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The Disclosure, Disconnect, and Digital Sexploitation of Tween Girls' Aspirational YouTube Videos

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ABSTRACT—Does YouTube normalize the unintended sexploitation of tween Black girls' musical play in user-generated content (UGC)? A review of girlhood studies, online sexploitation, social media, and intersectionality contributes to a case study of over 600 YouTube twerking videos uploaded over a six-year period (2008–2014). Utilizing Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA), three main findings point to the normalization of online sexploitation relative to Black girls' user-generated content: 1) the disclosure of personal-identifying information; 2) disconnects between culture and age-restricted guidelines; and 3) the monetization of music in UGC.

KEYWORDS—African American, Black girlhood studies, critical discourse analysis, dance, digital ethnomusicology, tweens, sexuality, play, video, YouTube

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Introduction

> The talk of [social media] revolutions is 'a naive belief in the emancipatory nature of online communication that rests on the stubborn refusal to acknowledge its downside' (Morozov 2010, xiii quoted in Fuchs 2017, 2).

YouTube is both an online playground for children as well as a stage where musicians and copyright owners monetize their musical content and intellectual property. Initial observations of YouTube's once public statistics that tracked the age and sex of any published video's audience before 2013 hinted at a pattern. Attention from tween and teen girls seemed to be the primary demographic groups driving eyes and ears to popular black music videos on the site. A search for tween black girls' content led me to start examining twerking videos they recorded and uploaded from their bedrooms while dancing to derivative sounds of a commercial song or monetized twerk songs by emerging YouTube artists. YouTube allowed music companies to advertise and sell sexually-explicit songs via immersive hyperlinks below aspirational fan videos. This phenomenon seemed openly at variance with any notion of protecting children 13 and under from potentially harmful online behaviors.

Terminology

Before proceeding further, let me clarify the use of the terminology "Black," "girl," and "twerking" throughout the text.

Black refers to non-Hispanic and Hispanic people of the African Diaspora, and to such populations that reside within the United States. To some, African Americans are a subgroup within the larger Black community. Since UGC featuring Black girls could include first-generation immigrants or those who, for whatever reason, do not identify as African American, the term "Black" will be employed. It is capitalized to distinguish it as a racial category as well to signify an imagined community bound beyond any limiting notions of skin color difference because "[l]owercase Black is simply a color" (Tharps 2014). Similarly, when referring to a category of race, the word "White" will be capitalized.

The use of the gendered term "girl" comes with its own set of complications.

> If growing up is painful for the Southern, being aware of the displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat. It is an unnecessary insult. (Angelou 1969 quoted in Mulder 2014).

Girl generally refers to a female child. It is also used colloquially to refer to sisterhood among adult women, gay men, and transgender women across Black cultural contexts as well as appropriated White women, White gay men, and White transgender men and women. Social media hashtags like **#BlackGirlMagic** or **#BlackGirlJoy** make it difficult to distinguish between its use to refer children vs. adults. This example of collapsing or colliding contexts known broadly as 'context collapse' in research about social network sites (Marwick and boyd 2014; Davis and Jurgenson 2014; Marvin and Sun-ha 2017) reminds us that situating knowledge or events within its intended context matters. Therefore, throughout the article, "girl" solely refers to children.

Twerking is a style of dance subsumed in a broader genre of club and party dance culture in New Orleans. Also known as *bounce*, twerking originated in New Orleans as part of a local scene that fomented by the end of the 1980s with the first reference on a mixtape occurring in 1993 by DJ Jubillee's "Do the Jubilee All" in 1993. To quote Big Freedia (born Freddie Ross, b. 1978), the reigning transgender queen of Bounce, twerking is defined as "popping, locking, dropping, and bouncing your booty like a basketball" to the beats and rhymes of a rap or party song (cf. Big Freedia 2013). By 2013, the number one "What is" Google search of the year was "What is twerking?", signaling the trend of online (Hern 2013) and the *Oxford English Dictionary* added the word into its site.

Twerking videos was but one form of fandom in over 300 hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute in 2013 (YouTube for Press). Twerking is significant for online tween and teen Black girls who use their cultural performance and a webcam to document dances and share daily aspects of their social lives online. Life-streaming their twerking gestures as if lip-synching or "werking" their bodies to the latest songs for a webcam has become a norm among those whose smart mobile devices have access to the Internet. However, the unintended consequence of tween girls' digital content is the collapse of their playful performance with users' sexualized voyeurism. Invisible and unintended audiences watch their content on personalized, handheld devices different context. Triggered by stereotypes and stigmas about black girls, other viewers may read their twerking perfor-

mance as self-objectification or sexually-explicit behavior that needs to be policed or controlled.

The Community Guidelines of YouTube that prohibit nudity, sexual conduct, child exploitation, and child pornography in its user-generated content may probably frame adverse audience reactions to the dance, the sexually-explicit songs by generally voiced by male artists, and targeting Black girls and their guardians as irresponsible given the site's suggestion that:

> YouTube is not for pornography or sexually explicit content. If this describes your video, even if it's a video of yourself, don't post it on YouTube. Also, be advised that we work closely with law enforcement and we report child exploitation (Community Guidelines, n.d.).

The adverse, sexually-explicit reactions found in user comments below Black girls' twerking videos reinforce racialized sexual stereotypes and perpetuate the condemnation surrounding the dance. The act of bouncing one's booty to the beats and sexually-explicit lyrics broadcast from the domestic and often segregated residential space of a Black girl's bedroom for anyone to search and share is read as "deviant" behavior even while users often applaud White girls are for the same behavior.

Empowered by their twerking practice, tween Black girls often show a sense of shared connection and ancestry to their peers. The practice demonstrates their knowledge of trends in black popular culture and contributes to the imagined community of Black girlhood online. Not unlike adults online, children may not anticipate the future, unintended consequences of their self-disclosure of personal information in the metadata of channel names, video titles, and descriptions required to make your content discoverable. Metadata along with the sonic performance of derivative content and the visual performance of twerking function in concert as ethnic markers of age, race, nationality, gender, region, and cultural difference.

Black girls' content may thereby be exploited affected by autocomplete search results and algorithms as well as by the persistent commenting on and sharing of the video and its metadata by unknown others. Since their UGC is searchable, portable, and persistent, any predatory viewer can come to their content with an intent very different from girls' aspirations to have fun dancing to a popular song in their bedroom for online play.

By observing and studying content created by tween Black girls performing from the perceived safety of their own homes and bedrooms, I began to explore the unintended consequences that arise from techno-cultural dis-

course of YouTube's free platform, which is also part of Google, a for-profit corporation with no liability to third-party effects. For this study, I collected over 600 YouTube videos of Black girls twerking primarily from bedrooms or other seemingly private living spaces.

Girls' user-generated twerking videos tend to be aspirational content: the girls aspire to be or imagine themselves becoming someone notable through online play with a camera phone. The webcam allows them to picture adopting a new public persona through a socio-musical digital identification with trending twerk songs or a favorite artist such as the emerging rapper Kstylis (pronounced "K-Styles") and his songs "Booty Hopscotch" or "Hands Up, Get Low." Black girls YouTube twerking videos can be found in the YouTube archive as early as 2006, long before Miley Cyrus's twerk-a-thon to shed from her Disney persona in 2013 and long before smartphones were the norm.

The free online musical play of Black girls as well as their video-ed dances to songs that are primarily owned by male artists and distributed by male-run companies and platforms, all contribute to a system of commercial profit through likes and dislikes, sharing, curating playlists, and monetization of channels run by big (VEVO) and small (ordinary individual and micro-celebrity) users. Twerking on YouTube primarily benefits rights holders of the music and subscribers who monetize their YouTube channels. Black girls earn a bad reputation more often than not and live with the unintended consequences to their psychological development and possibly their future status and employment.

To monetize a channel a subscriber must sign up for Google AdSense account and link their channel to a personal checking account. Tween girls, ages 8–12 and younger, are unlikely to have their own checking accounts. With views-as-currency, users net 55% of the gross earnings while YouTube/Google gets 45%. Everyone benefits in profitable ways but the Black girl.

Before people blame parents, before we accuse them of not managing pre-adolescent daughters' play in twerking videos while unintended and invisible audience members treat their content as sexual or nude resources for their own exploits, a look at how music and technology might contribute to the sexploitation of this content is essential.

Even though YouTube's minimum age is 13, YouTube and its parent company Google are surely well aware that millions of minors distort their age to join the online video-sharing platform. YouTube is one of the most popular tween destinations for *hanging out*, *messing around*, and *geeking out* on

mobile media (Ito et al. 2008; Dollinger 2015). To be young and "broadcast yourself" while a Black girl in the most public of public sites on the web is part of discovering your adolescent self-expression and identity online while creating content that will live in the 2nd largest search engine and the world's most extensive video archive in human history.

Literature Review

Girlhood studies

The earliest studies of adolescent girls arose as a feminist intervention in studies of schooling, delinquency, and job markets in the 1980s (Chesney-Lind 1974; Fine 1988). A decade before that, sociologist Joyce Ladner published a ground-breaking monograph on Black female adolescence titled *Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman* (1971/r1995), This work is often overlooked in reviews of girlhood studies, revealing how Whiteness continues to operate as the default unless matters of race or ethnicity are evoked in scholarly analysis.

Since the 1980s, scholars of British cultural studies and feminist theory brought attention to the role of the bedroom in girl-centered fan fiction (McRobbie 1991; McRobbie and Garber 1976). A pivotal article by Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber (1976) made girl-centered inquiry notable in feminist scholarship. Their work pointed out the illegibility of the category "girl" and how it was being written out of theory and history by omission. They demonstrated how the persistent attention to "teddy boys, mods, rockers, hippies and punks" by male scholars led to the erasure and silencing of girls in British youth subcultural studies (ibid.).

In cultural musicology, attention to the "hidden musicianship" (Finnegan 1989) of Black girls as tastemakers (Gaunt 2006) revealed the ways both male and female scholars and popular music discourse continues to "invisibilify" their contributions to musical Blackness rendering their roles and influence–making them both invisible and vilified. This type of misogynoir leads to the symbolic annihilation of their embodied gestures, their agency, and their contributions to music and musicianship in everyday Black music socialization and in taste-making within commercial music production (ibid.), particularly on the televised channels of YouTube. Black girls are generally denied their childhood innocence as television and popular music insist on the intensification of hypersexualizing young girls.

The category of "teenager" was effectively brought into being by market research in the 1950s. Contemporary marketing tactics involve the invention of "new" sub-categories that sell products to "tweens," "middle youth," "kidults," and "adultescents"; categories that blur the distinctions between children, youth and adults (cf. Osgerby 2005 in Buckingham 2008, 4) Our current marketplace seems to be a paradox. For example, the *adult-ification* of children's toys is countered by the *kidult-ization* or *adult-escent* of our online performances of identity (Faulkner 2010; Phoenix 2011). One study of Black girls between the ages of 5 and 14 revealed how they tend to be treated as if less innocent, less in need of nurturing, and more like adults around topics like sex. The *adultification* or dehumanization of Black girls can help explain why they are over-disciplined and pushed out of school more than their Black male peers or White female counterparts (Epstein et al., 2017).

The field of contemporary girlhood studies emerged in the aughts of the 21st century (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2005; Kearney 2007; Mazzarella 2007; Senft 2008; Mitchell 2012) Black girlhood emerged simultaneously (hooks 1996; Gaunt 2006; Brown 2009; Lindsey 2012; Simmons 2015) across a variety of disciplines including media studies and technology (Stokes 2004, 2010; Trammel et.al. 2012; Noble 2013; Senft and Noble 2013). A new field of studies of online and digital Black girlhood in networked publics (Emerson 2002, Warner 2015, Stokes 2004, 2010) discusses online sexuality, empowerment, and exploitation (Ringrose 2008, Lindsey 2012).

Online Sexploitation

Exploitation can occur when children receive gifts, money, or attention for their online activities (Livingstone and Mason 2015; Renold and Ringrose 2011). The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified in 1990) recognizes the right to freely and fully "engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child" (Article 31). It also recognizes the right to be "protected from economic exploitation" and "from performing any work" that is hazardous to the education, or harmful to the "health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development," of a child (Article 32).

Play may be a right for children but protecting their online play from the social and economic forces of the Internet and its commercially-controlled spaces begins when they dance to new media in their bedrooms (Baker 2004). They may be exposed to or lured into forms of criminal sexual abuse

identified as online child sexual exploitation (CSC). Online sexploitation may include gender-based violence, image-based sexual abuse, as well as technology-facilitated sexual violence (Powell and Henry 1970).

Some articles theorize specifically about teen girls online in the age of sexualization (Renold and Ringrose 2011; Faulkner 2010; Phoenix 2011). An annual research review in 2014 found that new media and mobile technologies lead to far fewer risks than alarmists tended to suggest. These risks can include cyberbullying, contact with strangers, sexting, and pornography, which "generally affect fewer than one in five adolescents" and these findings "do not appear to be rising substantially with increasing access to mobile and online technologies" (Livingstone and Smith 2014). Simultaneously, the same review noted a range of "adverse emotional and psychosocial consequences" including "sensation-seeking" behaviors, peer norms, and online practices peculiar to certain sites were observed in longitudinal studies. What they found ultimately was that "mobile and online risks are increasingly intertwined with pre-existing (offline) risks in children's lives" (ibid.).

Sexploitation in sites like YouTube may also involve what is considered explicit pornography or child sex-trafficking. Online luring or "grooming" of children in sexually seductive ways and into sexualized situations (Quayle 2017) are not uncommon. The free nature of online video sharing has contributed to an intensified demand for a new child sexual abuse material available given its low cost and the increased demand for new novelty is online sexual appetites for children (OHCHR 2016).

The constant circulation of self-generated life-streaming via a webcam, distinct from textual content like sexting, engenders and amplifies audiences who like to watch children performing acts that are perceived as sexual. In 2011, former Attorney General Eric Holder framed age as a critical concern behind increased exploitation of children online:

> Unfortunately, we´ve also seen a historic rise in the distribution of child pornography, in the number of images being shared online, and in the level of violence associated with child exploitation and sexual abuse crimes. Tragically, the only place we´ve seen a decrease is in the age of victims (Child Pornography, n.d.)

The mere association between televised child porn and watching tween girls enact performances as bedroom culture (Kearney 2007, 2009; Ringrose

2008; Baker 2004) while they self-present images that mirror porn's crotch shots for free may increase reliance on girls' UGC in YouTube's attention economy of music. In offline contexts or explicit porn sites, much of what viewers perceive as crotch shots might be considered criminal acts. Moreover, if they were, who would authorities arrest if they were criminal acts? Would it be the tween girls making the videos? Their parents? Distributors of the content? The fact that minors are self-generating expressive and aspirational content in a seemingly voluntary or agentive act complicates any simple criminal designation.

Social Media: Regulating Harm to Minors

Music seems to play a pivotal role in perpetuating exploitation of Black girls' aspirational content. In 2015, HCI (human-computer interface) researchers in Finland published one of the earliest academic studies on YouTube music consumption based on UGC or "user-appropriated videos" which are "readily available and well promoted" by the site (Liikkanen and Salovaara 2015; Aalto University 2015). In addition to previous articles (Cayari 2011, Waldron 2013), to the best of my knowledge Liikkanen and Salovaara provided a framework for understanding how social media users and music copyright benefit one another in reciprocal but not always equally beneficial ways:

> Familiar music videos and copyrighted movie clips rub shoulders with original user-generated content and with content that combines original material with copyrighted material, such as user-created videos that include popular songs as part of their background or soundtrack, or mashups of copyrighted audio and video material. . . . six of the all-time ten most popular videos on YouTube [were] reportedly music videos (Andrejevic, 2009).

Andrejevic mentioned "sweeping overtures by YouTube to commercial copyright holders" that eventually resulted in the institution of a proprietary system of code known as *Content ID* discussed below. The question is how does the corporate control of copyright in an age of remix and fan content creation (Lessig 2008, Walker 2008) factor into normalizing of online sexploitation and how might it be regulated when it comes to minor girls from vulnerable and marginalized groups?

COPPA: Protecting Children from Harm Online

Over 20 years ago the FCC enacted the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (known as The Communications Decency Act) and soon after the FTC enacted the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (15 U.S.C. 6501–6505). It was President Clinton who signed the former into law, thus adding FCC oversight of the Internet as a broadcast technology, to its responsibilities for television and radio. Later, President George W. Bush signed the COPPA act into law supposedly to secure the privacy of children under the age of 13 online and regulating "the gathering of personal information from a child by any means."

COPPA requires online companies who are aware of teens on their sites or who knowingly collect data from minors to obtain "verifiable" consent from a parent or guardian and the gathering of data that would qualify as a violation. A violation could include: 1) encouraging children to submit personal information online, 2) enabling her/him to make their personal information publicly available, or 3) any passive tracking of location and other data by companies on the Internet (COPPA 2016). These definitions of federal oversight were inscribed years before YouTube emerged as a "Broadcast Yourself" technology.

Google went live in 1998 just as Congress instituted the Communications Decency Act. The previous year, X-rated pornography was the first product to make money on the Internet. Napster, Myspace, YouTube, and Twitter did not yet exist. In 1999, the Napster launch allowed millions of young people to score free music via peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing of mp3s and videos via dial-up systems. In the eyes of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), a trade organization representing creators and producers in the recording industry, Napster allowed Internet users to violate musical and intellectual copyright blatantly (Kravets 2009). Napster was sued by RIAA, setting off culture wars over music piracy that led to its demise (M. James 2013).

Fifteen years after YouTube's launch, music piracy on the free platform is tamed by their Emmy-award winning Content ID system. The launch of a site designed to "remove the technical barriers to the widespread sharing of video online" meant there was a low barrier to uploading and sharing videos anywhere, anytime, to anyone on the web (Burgess and Green 2009). Curiously, YouTube originally began as a dating site (Nieva 2016). Before the launch of YouTube in 2005, owners Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawid

Karim unsuccessfully tried to lure "attractive females" with $100 through a Craigslist ad. All they had to do was post 10 or more videos to the new site, but no one took the bait (Burgess and Green 2009). Similar to the popular nightclub tactic where ladies get in free before 10 pm, media and entertainment often resort to tactics that lure young girls and women to "get paid" or "get in free." Meanwhile, nightclub promoters served women up as bait to increase traffic and consumption of their leisure services and sale of spirits by its targets—male consumers in a patriarchal society where girls and women used as if objects. Even in the music business, from rhythm and blues to rap songs emerging male artists incorporate familiar chants from black girls' musical play to hook audiences with earworms from vernacular spaces to generate popular taste in new dance music (Gaunt 2012). The sexual exploitation of female users' videos remains a lure in various contexts. When girls make videos that mirror this process, they will be blamed for their own sexual objectification.

When YouTube made it possible for any online user to post clips from TV or radio, this triggered an accusation about online piracy from copyright holders and big media companies like Viacom. In 2010, Viacom sued Google, YouTube's parent company. Their loss in 2013 led more or less to a deal between YouTube, major music labels, and entertainment companies like Nielsen and Billboard where viewable impressions were viewed as currency to be accumulated in the economic marketplace. With Content ID in place, YouTube's algorithms could track any audio and visual material uploaded that was an infringement of rights holders' registered copyright. With over 1 billion users as of 2015 (Winkler 2015), every upload can be matched against a database of millions of audio and video "fingerprints" submitted by rightsholders large and small. As mentioned earlier, the Content ID tool allows rightsholders to block or monetize derivative UGC like the twerking videos uploaded by Black girls on YouTube (Electronic Frontier Foundation, 2017).

Music has always played a pivotal role in socialization for members of elite institutions as well as the state. Music is vital in marginalized communities like Black American culture and Black girls' imagined communities (Lysloff 2003; Turino 2008, Gaunt 2006). The ubiquitous nature of YouTube mobile intensifies the global availability to published content and the accessibility of shareable media among and beyond the friend and family networks of minor girls. The beats and rhymes of music, as well as the algorithms and user engagement of social media, amplify the ways young

girls perform and share their "publicly-private and privately-public" selves (Lange 2014). It also amplifies the speed, collapses the context, and reduces critical literacies about the gendered ways other users–young and old, Black and non-Black—racialize and sexualize their engagement with Black girls' twerking videos content. If children are recognized as having songs in their heads (P. Campbell 2010), how do sexually explicit music and video shape the lives of pre-adolescent Black females as they embody their rhythms while creating content on/for YouTube?

Intersectionality and CTDA

The theory of intersectionality, which emerged from Black feminist thought in the 1970s and 80s helps answer such questions (Combahee River Collective, 1977, A. Davis 1981, Smith, Hull, and Scott 1982).

> [B]lack feminism imagines Black women's subjectivities as an inherent disloyalty to race-or-gender thinking and marshals Black women's [as well as girls'] stories, experiences, and narratives as a way of continuously and strategically jamming the workings of binary thinking (Nash 2008, 9).

The study of intersecting forces of oppression is described as "intersectionality" (Crenshaw 1991, Collins 1993, 2000, Nash 2008, Cho, et al., 2013, Cooper 2015, Hankivsky 2014). Intersectionality follows the premise that oppression is never merely the result of a single factor of one's identity; our lived experiences are a function of a convergence of age, race, gender, and our positionality within broader social structures. How we move and transact, or how our images in UGC, is transacted with by others, is the thing to be studied to render oppression and exploitation visible to critical readers. These experiences of convergence reflect exclusion, discrimination, segregation, and hate online that bring up questions like what kind of power do tween Black girls have on YouTube given its corporate-controlled platform and what kinds of oppression or exploitation is evident by the engagement with their UGC on YouTube (Fuchs 2014)?

The examination of gendered and racialized oppression and empowerment in digital spaces has contributed to the critical study of Internet technology (Emerson 2002, Stokes 2004, 2010, Lindsey 2012, Trammel and Dillihunt 2012, Gaunt 2015, Tanksley 2016). Studies of Black Twitter specifically examining discourses and discrimination of Black and brown people on social media platforms by André Brock (2009, 2016)

and Safiya Umoja Nobile (2012, 2013, 2016) are most salient. Brock offers a method of analysis known as *Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis* or CTDA (Brock 2016). It is a holistic approach to understanding and analyzing the multiple interactions between technology, cultural ideology, and practice. CTDA is useful in examining the meaning of the YouTube as an information and communication technology (ICT), with its distinct hardware, software, interface, and as tools of content creation. CTDA also reveals counter-hegemonic cultural practices and discourses users from marginalized groups bring to free social network sites and the uses of platforms.

Theory

> We were still in love with ourselves then. We felt comfortable in our own skins, enjoyed the news that our senses released to us, admired our dirt, cultivated our scars, and could not comprehend this unworthiness.
>
> —Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

The patriarchal and sexist oppression reflected in searches for music on YouTube is part of a more extensive system of oppression. Realizing that these systems fuel the attention economy, the fuel our tastes for images and sounds, which in turn tend to obscure and obfuscate not only the social suffering of Black girls and women but the exploitation of their objectified images and terms associated with their imagined community. Queer Black feminist scholar and Professor Moya Bailey created the word "misogynoir," as she wrote, "to describe the particular brand of hatred directed at Black women in American visual & popular culture." She and other scholars of color have used the term to confront the persistent and pervasive assault on Black cis or transgender women particularly in rap music:

Even when things attempt to move away from the formula, MONEY+ CARS + HOES = hit record, they can't move that far; money+ cars+ hoes = hit record. A song about playing your music loud still has to call on the transformative power of Roscoe Dash, Travis Porter, et al.'s masculinity to make lesbians want to suck a dick? Nice. I wonder what it means that there are no songs on mainstream radio that challenge the status quo. Moreover, when artists do manage to break out, they look so out of place (Bailey 2011).

Examining the misogynoir of Black women in new media ecologies is not new (Noble 2012, Lindsey 2012, Cooper 2015). By studying how technology on YouTube fosters implicit bias and racialized gender oppression, we can begin to recognize how Black girls' content contributes to the ongoing stigmatization of their image. When online memes and comedy sketches make fun of black female behavior and names as mere clickbait to monetize a channel, the dehumanization and restigmatization of the Jezebel stereotype persist. The social proof of others that suggests the content is laughable, as well as the persistence of the content itself, reinforces and amplifies stigmas via systemic technologies (algorithms) associated with searching, sharing, liking (or dis-liking). When users witness other users sharing and liking (or dis-liking) twerking videos by Black girls and read the adverse engagement below their content such as racially implied commentary where males suggest grooming tactics ("Why don't you take off more of your clothes in the next video"), this social behavior could entice tween girls to broadcast sexualized gestures in their dance to elicit more attention and more views. All these interactions create exposure to and the exposing of Black girls' personal meta-data through information doxxing and grooming that make them even more vulnerable to sexploitation online.

Previous scholars have discussed online Black girls but have rarely examined music and the music industry in relation to search and search results (Noble 2012; Lindsey 2012). Black girls' digital mobility–their access to handheld webcams, and their self-generated content–will, in turn, be used to make *them* responsible for the harm mitigated by the unethical sexist and racist practices of unknown others on YouTube. Drama framing Black girls in twerking videos as if sluts, as if they are throwing away their innocence, masks merely the structural exploitation, intended or not, by tech and music companies who can hide behind a claim of plausible deniability. To avoid regulation, sites like YouTube claim they are not to blame when girls or boys under 13 distort their age to subscribe to their website. The youngest members of marginalized groups are much more vulnerable than other groups to what happens to their privacy, their expression, and their public reputation online. The interlocking oppressions they may encounter as a consequence of permanently digitized information that will be searchable now and into the foreseeable future is not something a tween of any ethnic background is likely to anticipate.

In many ways, music and music discovery on YouTube becomes a perfect lure for adolescent girls to present themselves in sexually suggestive videos.

The massive public archive is also a resource for men (or women) to use free online video content to find content by young girls for their own sexual arousal or predatory pleasure.

Entertainment media companies such as Nielsen Soundscan (third-party sales data), Spotify (music streaming), VEVO (an American multinational online video hosting service with YouTube as its key distributor), and Billboard together have played an important role (see Sisario 2013) in making social network sites free for all users. Many of the undergraduate students in my courses believe this is a valid trade-off. However, at what costs to children online or to their privacy and protection?

What are the intangible costs of re-stigmatizing society's deep-rooted and persistent forms of racism and sexism through predatory audience engagement with tween Black girls' UGC? Are YouTube's audiences learning from the negative attention often found below tween Black girls' twerking videos and what attitudes are girls consuming about themselves given the misogynoir and sexploitation evident in the grooming practices and racism hurled at them at ages as young as eight or nine?

Data and Methods

YouTube is the most popular video-sharing site on the web (Dollinger 2015) and the most visited destination for children under 13 (Shields 2014; KidSay 2014). While the study of race, gender, and sexuality in social media is no longer new, the social surveillance of people of color, especially children, is much less common. A grounded theory approach to developing this methodology allowed the author to examine the technology through use by a diverse group of undergraduate students. Since technology allows us to personalize our access to social media by location and device, a multi-user approach was essential to discovery.

For six weeks between October 27 and December 11, 2014, a team of 16 undergraduate researchers assisted the author in collecting over 1000 videos targeting the study of Black girls twerking on YouTube. A group of researchers collected and coded user-generated content of tween and teen Black girls twerking primarily at home in their bedrooms. A hybrid of discourse analysis (Emerson 2002; Ringrose 2008; Brock 2009), content analysis, (Wallis 2011) and theoretical sampling (Glaser et al., 1968; Emerson 2002) was used to collect and analyze the data.

Central to this research is not only what videos were selected as data,

but also what search terms, autosuggestions, thumbnails, and filters lead to them to be discovered by group members. We first searched YouTube with terms that related to race (e.g., White, Black, hair), gender (e.g., girls, me and my sister), age (e.g., 10 year-olds), and "sexualized" play (e.g., variations of the word "twerking"), and their intersections. With over 27 group members, this process elicited over 600 videos. They were coded based on a number of variables related to the content creation, user engagement, and the music (including explicit lyrics) employed. We collected information linked to user-generated metadata and user engagement (e.g., titles, subscriber names, the number of views, likes/dislikes, age-restrictions, and sexually-suggestive comments).

To glimpse how the broader music industry and technology companies economically benefit from the medium of YouTube and its monetization of UGC, the artist and title of a copyrighted song(s) were identified, whenever possible, utilizing free music discovery apps such as Shazam or SoundHound. The name of the artists and any "deep links," or hyperlinks that connect a user from the YouTube interface directly to music content stores like Google Play and iTunes, were also captured whenever they were visible on the interface (Maddern 2015). The latter led to insights into the implications of monetization in tween and teen girls' fan labor as well as how deep links benefit rights holders.

Participant-observation, learning to vlog, findings and insights from the community norms and values found in the YouTube Creator Academy were also part of the methodology. Situating our discovery within the context of creating videos and uploading content on YouTube offered insights into the techno-cultural logic of YouTube creators and users. Each group member also imagined what it might be like to search for content featuring Black girls as part of the search method. As creators of self-generated content we learned to craft catchy titles, tag content, and choose thumbnails that were "appropriate" rather than sexy (or eye-catching) in order to avoid misleading audiences just to get views. Discoverability and engagement of music-related content are keys to increasing traffic in YouTube's attention economy and the metadata a user assigns (e.g., 140-character limits apply to titles and descriptions) or the thumbnail one chooses are all essential to discovery, search engine optimization (SEO), auto search results, and autosuggestions of videos.

Popular music is one of the most alluring means of information and communication in online technology. It can be used to click and bait girls

into situations where their voiceless presence drives an economy of profit and unpaid affective labor. This research is the beginnings of the Bottomlines Project aimed at studying big data and the unintended consequences of music-related social media for members of marginalized groups. The goal is to reveal how the intersections of music, technology, and culture contribute to the social reproduction of structural and intersectional biases in online spaces.

Findings

From a close analysis, three main patterns emerged from the study of 80 videos featuring girls who appear to be tweens (ages 12 or younger) found in the over 600 twerking videos collected:

1. disclosure (self-disclosure as well as doxxing) of personal information about tween girls;
2. a disconnect between Black girls' cultural norms of embodied play and YouTube's demarcation of age-restricted content; and
3. the digital sexploitation of Black girls' UGC due to monetization of copyrighted songs

The following sections outline the patterns of user interactivity (Kiousis 2002) that offer a Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis of YouTube. Patterns of disclosure can help us examine how technology, the social aspects of ICT and interpersonal perceptions of online activity are shaping music discoverability, music fandom, and the need for social justice work around online citizenship.

Disclosure (Self-Disclosure and Doxxing)

Online disclosure is the act of exposing something for public view or making information that personally identifies young girls to other users. Two types occur in the dataset. The first is *self-disclosure* from user-generated metadata and on-screen behavior by both girls and those posting comments. Men and boys often leave their actual phone numbers below tween girls' videos. The second is *disclosure by viewers* often in the form of doxxing or disclosing of personal information that male users gather from elsewhere on the web and post in the comments.

YouTube's interface requires the disclosure of metadata provided by the

user as creator. User-generated metadata, specifically the first 140 characters of both the title and the description along with the thumbnail (often featuring a tween girl's figure squatting in a freeze frame), factors into the discoverability of twerking videos in YouTube's search algorithm. The massive UG archive grows exponentially year after year increased from 300 hours uploaded a minute in 2013 to over 500 hours in 2015 (Robertson, 2015). Metadata shapes the context through which a user/viewer engages with individuals seen on-screen. These narrative elements express tween girls' imagined self-identity and connection via race, gender, and sexy song titles. Examples of YouTube titles by tweens include:

- "12 year old twerking (must see)" or "9 year olds doing toot dat"—self-disclosing a girl's age to grab attention given the noisy environment of YouTube search
- "red nose"—using the title of a 2013 song by Sage the Gemini that charted #52 in 2013 on Billboard Hot 100 gaming the "halo effect" of the song in search results.
- "Me Dancin to trampoline booty"—using the title of a song by the Kansas City, Missouri-based party rapper, dubbed "King of Twerk," Kstylis. His song "Booty me Down" charted #49 in 2013 on Billboard's R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay
- "Keep dat ass jumpn :-)"—the hook from the song "Booty Hopscotch" by Kstylis
- "The way we do bruck it down lol"—using the song title "Bruck it down," that charted #66 in 2013 on Billboard's R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay, by Jamaican dancehall singer-rapper Mr. Vegas

To analyze such texts, I utilized Voyant-tools.org, a web-based text reading and analysis environment, to examine 380 total words found in the 60 user-generated titles from the subset of tween videos. This elicited 192 unique word forms. The most frequent words in the corpus were twerking (24); lil (16); twerk (14); girl (11); booty (9). The metadata disclosed by girls included 1) personal names—first as well as first and last although some were pseudonyms, 2) their age—"9 year olds doing toot dat," "10 year old drop it low," or "Niña de 8años bailando dembow:-) :-) :-) :-) :-);" and 3) older tween siblings who may have their name on their channel broadcasting a younger female sibling messing around twerking on camera. This form of disclosure, albeit unintended, may be exploited by data mining advertising

by those interested in target demographics of music consumption. The insertion of popular song titles and the style of dance, easily sought in search results, often appears in user-generated titles. Such metadata lures the curious, the haters, or those who seek out content by the youngest girls online whether malicious or merely voyeuristic.

In addition to self-disclosure, male users primarily disclosed personal information in the form of doxxing and downloading girls' content for their own gain or capital on YouTube. The first example mirrors those above: "Gitana de 6 años bailando dembow" [translated as "Gitana 6 years old dancing dembow"] *Dembow* is the Dominican style of dance that closely resembles twerking. Here the context shifts to hailing other users or men to come and see what minor or underage girls are doing in the context of a provocative dance broadcast to many online.

There were about a dozen videos that seemed to be downloaded and uploaded onto channels of a male subscriber who generated titles such as "mira que Sexy: niña de 11 año bailando Dembow" (Look how sexy: 11 year old girl dancing dembow), "Thick ebony teen twerking jiggly asf," or "Fast lil girl . . ." to name a few. Stigmas and stereotypes are used to lure attention to this ported content.

Disclosure by a second- or third-party becomes searchable information. Its digital traces remain in the archive linked visibly or invisible to girls' personal data content. Such linkages through algorithms will remain accessible to those seeking connections who might have the resources to gather and access such information. Given the persistence and portability of public YouTube videos, it is probably that such information will remain accessible as long as girls or their guardians do not request its removal. It will potentially still be accessible when girls' future selves come of age when they conduct a vanity search or when others seek to inspect their online presence and reputation long after adolescence. Girls may look back on their online selves as will others as they transact for status and reputation in their post-secondary education and future employment.

Another often overlooked aspect of disclosure involved observations of sound emanating from off-screen male users. Their voice(s) suggested that they may have been directing or had perhaps enticed the twerking of girls from behind the camera. Sometimes the verbal expressions, non-verbal sounds, and tone of voice, and even verbal directions to the girl on screen suggested a younger male sibling or a boyfriend was behind the camera. All the videos were accompanied by a soundtrack of sexually-explicit male-

voiced rap songs as the sonic backdrop to their interactions. Of over 52 songs in the subset, only 3 featured a female artist (e.g., Beyoncé, Ciara, and Nicki Minaj).

The presence of personal Black and Hispanic surnames, such as Brown, Clark, Williams, Jackson, Holman, Harrison, Bonilla, Jimenez, Arevalo Moreno, and Lee allowed many male users in the larger dataset to find the girls' other personal social media accounts and share their usernames for Twitter or Instagram to other viewers. In some comments or men left their actual phone numbers or their KIK messaging app username, so girls to reach out to them directly. The non-consensual doxxing of girls' social media information by male users was one of the most disturbing findings regarding disclosure. It made contacting tween girls beyond the YouTube interface easy for other male users and suggested girls were being digitally-trafficked (Gaunt 2015).

Disconnect

Social media researchers have discussed the colliding and collapsing contexts online (Marwick and boyd [sic] 2014; Davis and Jurgenson 2014; Marvin and Sun-ha 2017) as well as ethical disconnects among youth (C. James 2014). The cultural norms and values that drive interest-driven adolescent bedroom activities for Black tween girls who twerk on YouTube are at variance with YouTube's minimum-age requirement. YouTube's Community Guidelines about nudity and sexual content led six of the 60 videos to be flagged and age-restricted. This means the content will not be available to young audiences. However, age-resricted videos remain in the YouTube archive until someone explicitly flags content that reflects some harm or unethical exposure to an under-age girl on screen.

The policy available on a YouTube Help/Google Support page warns users, particularly parents/guardians, that some videos "may not be appropriate for all audiences" yet may not violate policies for vulgarity, nudity and sexually suggestive content, or videos that portray harmful or dangerous activities. "If a video is intended to be sexually provocative, it is less likely to be acceptable for YouTube." A review team may decide to apply the demarcation "age-restricted" to such content; these videos would no longer visible to users who are logged out, users ages 13–17, or users who opt to use the "restricted mode" which would allow parents to filter out potentially mature content. (Online kids under 13 can find dozens of how-to YouTube videos to teach them how to work-around these barriers.)

YouTube expects its audience members to use various cues—the video title, the description box, user metadata, its Community Guidelines and age-restrictions—to identify and flag potentially mature or sexual content. Restricted Mode is available in all languages, but due to differences in cultural norms and sensitivities, the effectiveness of user-reporting varies. The policy on age-restricted videos concludes with:

> If you are looking to monetize your video, please review our policies as age-restricted videos will not be eligible for monetization and will also not be shown in certain sections of YouTube. Age-restricted videos are also not eligible to be used for ads (YouTube Help 1).

The cultural disconnect between normative behavior and values associated with erotic (not pornographic) displays of dance common across the African diaspora conflicts with the Community Guidelines that lead to the demarcation of twerking videos as age-restricted content on YouTube. A list of violations in the guidelines on nudity and sexual content would lead most users to flag or report a twerking video as inappropriate. The following are considered violations:

- Whether breasts, buttocks or genitals (clothed or unclothed) are the focal point of the video;
- Whether the video setting is sexually suggestive (e.g. a location generally associated with sexual activity, such as a bed);
- Whether the subject is depicted in a pose that is intended to sexually arouse the viewer;
- Whether the language used in the video is vulgar and/or lewd;
- Whether the subject's actions in the video suggest a willingness to engage in sexual activity (e.g. kissing, provocative dancing, fondling); and
- If a subject is minimally clothed, whether the clothing would be acceptable in appropriate public contexts (e.g. swimwear vs. lingerie).
- Other factors include:
    - The length of time an image appears in the video
    - Fleeting vs. prolonged exposure especially relative to the overall length of the video.
    - The camera angle and focus

When tween and teen girls dance in their underwear, bend over and re-

veal what is typically perceived as a crotch shot, or pull their panties up to reveal more of their cheek, just the way grown women in predominately male and even female directed rap videos are seen doing, their content may be flagged, made inaccessible from the under 18 audience, but the UGC will remain, in many cases, in the archive.

This leads to the third finding that suggests the normalization of digital sexploitation when it comes to Black girls' UGC.

Monetization and Content ID

YouTube videos are monetized when a user becomes a YouTube partner with a checking account linked to a Google AdSense account. Given these requirements, it would be the exception not the norm for tween girls to monetize their channels on their own. Still their content is being monetized.

Advertisers are monetizing their content with the aid of Content ID while ordinary users—usually male subscribers—accumulate views from doxxing tween and teen girls' public content to their own YouTube channels. They also profit with social capital from views on YouTube by doxxing videos to playlists or to other social network sites like Facebook, (the now defunct) VINE, and Tumblr.

Content ID was awarded a Primetime Emmy for Engineering in 2013 for providing rights holders with an automated way of protecting and managing their rights and monetizing their programming on a global scale (Television Academy, 2013).

Content ID initiates the possibility of immersive advertising. "When a video is uploaded, it is checked against the [song and video] database, and flags the video as a copyright violation if a match is found" (YouTube Help, 2010). Even twerking videos where tween girls performed to more than one song from their bedroom were caught by Content ID.

While twerking video content may also be demarcated as age-restricted, rights holders not only control music-related content but also take advantage these new forms of user distribution. While only 10% (8 videos) were age-restricted, 21% (17 videos) featured ads by Google Play, iTunes, or Amazon in a deep link below tween girls' UGC.

The songs in the videos generally feature male-voiced sexually-explicit lyrics. As dance music, the lyrics usually direct female fans to perform choreographic gestures that signal twerking enacting the patriarchal fantasies commonly represented in music videos (Jhally 2007). This results in user-

generated content where girls jiggle their asses and bend over to reveal crotch shots in ways that mirror what they see performed first and foremost by the video vixens in commercial videos as well as increasingly as a gesture of female empowerment by megastars in the industry from Rihanna to Nicky Minaj to Beyoncé, all grown women.

Tween twerking videos predominantly drive eyes/attention to songs by male artists as well as to male subscribers who use twerking videos by young girls to drive traffic to a monetized channel. Other users watching young girls' twerking videos can purchase and download songs through deep links placed below the videos by copyright holders or the sound of the song will be removed. Deep links, attached to the title of song and the artist's name, redirect a user to another webpage where they are able to buy the music or access additional content like porn sites.

The twerking videos often function as clickbait for rights holders and emerging music creators dating back to Soulja Boy or more recent examples by Kstylis and many other artists. Girls who are supposedly restricted by age from participating on social network sites become the visual cipher through which companies and artist sell the sounds and genres of their music. Meanwhile, audience members groom girls in ways that cause their online fan play to resemble and be easily associated with porn.

Black girls, not-unlike other members of marginalized groups, buy-in to the participatory culture of uploading UGC content from their desire to be seen given the lack of their representation in many modes of media. The trade-in here? girls and others trade in the unforeseen and unintended consequences of dancing to popular dance songs under copyright in the hope of the micro-celebrity or Internet fame.

Most of the videos in the dataset collected average about 30,000 views. When girls dance to songs identified by Content ID as under copyright, the sound on their user-generated video is removed unless they agree to opt-in to advertising the music in their content. Fewer than 20 of over 600 videos did not have any sound, which could suggest these users opted-out of the immersive advertising of commercial music or perhaps they simply thought something went wrong with YouTube and simply tried making another video.

Either way, the twerking videos of most girls under the age of 17, and particularly girls below the minimum age of 13, are playing a tricky role in advertising content. Also, the algorithmic nature of big data is tricky. It tracks

the self-identified sex and age of every user along with your IP address as well as the types of engagement to show links to the Content ID. Tween girls are the object of the attention that drives traffic to new music in these examples of twerk-related content.

The total count at the time of the collection for the 80 videos that feature tween Black girls amounts to over 2,263,894 views. A view is counted when a video is watched for 30 seconds or more. Two statistics are important in understanding monetization—CPM and RPM/eCPM (Pinsky 2014). CPM stands for "cost per mille" (*mille* means "thousand" in Latin or "cost per thousand") which applies to the amount an advertiser (which could be an artist in conjunction with VEVO, for instance, or company like Tide or Nike) pays to have ads run against a video 1,000 times.

While practically all the videos of tween girls dancing to recorded songs do not appear to be monetized, male subscribers may be monetizing their content in various ways. In the subset of 80 tween twerking videos, 40 videos are danced to songs under copyright while 10 featured songs from local mixtapes by DJs based in Atlanta, Miami-Dade, and New Orleans (the latter marked by the distinctive "Triggerman" breakbeat). Together all the mixtape references stem from rap/dance music the represents the Dirty South. The music of YouTube creator/recording artist Kstylis from St. Louis Missouri, who hails himself as the King of Twerk, is most common in the dataset of tween twerking videos with titles such as "Booty Hopscotch," "Booty Me Down," "Trampoline Booty," and "Kangaroo Booty."

"Bruk it Down" by Dancehall recording artist Mr. Vegas is the next most prominent commercial artist along with "Red Nose" by Bay area artist Sage the Gemini, where twerking is known as "yiking". Examples from Dominican music known as dembow also appears in the data. The monetization that stems from ads by media companies as users and by ordinary male subscribers suggests the sexual exploitation or sexploitation of girls UGC as a form of unpaid work and affective digital labor by children.

These findings raise questions about how Content ID intersects with two acts of Congress—COPPA designed to protect children from harm online and DMCA designed to protect copyright in a digital age.

Discussion

When tween Black girls upload their own content, their context may center on play and musical performance. Through such display, girls learn to use

certain gesticulations to narrate the rhythm section and the ideas of a song in what's known as kinetic orality. Observers from within these cultures of learned dance choreography see the skill and the learned complexity involved. YouTube and the unintended audiences see stereotypes and stigmas. YouTube allows people from every background to "Broadcast yourself" (YouTube's iconic tag) freely and for free, but for those whose culture was targeted or stigmatized as deviant before the rise of the Internet experience similar and more intense associations from unintended audiences online.

Once Black girls' upload their twerking video, the broadcast is situated in the context of derivative content and that means monetization for rights holders and for users on YouTube whose total views on re-uploaded videos or playlists can increase their bottom-lines from the site.

Legislation designed to protect children from harm online, from advertisers collecting data from kids under 13 without the express permission of their parents or guardians, collapses and collides with the context of protecting the win-win for rights holders who use this child labor to increase attention to their product. They are more concerned with preventing piracy by individual users (DMCA) that protecting the girls under 13 whose images are virtually being trafficked in sexual ways for profit. Music companies and organizations will look past any culpability they have to youth and their parents, naturally place the blame on kids or their parents for not managing their participation online while they and other users generate multiple forms of capital and profit on the back of content generated by minor girls and marginalized girls who may be more vulnerable to such exploitation when it comes to intersections of race, gender, and sexuality online than most. Everyone but the girl seems to profit or gain value through cultural, social, or economic value.

> The politics of respectability implies that recognition of Black humanity has to be "earned" by Black people by engaging in puritanical behavior as approved by White supremacy . . . behaviors that Whites themselves don't have to engage in to "prove" humanity because of White privilege; they're always viewed as "the default human" (GradientLair 2013).

While Black girls' bedroom musical fandom often functions as a "backstage" for rehearsing their "onstage" roles as Black women and adults in other social settings (Goffman 1959), their UGC from activities like twerking tend to function as unpaid digital child labor where multiple "bottom-lines" produce profit for music and tech companies. Most companies have grown

indifferent and immune to the social suffering of young Black girls and the treatment of their images online.

A critical technocultural discourse analysis of tween Black girls' UGC demands we understand the cultural use of YouTube as a mechanism of social play and cultural performance, as a tool for reconnecting across the diaspora of New Orleans youth, of Black girls coming of age in their danced social identity, of learning to mess around with content creation when that is under the disciplinarial gaze of unintended users who find ways to reject and stigmatize Black girls online with the stated Community Guidelines of the platform. Traces left that suggest such disgust also become fodder for deriding girls by subsequent users who know embarrassment, shame, and sexual disgust gets attention in the comments of a YouTube video. It elicits social engagement through gossip and drama sharing. How do we begin to under and analyze the multiple interactions between technology, cultural ideology, and practice unless we begin to broadly study the experiences of marginalized groups on social media?

What initially drove my interest in collecting data on music-related UGC by Black tween and teen girls was the culturally-normative play these preadolescents displayed that reflect practice common in urban and suburban Black communities. Yet concerns about the unintended consequences soon arose. Even if young girls were sophisticated enough to account for the consequences of their own individual actions, tweens are not old enough nor ecologically fit enough to anticipate the cultural and societal consequences of their behavior online much less the technological ramifications.

The screen of the webcam and the frame on the YouTube screen or interface functions a mirror for the uploading a YouTube video of twerking. It reflects the internal values of their own culture, more or less, as well as the norms and values of an imagined community defined by being young, Black, and female as a dancer and as an online tween. Meanwhile, the same technology functions as a portal and a peep show for the external values of the pornographic gaze–a racialized and sexualized voyeurism entrained in the eyes of boys and men, or in the sight of those whose socialization by various forms of visual and sonic media entrains their taste for the sexual objectification and stigmatization, often simultaneously, of sexual "deviance" mapped onto their bodies. This phenomenon has existed since the evolution of mediated visual culture in early cartoons, photography, film, and television. YouTube is but an extension of these unintended consequences (cf.

Merton 1936) where s UGC is entangled in both internalized vines of culture and the externalized fines of societal expectations about Whiteness, heteronormativity, and femininity.

This begins to point at ways technology is facilitating the normalization and sexploitation of tweens' online play and user-generated content. The persistent accessibility to children's content—anywhere, anytime despite the limited physical mobility of Black tween girls beyond their bedrooms and the play spaces associated with school–functions like a pornographic peep show while it also functions as unpaid child labor for the music and tech business, not to mention advertisers who might be involved.

In subtle and subversive ways, twerking videos as UGC will be pointed to as the source of the normalization, and the girls are who are in the line of our visual apprehension will be to blame. But this is wrong. Such an interpretive move only normalizes the assignment of personal responsibility to children. It also normalizes forms of sexual grooming and racialized hostility towards the youngest girls of color online who are expressing their budding agency as pre-adolescents. The cultural disconnects of the Community Guidelines contribute to the ways other users feel compelled to protect the larger community but feel no ethical responsibility for the Black girls they see as if they are disconnected from the community they are supposedly out to protect by flagging comment or flaming their disgust in comments below it.

For girls of many different backgrounds, YouTube is the digital playground for their online expressive play, which by most countries account is a universal right. Play is where kids begin to learn to define their *own* voice in relation to others. But the relations being set in motion around twerking videos, the relationship between the creator and the viewer feels a lot like a form of *digital pimping*. Pimping their content, their social (not merely individual) agency, and contributing to the sexploitation of their culturally-significant play and normative use of social media as young people.

Converting play into profit is fairly common (Scholz 2012; Postigo 2016). When such online play accompanies sexually-explicit lyrics that feed not only the patriarchal pleasures of men and boys online but line the pockets of other users and music and tech companied for profit, should we be ethically concerned for minor girls? Minor girls with webcams on phones they were given by parents lured to buy multiple phones by a sales-pitch dominant telecommunications industry. The FOMO (fear of missing out) mentality

that suggests moms needs to stay in touch with their children 24/7. The ethics of this seems unconscionable but this is barely noticed if tweens are not perceived as innocent from the start.

A well-worn hypothesis in social and developmental psychology is that adolescence is a defining period of self-identity formation. Sociological theories about impression management also known as "face-work" (Goffman 1959) is turned on its head because of a cultural disconnect and the doxxing that takes place with content by tween girls who do not recognize they have a reputation to manage online. The theory of looking-glass self and its social formation (cf. Mead) means that girls are learning who they are in the face of sexually grooming commentary by audiences who have no compassion or ethical consciousness about the treatment of young girls online.

While they are learning to dance and to move in ways that are culturally normative, they are also learning to be silent, to not voice their dissent to sexually objectifying lyrics from songs that clearly target very young girls. Three artists' song titles dominate the subset of 80 songs. All three—Soulja Boy, Kstylis, and Mr. Vegas—are emerging artists whose presence on YouTube advanced their recording career. They gain a credible voice on the backs of Black girls' user-generated content with lyrics that turn the booty—a girl's ass—into hopscotch, a trampoline, meat, or booty is used in a title as an act a female should enact on top of a male "booty me down". All the while, the architecture of You Tube's interface advertises these artists' music via deep links to various stores to buy their singles. "Bruk It Down" by Mr. Vegas featured deep links for Google Play, eMusic, iTunes and AmazonMP3 while "Booty Hopscotch" by Kstylis was sold via Google Play, iTunes, AmazonMP3, eMusic. The texts from these deep links are duplicated here in the order they once appeared below girls' UGC from the dataset. YouTube's interface has gone through a few transformations since 2013–4 when the data was collected and such information even more elusive to spy for most users captivated by the view count or type of comments they probably notice first.

The context collapse continues since some users visit YouTube simply for pleasure or entertainment, artists use it to gain social and economic capital, and tech and music companies use it for profit in the convergent model where girls' play becomes affective digital labor for emerging artists and for companies like VEVO.

Intersectionality theory in Black feminist studies and in internet and new media studies helps us view how search and search results as well as UGC creation and social engagement by its audiences are all shaped by same

structures of power that afford privilege to a few often at the expenses of others. Who protects the young Black girls in the commercially-controlled spaces where profit is shaped by the usual symbolic discourses of power—White superiority, patriarchy, and capitalism? In other words, who profits from normalizing the sexploitation of Black girls twerking videos and who will protect them in new media ecologies like YouTube?

This article offers sometimes disturbing insights into experiences that girls may view as normal. They may even seek more attention as male users' comments invite their self-objectification which may in turn lead other male users to treat their content and image as fodder to denigrate Black and female subjects while gaining capital by driving traffic to their content or curated playlists of tween girls twerking. Eighty out of over 600 videos appear to feature tween girls under 13, and total over 2.2 million views. Ranging from 71 views to over 200,000 views, the average view count is about 27,000 videos for user-generated content featuring bedroom or living room twerking by tween Black girls.

Most tween girls of color who twerk online as well as those who wish to protect them from harm may be indifferent to the ramifications of audience commodity culture expressed in the idea that if a platform is free, you are the product sold to advertisers (Smythe 1977; Arvidsson & Bonini 2015; Khajeheian 2016). In this case, tween Black girls generate content that increases the bottom-lines of everyone but themselves and this is heightened by the structures of race, gender, and technology where being young, Black and female might get you attention but without the ability to capitalize on the attention with a monetized channel, their aspirational fan vids should be considered exploited labor. But who protects them when they lose control of their content?

YouTube content generated by users functions like digital "sharecropping" (Lessig 2008, Soha and McDowell 2016). It cultivates value for the landowner but not the everyday user. When it comes to marginalized or vulnerable populations, it is analogous to slaves who picked cotton or other cash crops or female slaves whose labor reproduced the social, cultural, and economic capital in human life enslaved by a system of exploitation. When a tween Black girl broadcasts herself twerking to sexually-explicit lyrics, performed primarily by male-voiced texts in music under copyright, pre-adolescent girls' UGC entrains them in a process of enacting moves designed for a patriarchal gaze. Her body image (and her content) become a commodity for advertising products for recording artists, distributors like

VEVO, and large music and tech companies based on the innovative business models of digital new media and mobile platforms.

Legislation designed to protect children from harm online, including barring advertisers collecting data from kids under 13 without the express permission of their parents or guardians, collapses and collides with the context of protecting the win-win for rights holders who use this child labor to increase attention to their product. They are more concerned with preventing piracy by individual users (DMCA) that protecting the girls under 13 whose images are virtually being trafficked in sexual ways for profit. Music companies and organizations will look past any culpability by YouTube or Google and blame the youth for doing what generates profit and multiple forms of capital for everyone but the girl. Who will protect these girls from data collection, from predatory grooming from online strangers, and from the socialization that surely comes with being viewed as deviant while having fun? The normalization of such behavior towards Black girls during their formative tween years should be unacceptable.

This system of production turns Black girls play into exploited affective fan labor where social roles and contexts of kids' public and private behavior collapse and collide with other users (Davis and Jurgenson 2014), and organizations and companies profit not only from the "win-win" that allows favorite artists to reuse the content of their fans to create promotional and business opportunities for themselves and the music and tech companies that distribute their work. The YouTube help information highlights how this "enables new forms of creativity and collaboration" (YouTubeHelp 2010) but the unintended costs of this "win-win" situation should no longer go unexamined. More empirical observation of both quantitative and qualitative processes on YouTube is needed especially with regards to members of groups marginalized by the intersection of race, sex, gender, sexuality, and particularly age.

Intersectionality allow researchers to critically examine both the position and relationship of users, advertisers, and corporate-controlled sites within the situational labor and play at work. As we study human lives and lived realities online, intersectionality help us see how all three together (users, advertisers, and owners of companies) in the case of YouTube, are "shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g., "race"/ethnicity, Indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion) [occurring] within a context of connected systems and structures of power" (Hankivsky 2014) such as federal laws and policies such

as COPPA, YouTube's policies and terms of service such as its Community Guidelines not to mention political and economic unions such as RIAA, and the practices and policies of digital media companies and their business.

In the text-based early days of the Internet, race was dislodged from users' real-life bodies while it was also disembodied from communication online in various ways (Chon 1999, Daniels 2013, Nakamura and Chow-White 2013). But other signifiers allowed users to mark marginalized members of sites, which contributed White flight and segregation between networked public sites (boyd 2013).

Intersectionality, or any critical analysis of power and oppression, helps users—kids and their guardians in this case—realize how their own interests may not be one and the same as those in dominant positions of power offering free access to Internet sites and its content creation (Fuchs 2014). This ability to freely define phenomena, to make content and upload to the web, is particularly problematic for online users who are members of marginalized groups who may not appreciate that who you are online is who others say you are.

> The presence of racist or racially charged, provocative content on a site typically appears to reflect something other than the results of [users' intentions. Instead companies are delivering user-participants to advertisers while seeking to maintain profitability for their shareholders]. In this way, racist, homophobic, and misogynist imagery and content becomes reified as a norm, and the structures that abet it are cloaked and invisible, suggesting that the existence of content is just some kind of natural order of things and not, for example, potentially hugely profitable (Roberts 2016).

Conclusion

Uploading dance videos to your favorite songs is a form of aspirational music fandom and online play for tween Black girls. Through such display, girls learn to search, learn to get their content discovered, and learn to confront or ignore the reactions of the networked public they may encounter.

The UGC studied in this article featured videos posted by subscribers who joined YouTube from its first year of operation in 2006 through 2014. By examining a sample of YouTube twerking videos by teen and tween girls, we reached three substantive conclusions about the normalizing of hostility and sexploitation towards tween Black girls and their UGC.

The self-disclosure and doxxing of personal identifying information both

contribute to tween Black girls vulnerability to forms of sexual grooming, such as inviting girls to take off more of their clothes in their next video, or male subscribers leaving phone numbers for the girl in the video, turning the online play of tween girls into a strange "call boy" service designed to encourage girls to contact male viewers.

A core tenet of anthropological inquiry is to fight ethnocentrism, to avoid judging another culture by the norms and values of one's own. On YouTube, the visual element is even more deceptive than text. Viewers believe what they see is true regardless of the fact that our perspective shapes what we perceive as reality. Online there is no guarantee the cultural information or images will be interpreted as the producer of the content intended. This is a perfect description of context collapse. But the context collapse is a function of the design of the technology, its intersections with diverse groups, and the interpersonal (or lack of interpersonal) exchange groups experience as users, creators, and audience members when the subject is young, Black, and female. The ideas that are allowed to surface and thrive in our ecological experiences with technology are reproducing biases.

In a 2014 TED talk about culture as technology, psychologist Barry Schwartz stated that unlike the technology of objects, the technology of ideas does not vanish when they stop working. "Bad technology disappears. With ideas—false ideas about human beings will not go away if people believe that they're true. Because if people believe that they're true, they create ways of living and institutions . . . consistent with these very false ideas" (Schwartz 2014). This is what concerns me most about invisible and unintended audiences' engagement and the digital traces they leave behind under Black girls' aspirational twerking videos on YouTube. The comments that suck can get passed on and shared to the next viewer and the next and the next *ad nauseum* until the user removes the video or it is taken down for violation of Community Guidelines or copyright infringement. But who protects the girl from online harassment and sexist grooming?

The third key finding of monetization appears to contribute to the process of normalization through sexual exploitation. The system of Content ID used to control and track copyrighted music on the platform leads to a phenomenon that, again, normalizes hostility and sexploitative practices. This is happening not only in forms of engagement found below girls' videos, but the digital traces also left in comments remain to prime future readers of how to treat Black tween girls and their user-generated content. It is hard to recognize their performance as play when the literate comments links girls'

non-verbal and mute behavior, primarily accompanied by sexually-explicit male-voiced lyrics, to sex work and a pornographic male gaze.

> As corporate controlled spaces become seamlessly integrated into the social worlds of youth, they are increasingly important places of interaction and self-expression (cf. Lenhart, et. al., 2015; quoting Lenhart in Hill, 2016).

While YouTube fits the description of a corporate-controlled space where children interact, the unintended consequences of those interactions often go unpublicized to the communities of color whose concern might offer the most protection for black girls online.

There are serious ethical issues associated with collecting, downloading, and sharing videos that could be considered child pornography or any form of child sexual exploitation. "Federal law defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor (persons less than 18 years old). . . . Federal law prohibits the production, distribution, importation, reception, or possession of any image of child pornography. A violation of federal child pornography laws is a serious crime, and convicted offenders face fines severe statutory penalties" (U.S. Department of Justice). In 2011, Former Attorney General Eric Holder reported at the National Strategy Conference on Combating Child Exploitation a historic rise in the distribution and number of images shared online and added "Tragically, the only place we´ve seen a decrease is in the age of victims" (ibid.). The "permanency, longevity, and circulation" of YouTube twerking videos accompanied by derogatory, sexually-explicit comments directed at tween girls' performance of their black femaleness by online male users who treat their content as if pornography surely functions in psychologically damaging ways. At least it may operate as forms of micro-aggression often do. They may disrupt their healthy development of their self-image, social identity in public spaces, as well as their sexuality and their ability to develop a sense of trust in others.

I stopped collecting this data late in 2015. I connected to an investigative journalist who specializes in Internet privacy named Kashmir Hill. I shared the spreadsheet of data on over 600 videos of tween Blacks girls twerking and Kashmir went video by video to try to connect with and interview any of the girls who had uploaded videos. She was unable to find one. But she stumbled upon an 11-year old Black girl who was defending herself against the "pervs," as she called them, who had left sexually-explicit comments be-

low a video she had made three years earlier at age nine. Let's call her by the pseudonym Deneshia.

Deneshia had made a twerking video with her two cousins in 2013. You could tell the video was surreptitiously made with a desktop computer mounted with a webcam on a desk in her bedroom. As they recorded their dancing, you could see them abruptly stop whenever she heard a grown-up coming near her open door. She and her cousins would stop twerking and act like they were playing a game on the computer screen until the adult was out of sight or sound.

"[Deneshia] was wearing a Hannah Montana [a.k.a. Miley Cyrus] t-shirt," wrote Kashmir Hill and article bringing attention to the concerns around child sexploitation. 2013 was the year the former Disney personality shed association with kiddie television to crossover into a "bad girl" or a late adolescent embracing her sexuality by twerking on Facebook and YouTube. "Another [girl in the video] is wearing a pink tutu, and the third is in pink and white pajamas. 'Let's get this started,' says one of the girls into the webcam before putting on a fast-paced song, heavy on the bass." The song was "Toot Dat" by DJ Dwizz.

A YouTube search on September 2, 2018 for the song title resulted in about 20 suggested videos. The top result was uploaded July 31, 2008 on the *BaltimoreClubMD* channel and had about 7.5M views. The 4th suggested video was uploaded May 26, 2017 on the *Jersey Club For Life (Toot Dat) Teamclub* channel revealing the continued popularity of the track. Deneshia named her YouTube video "9 year olds doing toot dat," and the video had garnered over 74,000 views when it was added to the dataset in 2014. Hill described the sexually-explicit engagement by male YouTube users:

> Many of those who watched it didn't just think it was cute. "The girl in the pink & the girl in the white pants just made my dick hard. Dem some sweet little fat asses," wrote one commenter. (People can be permanently banned from YouTube for predatory behavior, but YouTube says users would need to flag these comments for them to be taken down.)[1]

The investigative piece was published in 2016 was titled "A 9-year-old's twerking video had 70,000 views and she couldn't get it taken down" (Hill 2016). Two years after nine-year old Deneshia uploaded her playful twerking video to YouTube, she had lost control of her account and was unable to remove the content. Kashmir Hill sent a request for help to Google and it took

four months to get a response. Hill spoke to a representative and within an hour the video was removed. They were not interested in the rest of the data.

As long as girls generate videos of themselves, even if minors under the age of 13, these artists and companies will not be thought of us the culprit. On some level, it seems YouTube and not simply the YouTube uploader or girls' parents, the music industry and not simply the commenters, should be culpable for distributing and capitalizing on tween girls' twerking videos. If it was radio or television, broadcasters could be responsible for any harm to minors. But the administration of COPPA is designed to minimize the any culpability by content uploaded by users or the comments.

The producers of platforms like YouTube, dominated by White and White-identified males whose "design blindness" (Birkeland 2012)–a bounded system of thinking caused by the lack of inclusion and diversity in the tech industry as well as a lack of offline as well as online interactions with people of color and/or women–contributes to the unintended consequences of Black girls' online play. The biases that stem from the limitations of their algorithmic and techno-cultural design are inherent biases that socially reproduce racial and sexual stereotypes at a scale far beyond ordinary, everyday face-to-face interactions by non-White, non-female, and non-cisgender users themselves. The inclusion of more women and girls of color in the design of these systems would lessen and disrupt the normalization of sexploitation of black girls and their content by unknown others and unintended audiences online. As psychologist Barry Schwartz warned, bad ideology like bad technology is hard to dispute. By bringing attention to these techno-cultural discourses, we can begin to discuss regulation and find ways to improve the digital media literacy education about the sexploitation of the user-generated content uploaded by members of marginalized groups.

Kyra D. Gaunt (PhD, University of Michigan) is an ethnomusicologist and leading scholar in the gendered study of musical blackness between the sexes, as well as critical studies of music and technology from YouTube to Wikipedia. Her feminist counter-history *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop*, funded by the Ford Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, won the 2007 Alan Merriam Book Prize from the Society for Ethnomusicology. Her earliest publications on Black girls as agents in popular musicking contributed to the emergence of hip hop studies, black girlhood studies, and hip-hop feminism, and the viral TED video, *How the Jump Rope Got Its Rhythm* with over 7M views, features her scholarship on kinetic orality. Dr. Gaunt also serves as a federally-certified expert witness on Facebook and she performs as a classically-trained vocalist and an R&B/jazz singer-songwriter; her music is downloadable on iTunes.

Note

1. Examples of the comments and further discussion can be found on *Splinter*: https://splinternews.com/a-9-year-olds-twerking-video-had-70-000-views-and-she-c-1793854688.

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