes and objectification towards women. Quintessentially, the videos appear to reflect women in two lights; the domesticated housewife or the sexual being. These
roles could be considered as figures of irony for the female musicians, as they appear to present parodies of such roles, diminishing these characters to figures of humiliation and ridicule. This then undervalues women, and keeps them restrained by the hetreonomrative reality. This is reflective of Park’s (1992) theory that believed the hierarchical differences between men and women were due to the variation in characteristics that women held. It was these characteristics that kept them restricted to specific positions, and under the heteronormative control.

This dominant heteronormative society is visible with the findings of masculine positions and fantasy characters. Todd (2010) alleged that music videos today used costumes and tools that created a sexualised figure. The exposure of masculine positions in music videos supported Todd’s assertion, as the female musicians are only seen in male roles of power when they are dressed provocatively, indicating they are in control of their sexuality. The adaptation of the masculine positions is evidence of the double meanings and binaries occurring. The musicians take on functions, that on the surface appear to be courageous and empowering, but after deeper insight and focus, it is evident this is being used as another tool to flaunt sexuality and sell their music. Moreover, the fantasy figures feed males’ sexual appetites, as they are fetishes and sought after characters of men. It places emphasis on the female’s physicality and appearance, and demoralises the representation of women, as they are reduced to sexual creatures. These results reinforce the conclusions of Railton (2001) and Boden (2006), as the female musicians are overly sexual, and their image is the focus. This shows the industry is focused on physicality rather than the music.

Furthermore, the sexual creatures women adopt and the male desires are reflective of the long standing, and stereotypical images, which people have come to accept as the norm for men and women. The roles men were presented in demonstrated intelligence and skills, whereas the women were opposed to this and seen as dim, and reduced to their physical appearance. The powerful and sexual predator characteristics all fit with the stereotypical image that we have come to accept is a man’s spirit. Therefore, that which is culturally valued is seen as masculine, as the men are in greater positions of power, and these roles are socially accepted and respected. The women appear to serve men, further reinforcing the male strength and control in society, implying it is the men’s abilities that are valued, as the women are reduced to a position of service and a domesticated role. Their personalities are diminished, as the focus is placed on their appearance, and their function is determined by heteronormative society. Similar conclusions were drawn from the work of Kales (2003). Kales theorised that women who appeared as competitive, exerted their will and asserted their own needs were presented within the media.
format as grotesque and unfeminine beings. This perception was adopted because it provoked fear in men as they fear their dominant position will be overthrown. Thus, these images are limited within the media, due to it being under masculine control, and the presentation of women will remain sexually explicit in order to please heteronormative guidelines.

Besides these gender issues, the nostalgic female role and the masculine position are poignant findings, and they also represent an important binary which needs to be discussed. The role of nostalgia and irony is serving the heteronormative image of women that has been created through history, but at the same time is seen to make a mockery of this position. This contrasting picture suggests that this position still holds some form of value and worth to the women. It maybe an image of ridicule and viewed negatively now, however, it still holds some nostalgic attachment which may well be yearned for once again. This use of irony and nostalgia is reflected in previous theory by Hutcheon (1998). Hutcheon claims nostalgia is used to symbolize dissatisfaction with the present culture. Steiner (1974) states; deep nostalgia is becoming more evident, due to the decline in the value system which Westernised society has created. Therefore, the utilization of irony and nostalgia within the videos is subtly highlighting a loss and displeasure with modern culture, and represents the strong portrayal of satire that is occurring within the media. This is reinforced by McDermott (2004) who states feminism’s aim has always been to achieve equality for women in all aspects of life. However, they have now become tangled with emotions of nostalgia and regret for how things once were, which essentially contradicts their movement, and shows the satirical position women now hold.

On the other hand, the masculine position played opposite the feminine character is fashioning a position of strength and power. Ironically, the women are dressed seductively when drawing on the male role, lessening the impact of the male traits they could have seen to have adopted. The employment of their sexuality here may also highlight their nostalgic views, as they reduce a character of power to the classic vision of women as sexual creatures. Thus, society may not want to or need to move away from a heteronormative order, as it appears the traditional culture is the one which is longed for.

In conclusion, these results show that Gill failed to notice the importance of binaries, and that several other characters are used by women in the media in order to sell. These are significant discoveries, as they were able to highlight heteronormative power, and the sexual promiscuity of women. Heteronormativity could be seen as the barrier, which is preventing women from being empowering. The overly sexual activity of the female musicians, and the finding of the traditional female role in these videos conform to the heteronormative way. On the other hand, the discovery of women taking on masculine roles and Gill’s theme of the ‘hot lesbian’ oppose the
heteronormative view. The ‘hot lesbian’ challenges the rules and could be seen as an empowering and progressive statement. However, at the same time this theme is fulfilling numerous men’s sexual fetishes, and reduces women to characters of sexual desire, rather than empowerment. This creates a conflicting image, and the masculine position also defies heteronormativity, leading to controversy and conflicting arguments, as to whether this is for the male gaze, or is suggesting some nostalgic and ironic image.

Fundamentally, everything could be seen to serve the heteronormative male, and moving away from this should be priority, if women wish to be presented as empowering. A way to move away from heteronormative desire, could be to use a masculine woman. By this, it is not suggesting adopting a male physical role, as seen in some of the videos, which are used suggestively, but to have a woman with short hair, great physical strength, tattoos, piercing and is tough. Men fear confident, dominant, independent, outspoken, strong women who are willing to take care of themselves, thus presenting a female as a male would be a way to remove the sexual desire. A recent example would be the musician Pink, who adopts a tomboy image, and has deducted the sexual edginess away from herself and made her work purely about the music. However, the images of irony and the nostalgia attached to them could indicate that women do not wish to progress beyond the restraints of heteronormativity, rather they would prefer to return to the traditional role, which was once strictly enforced. Conversely, the appearance of this traditional role could also represent sarcasm on the musicians part. The musicians may be aware of the criticisms they receive, due to the sexual promiscuity in their videos, and decide to mock these evaluations by using retro images of women. In this way, they show the contradictory nature of progression. Whether women wish to progress or retreat to how things once were, it would seem this is determined by the position of heteronormativity.

Reflexivity

It is important that the author of the discourse considers the position that they hold within the discourses they are describing. My view is that men and women should be treated and regarded as equals in both society and the media. A person’s progression and success in any career should not depend on values that only serve or suit one gender, and the distribution of power should be measured on a person’s capabilities and not their gender. This places me in an ideal position to critically analyse modern music videos objectively. This would allow for restrictions being placed on genders to be acknowledged, and highlight the boundaries that are preventing a gender from progressing into an empowering, and highly regarded role.
This would advance research and insight into gender and power inequalities which exist today, and provide a new sphere to develop media and societal projections of gender.

Discourse analysis is a relevant and effective qualitative method for the inquiry into sexuality and gendered roles in modern media. More specifically, my use of a feminist discourse analysis proved fruitful for this research. However, the music scene is changing constantly, with new artists emerging and a variety of images and approaches to music and music videos arising. It is therefore necessary that future discourses adapt to these changing media angles and positions in order to achieve a relevant and up to date insight in this area.
References


Images and writings of traditional 1950s housewife