CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: SEXISM IN CONTEMPORARY POPULAR ENGLISH MUSIC OF 2015 IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to explore sexism in music through analysis of language used, themes present, and grammatical power distributions evident in English contemporary pop songs from 2015. It aims to look into the types of gender ideologies and power relations reproduced and resisted in the musical aspect of pop culture. The study hypothesizes that the songs analysed contain significantly more language and sexist themes that is derogatory to women as opposed to that which is sexist against men, and that grammatical power distribution trends observed will be greatly skewed toward male characters.

The study selected a corpus of 20 songs from the Hot 100 Songs 2015 Year-End Chart by Billboard that revolved around relationships between male and female characters. This was followed by an analysis which comprised of two stages, identifying sexist themes in lyrics and comparing grammatical power allocation to male and female characters with reference to Systemic Functional Linguistics.

The majority of the songs we analysed, which were performed by both male and female artists, favoured male characters over females in terms of grammatical power allocation, which mirrors the power imbalances in the real world. From the analysis of themes, it was evident that sexism in music exists against both genders, and the prevalence of different biases that influence our thinking was demonstrated. As a whole, results indicated that gender ideologies present in the corpus were in favour of males and more prejudiced against females.

We concluded that the gender ideologies present in English Contemporary popular music of 2015 are more sexist toward women, but that sexism against males also exist in great amounts, as power is distributed in favor of males, but sexist themes biased against both sexes were highly prevalent.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, Sexism, English music

Section 1: Introduction and Aims of Research

Music is arguably the most important, influential, and representative aspect of culture. Popular music reflects societal norms, ideals, values, and customs, and even deals with conflicts and controversial issues that exist in current society. Additionally, it merges with cultural evolution in the opposite way; music, with its prevalence in all forms of media and ability to affect any demographic, has a huge influence on how society is shaped. It is for these reasons that an awareness of the ideologies and themes present, especially those concerning gender relations, in music is vital. It is widespread knowledge that many aspects of the media are rampant with sexism against both men and women. However, popular music is a section of the media rarely approached in the field of gender studies, even despite the immense significance it has in influencing current interactions and societal power distribution.

This study aims to explore gender relations in popular contemporary English music from 2015. As it is not possible for the study to make a definitive claim on the exact extent of sexism present in our society or in music as a whole, the project is simply an exploration into the different themes and power relations present in music. The scope established was identified as the most relevant and realistic range given the time frame of the project. The 20 most popular songs of 2015, as defined by Billboard Charts, that depict any form of relationship between male and female characters, were chosen for analysis.

The research questions this study aims to answer are as follows; Primary:

- What gender ideologies are present in English contemporary popular music of 2015?

Secondary:

- What sexist themes, such as stereotypes, offensive comments, violence, and inferiority based on gender, are present in these songs?

- How is power, both grammatical and real, distributed among male and female characters in music?

- Are these gender representations consistent in songs performed by male and female artistes? What is the difference?

Section 2: Literature Review

Historical Background:

Pop Music

Pop music is an originally Western genre of popular music that developed to meet the demand for an alternative to rock & roll from the 1950's, toward the end of that era of music. (Kay, *History of Pop Music*). The term refers to music that is crafted to appeal to the public. Pop music targets millions worldwide and therefore has the ability to influence a huge portion of society through its lyrics and ideologies.

Gender relations

While this is a universal concept that has been present as long as genders have existed, the push for equality between the sexes as we know it today began in the early 20th century, when public figures began to challenge perceptions of gender balance at the time. Several icons surfaced in this movement; writers like Simone de Beauvoir questioned male superiority and female objectification, and respected females such as Marie, Curie, Eleanor Roosevelt and Amelia Earhart made statements on the definitions of femininity and the limitations that constrain women in society. Margaret Sanger also emerged as a birth control activist, and, more currently, renowned actress Emma Watson made waves in the ever-evolving field of gender equality with her pioneering of the "He for She" campaign. Of course, this equality has not been achieved everywhere; in less progressed nations, equal rights advocacy remains opposed by some conservatives, and sexism remains an issue the world struggles with everyday.

Sexism in music

It is evident without deeper examination that pop music often contains racist, sexist, and stereotypical messages. Taking a more in-depth look at the lyrics may expose even more instances of social inequality reproduction, or reveal qualities in other songs that instead resist inequality and discrimination. Very basically, many songs objectify the female body, and portray men as having power over women. This study goes beyond this narrow definition of sexism and explores a greater variety of themes and grammatical power trends.

Critics believe sexism against females in pop songs is now more prominent than before, as patriarchal societies and chauvinism are more apparent. However, some believe that the expression of potentially offensive views on sexual relationships is far from modern. "Misogyny and sexism in lyrics have always existed," claims Jenny Stevens, deputy news editor of *NME*'. "And I don't think lyrics in current pop culture are any more sexist than they have been traditionally. But what's so depressing is that misogyny is still present now – decades on and we still hear the same hackneyed cliches about women." (Foster, 2014)

Theoretical Underpinnings:

CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis)

Critical Discourse Analysis is the study of social inequality, and power relations as they are reproduced or resisted by different modes and aspects of language. It is a process of research that involves deriving social meaning from discourse and interpreting dominance, social, political, cultural, racial, and gender inequality from linguistic techniques and patterns.

Norman Fairclough proposes a model for Critical Discourse Analysis research (Fairclough, 1989). The model suggests that a CDA study that comprises four stages. The first stage involves the selection of a presupposed problem of social inequality for study. Next, the study should craft a pertinent body of text for analysis, one that serves as an appropriate reflection of the society of the inequality issue. The third stage makes up the analysis. The methodology of the analysis varies, and is largely dependent on the type of study, but must always deal with the gathering of data that shows the workings of power distribution in the world of the discourse. The final stage demonstrates the implications of discourse in real-life systems of power. This stage of the research brings Critical Discourse Analysis back to its principal purpose; to explore issues of unequal power allocation in society and determine how different modes of discourse reproduce or resist current power ideologies.

SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics)

According to Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) a clause comprises one of six main processes; Material, Mental, Verbal, Relational, Behavioural, and Existential. The name given to a certain participant of the clause is dependent on the type of process;

- A Material process is one that involves a concrete action being taken and in which there is a 'doing' or 'happening' of an action or event. In a Material process, the Actor is the participant who carries out action, the Beneficiary is the participant for whom something is done, the Goal is the participant who is affected by action, and the recipient is the participant who receives something.

- A Verbal process is one that involves the communication, indication, or expression of ideas, be it via nonverbal or verbal methods.. In a Verbal process, the Sayer is the participant who communicates, the Addressee is the participant who receives the message, and the Verbiage participant that is communicated.

- A Mental process is one that involves emotion, cognition, perception, or want of something. In a Mental process, the Senser is the participant who carries out mental action and the Phenomenon is the participant that is perceived.

- A Behavioural process is a combination of the Mental and Material processes. It involves

a concrete action that is also psychological, and therefore communicated both emotional and physical action. In a Behavioural process, the Behaver is the participant that carries out action and the Phenomenon is the participant that dictates or stimulates the action carried out.

- An Existential Process is one that demonstrates the existence of a participant. In an Existential process, the Existent is the participant that exists.

- A Relational process is one that either describes two participants in relation to each other, equates to participants, or demonstrates possession of one participant by another. In a Relational process concerning description, the clause involves a carrier and attribute, in a Relational process concerning possession, the clause involves a possessor and a possessed, and in a Relational process concerning equation of two participants, the clause involves a token and value.

Participant Power Hierarchy

The following hierarchy in Fig. 2.1 was developed by Andrew Goatly (Goatly, 2000 as cited in Haig, 2012) as a loose guide to the amount of grammatical power allocated to different participants in a clause, as the role a participant plays in a process is an indicator of how much power the clause gives the character.. It demonstrates how characters can be ranked by power based on their participant types.

1. Actor in Transitive Material process
2. Actor in Intransitive Material process
3. Sayer in Verbal process
4. Experience in Mental process
5. Experiencer in Mental process
6. Affected in Material process

Fig. 2.1. Less Developed Hierarchy

In a different study (Haig, 2012), Edward Haig developed a more comprehensive adaptation of this hierarchy that includes all types of participants in the 6 aforementioned processes, with the exception of participants in relational processes, as relational processes do not indicate any form of power distribution, and are simply used for descriptive or explanatory purposes. This hierarchy is shown in Figure 2.2.

1. **Actor in a Transitive Material Process** [100]
   Steve shot the boy.
   Actors exercise their power to act materially on another participant, apparently volitionally.

2. **Actor in an Intransitive Material Process** [90]
   Steve ran away.
   Actors exercise their power to act materially, apparently volitionally, without affecting other participants.

3. **Sayer in a Verbal Process** [80]
   Mike told a lie to Steve.
   Sayers exercise their power to act semiotically (by sending a message), apparently volitionally, which has an effect on the consciousness of the Receiver (providing that one is present and sentient). Sayers in Verbal Processes without a Receiver should be considered less powerful.

4. **Behaver in Behavioural Process** [70]
   His parents cried for hours.
   Halliday describes Behavioural processes as being on the 'borderline' between Material and Mental processes because they include both physiological and psychological action. Hence, the Behaver is ranked above Senser here. Behavers exercise their powers to act but the action does not usually impinge on another participant. In some cases, however, a Phenomenon may also be involved, as in *The children sniffed the glue.*

5. **Senser in a Mental Process** [50]
   Mike heard the police sirens.
   Sensers exercise their power to respond to an external stimulus but this has no effect on another participant and may be non-volitional.

6. **Beneficiary in a Material Process** [30]
   Steve shot the boy for Mike.
   The Beneficiary is the entity for whom the action was performed and who 'benefits' from it in some way, where benefiting may be construed as receiving an enhancement of power. By implication the Beneficiary may have the power to occasion such actions.

7. **Receiver in a Verbal Process** [20]
   Mike told a lie to Steve.
   Receivers have the power to respond to verbal signals provided they are sentient. The reception itself however is generally non-volitional.

8. **Phenomenon in a Behavioural Process** [15]
   The children sniffed the glue.
   The Phenomenon has the power to impinge on the consciousness of another participant and stimulate it to act materially or behave in some way.

9. **Phenomenon in a Mental Process** [10]
   Mike heard the police sirens.
   The Phenomenon has the power to impinge on the consciousness of another participant.

10. **Existent in an Existential clause** [5]
    There was a boy in the car park.
    Here the existence of some entity is asserted. No power (beyond simple existence) is grammatically assigned to it, but neither is any action directed towards it.

11. **Goal in a Transitive Material Process** [2]
    Steve shot the boy.
    The Goal in a Transitive Material process does not exercise any power but rather is acted upon by another participant. However, it is an autonomous participant which is independent of the process.

Fig. 2.2. Participant Power Hierarchy

Sexist Themes

As this study aims to explore sexism in texts, it is essential that some themes related to sexism are established. In *Sexism Across Musical Genres: A Comparison* (Neff, 2014), Sarah Neff proposes a highly comprehensive list of categories of sexism. The 5 suggested themes are as follows;

1. Portrayal of women in traditional gender roles (i.e., in the kitchen, taking care of children)
2. Portrayal of women or femininity as inferior to men or masculinity (i.e., weak, child-like, belittling romance)
3. Portrayal of women as objects, sexual or otherwise (i.e., "that ass," "she's all mine")
4. Portrayal of women as stereotypes (i.e., fat, can't be trusted, gold diggers) Portrayal of violence or force used against women (i.e., sexual assault, slapping, murder)

    This study assumes this to be a feasible basis for the identification of sexist themes. However, this study is an exploration of sexism against both males and females. The themes were therefore extrapolated to apply also to sexism against males. The 5 additional themes are as follows;

5. Portrayal of men in traditional gender roles
6. Portrayal of men or masculinity as inferior to women or femininity (i.e., weak, child-like, belittling romance)
7. Portrayal of men as objects, sexual or otherwise (i.e., "that ass," "he's all mine")
8. Portrayal of men as stereotypes (i.e. aggressive, non-relational, objectifying of sex and women)
9. Portrayal of violence or force used against men (i.e., sexual assault, beating, murder)

    These 10 themes formed the basis of the first part of the data analysis.

Current Context:

In *Sexism Across Musical Genres: A Comparison* (Neff, 2014), Sarah Neff explores sexism against females in a similar area. The study involved the identification of predetermined sexist

themes in popular songs of 2013 from a variety of genres. It found that the most prevalent forms of sexism were stereotyping and objectification of women, and that misogyny was most most popular in rap and hip hop. Conversely, another study, *Misogyny in Rap Music: A Content Analysis of Prevalence and Meanings* (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009), looked specifically at this genre, examining a random sample of 403 songs from all rap albums released between 1992 and 2000, and found, among other things, that misogyny was present in only 22% of the songs.

Another study, though perhaps less relevant to this study due to its focus on Malay contemporary music, made a similar attempt to understand sexist themes. Despite the study's limited sample size and narrower scope, *Gender Message in Contemporary Popular Malay Songs* (Jerome, 2013) was a credible source, with research aims pertinent to those of this study. The study discusses gender roles in relationships presented in current music, and finds that in most love songs, the male character leave his lover, and the female character is left to feel pain and longing. Trends in results also showed that females are constantly depicted to be more expressive of and susceptible to emotions, while males are insensitive and detached from emotion.

In summary, the general direction of research in this area, mentioned above or not, is that sexism against females is present in the culture of music in the past.

Significance of Research:

Previous research in this area looks mainly into misogyny and sexism against females. Few studies have ventured into the exploration of sexism against males, a trend that is arguably sexist in itself. Additionally, in a rapidly shifting pop music scene, the prevalence and nature of sexism is not a field that can be assumed to be uniform with time. This has resulted in an ever-widening gap in research into gender roles in music.

This study aims to fill that gap. The corpus has been selected to represent a much more current era of music, and research has been tailored in order to take an in-depth look at sexism without the assumption of only misogyny. Taking into account music's significance in the shaping and reflection of culture and the importance of understanding the dynamics of power distribution among the genders, this study is an essential one.

In investigating power relations between genders, sexism against each sex, and the ways that these ideologies manifest themselves in current pop music, this study will examine and aim to understand a crucial issue of current society.

Section 3: Methodology

The methodology utilised for this project is an adaptation of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Model (Fairclough, 1989). This framework is made up of 4 main stages;

1. Identify a social problem

2. Determine 'discursive dimension' or relevant body for analysis

3. Analyze texts showing workings of power

4. Demonstrate implications of discourse in systems of power

The first stage of the project involved starting the research with a stance on an issue. This study starts with the social problem of sexism in contemporary popular Western music in 2015. This study is an exploration into the extent and manner of this issue.

The next stage, the selection of relevant texts for the analysis, involved the development of an appropriate corpus. This was done by selecting 20 songs to analyze. These songs were taken from the Hot 100 Songs 2015 Year-End Chart by Billboard (Billboard, 2015). In order to extract relevant findings concerning power relations between male and female characters in the lyrics, the songs analysed had content revolving around relationships - romantic, sexual or otherwise - between male and female characters. Therefore, songs that did not fulfill this criteria were eliminated, and the Top 20 of the remaining songs were selected for analysis. The songs chosen were as follows; [Ranking on Billboard chart given in ()]

1. "Thinking Out Loud" (2) - Ed Sheeran

- Written by: Ed Sheeran, Amy Wadge

2. "Trap Queen" (4) - Fetty Wap

- Written by: Fetty Wap (Willie Maxwell II)

3. "Sugar" (5) - Maroon 5

- Written by: Mike Posner, Adam Levine, Joshua Coleman, Lukasz Gottwald, Jacob Kasher Hindlin, Henry Walter

4. "Shut Up and Dance" (6) - WALK THE MOON

- Written by: Ben Berger, Eli Maiman, Ryan McMahon, Nicholas Petricca, Kevin Ray, Sean Waugaman

5. "Blank Space" (7) - Taylor Swift

- Written by: Taylor Swift, Max Martin, Shellback

6. "Earned It" (9) - The Weeknd

- Written by: Ahmad Balshe, Stephan Moccio, Jason Quenneville, The Weeknd (Abel Tesfaye)

7. "The Hills" (10) - The Weeknd

- Written by: The Weeknd (Abel Tesfaye), Emmanuel Nickerson, Carlo Montagnese, Ahmad Balshe

8. "Cheerleader" (11) - OMI

- Written by: OMI (Omar Samuel Pasley), Clifton Dillon, Mark Bradford, Ryan Dillon, Sly Dunbar

9. "Can't Feel My Face" (12) - The Weeknd

- Written by: Ali Payami, Savan Kotecha, Max Martin, The Weeknd (Abel Tesfaye), Peter Svensson

10. "Love Me Like You Do" (13) - Ellie Goulding

- Written by: Max Martin, Savan Kotecha, Ilya Salmanzadeh, Ali Payami, Tove Nilsson

11. "Take Me to Church" (14) - Hozier

- Written by: Hozier (Andrew Hozier-Byrne)

12. "Want to Want Me" (17) - Jason Derulo

- Written by: Jason Derulo (Jason Desrouleaux), Ian Kirkpatrick, Samuel Denison Martin, Lindy Robbins, Mitch Allan

13. "679" (21) - Fetty Wap ft. Remy Boyz

- Written by: Fetty Wap (Willie Maxwell II), Remy Boyz

14. "Lips Are Movin" (22) - Meghan Trainor

- Written by: Meghan Trainor, Kevin Kadish

15. "Worth It" (23) - Fifth Harmony ft. Kid Ink

- Written by: Priscilla Renea, Mikkel S. Eriksen, Tor Erik Hermansen, Ori Kaplan

16. "Post to Be" (24) - Omarion ft. Chris Brown and Jhene Aiko

- Written by: Omarion Grandberry, Chris (Christopher) Brown, Jhené Chilombo, Tyrone Griffin, Jr., Dijon McFarlane

17. "Honey I'm Good" (25) - Andy Grammer

- Written by: Andy Grammer, Nolan Sipe

18. "Good For You" (27) - Selena Gomez ft. A$AP Rocky

- Written by: Julia Michaels, Justin Tranter, Nolan Lambroza, Nick Monson, Rakim A. Mayers, Hector Delgado, Selena Gomez

19. "Style" (29) - Taylor Swift

- Written by: Taylor Swift, Max Martin, Shellback, Ali Payami

20. "Hotline Bling" (30) - Drake

- Written by: Drake (Aubrey Graham), Paul Jefferies, Timmy Thomas

The scope of 20 songs was chosen as a realistic goal for the time span of the project as well as as a body of text large enough to provide accurate findings. These 20 songs were be assumed to be the most popular songs in 2015 that portray male-female relationships. Therefore, the corpus established was the most appropriate scope for the project.

The third stage, making up the bulk of the project, involved the analysis of the corpus. This analysis in itself comprised 2 stages. The first was an identification of sexist themes. The themes chosen were adapted from the 5 themes developed in Sarah Neff's *Sexism Across Musical Genres: A Comparison* (Neff, 2014). The original 5 themes as well as the 5 adapted themes are indicated in the Literature Review.

As the study is an exploration of sexist themes and power relations between;both genders, sexism towards males was taken into account, as opposed to the original identification of only sexism against females. Every line of the song for analysis that includes an instance of any of the 10 themes was counted as one instance of that theme. If lines were repeated, the theme was considered to be reinforced and was therefore counted again. These findings were collated and used for both comparison between songs and magnitude of sexism towards each gender. The second section of analysis related back to the third step of Fairclough's Model (Fairclough, 1989) - it involved determining how grammatical power was distributed among actors in a text.

In order to determine how much grammatical power is allocated to male and female characters in lyrics, each text was broken down using the concept of participant power. Each character of every clause was identified according to type of participant, and the occurrences of each participant type corresponding to each character, either male or female, were collated. A key (Fig. 3.1) was used in order to maximise efficiency and ease of clause analysis.

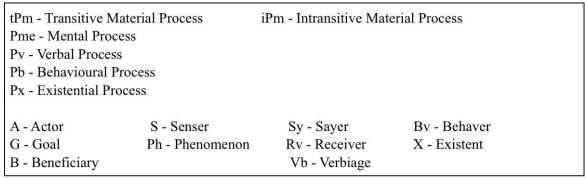| tPm - Transitive Material Process		iPm - Intransitive Material Process	
Pme - Mental Process			
Pv - Verbal Process			
Pb - Behavioural Process			
Px - Existential Process			
A - Actor	S - Senser	Sy - Sayer	Bv - Behaver
G - Goal	Ph - Phenomenon	Rv - Receiver	X - Existent
B - Beneficiary		Vb - Verbiage	

Figure 3.1. Key utilised for clause analysis.

Next, the following systematic method was implemented to compare power allocation.

The hierarchy (Fig. 2.1) developed by Haig in his study on participant power in radio news (Haig, 2002) formed the basis of power comparison in this study. Along with the rankings by power, it provided a quantitative representation of power allocation, giving each participant a number based on its position in the hierarchy. These numbers made up a point system that allowed an analysis to account for all the types of participants a character occurred as in a set of clauses or body of text. Using the findings from the previous step, each character in each text was allocated a given number of points based on the hierarchy. The total points accumulated from the entire text was the 'score' given to the character. In each song depicting a relationship, the score accumulated by the male character was divided by the total points of the female character, thus producing a figure representing the power distribution ratio of male to female. This enabled the most significant part of the research - an analysis of power relations between men and women.

The fourth and final stage of the study involved demonstrating the implications of these findings on real systems of power. The allocation of grammatical power to males and females in popular music was taken in this study to correspond to the power relations between men and women in Western Society in 2015, as music both influences and represents currently prominent ideologies. This stage brought the study back to the original social problem identified, and suggested an explanation for the findings in a socio-political context and real power relations based on the influence of social discourse.

The aforementioned methodology has several limitations. Primarily, the first stage of data analysis, which involved the qualitative identification of themes, was at times subjective. Therefore, the standardisation of the analysis required much communication and was highly time-consuming. In addition, the second section of the analysis, the point allocation system, did not take relational processes into account. This study deemed, based on findings of research in similar fields, that relational processes demonstrated no power dynamic between characters. This was an assumption necessary for the simplification of the analysis. Finally, the principal assumption, upon which the entire study is based, is that the capacity of music to influence and reflect society on a large scale is based solely on its popularity. As there is no other quantifiable means of determining the extent of a song's influence and its potency in reflecting society, this was also a necessary assumption.

Section 4: Findings

Song Title	No. of occurrences of theme									
	Portrayal of traditional gender roles		Inferior to opposite sex		Portrayal as object		Portrayal of stereotypes		Portrayal of violence against	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Trap Queen	1	6	0	0	0	5	3	1	0	1
Cheerleader	1	7	2	2	0	14	2	8	0	0
Want to Want Me	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Can't Feel My Face	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Style	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Love Me Like You Do	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	0	0

Honey I'm Good	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	1	0	0
Sugar	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	0	0
The Hills	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0
Lips are Movin'	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Worth It	0	0	18	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Shut Up and Dance	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
679	5	0	0	0	8	11	6	40	1	1
Post To Be	0	6	4	0	11	2	3	0	1	5
Good For You	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	0	0
Take Me to Church	0	0	8	0	3	0	0	0	6	0
Earned It	0	6	6	0	4	3	0	9	0	0
Blank Space	0	0	1	2	1	0	2	1	5	0

Thinking out Loud	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hotline Bling	0	1	1	6	0	1	0	4	0	0
Total	12	20	42	11	31	69	27	71	13	7

Table 4.1: Results of theme analysis

Song Title	Male to Female Power Allocation Ratio (to 5 significant figures)
Trap Queen	1.5200
Cheerleader	4.8403
Want to Want Me	2.7458
Can't Feel My Face	3.8000
Style	1.4994
Love Me Like You Do	1.7733
Honey I'm Good	6.3077
Sugar	1.1939
The Hills	1.1594
Lips are Movin'	3.8284
Worth It	1.7481
Shut Up and Dance	1.9157

679	2.5057
Post To Be	1.4266
Good For You	0.46451
Take Me to Church	0.40969
Earned It	0.65025
Blank Space	0.91048
Thinking out Loud	0.69607
Hotline Bling	0.49048
Average Ratio	1.9943

Table 4.2: Power Allocation Ratio

Section 5: Discussion

The following section discusses findings for each part of the analysis.

The theme-based analysis (Fig. 4.1) provides inconclusive results. The themes in descending order of total instances are as follows; portrayal of females as stereotypes, objectification of females, portrayal of males as inferior to females, objectification of males, portrayal of males as stereotypes, portrayal of females in traditional gender roles, portrayal of violence against males, portrayal of males in traditional gender roles, portrayal of females as inferior to males, and finally portrayal of violence against females. In total there were 125 instances of sexism against males and 140 instances of sexism against females. Based on the ranking of instances of each theme, neither gender faces significantly more sexism than the other, and, while the lyrics analysed displayed more sexism toward female characters, it is difficult to determine whether music as a whole can be definitively claimed to be misogynistic due to the large amount of sexism against males. Instead, sexism exists in great quantities against both genders, as evident from the fact that only one of the 20 songs had fewer than 10 instances of sexism. This portion of the findings can therefore exist as a suggestion of the different ways sexism manifests itself in music, and serve to demonstrate the prevalence of different forms of sexism in relation to each other.

Four specific anomalies in the data showed that the 'male' score was significantly higher than the 'female' score for the themes of 'inferior to the opposite sex' and 'portrayal of violence against', and that the 'female' score was significantly higher than the 'male' score for the themes of 'portrayal as objects' and 'portrayal of stereotypes'. A possible explanation for these findings is that instances of portrayal of violence against males were often clauses depicting males being territorial and defending their property. This may in turn reinforce the objectification of female characters - the theme with the second most instances - by presenting them as the property of males and things to be fought over.

The second anomaly showed that males were depicted as inferior to the opposite sex more often than females were. This category showed very different results in some songs. For example, Worth It, the song with the highest number of occurrences of the theme, made up almost half of the total, while only five other songs had more than one instance of the theme. These skewed results demonstrate the variations present in relationships due to the innate humanity of the phenomenon.

Finally, females were portrayed stereotypically significantly more often than males were. This study concluded that society as a whole has fixed viewpoints concerning gender roles, such that rigid perspectives regarding the social hierarchy of the sexes have become ingrained in public mindsets and manifested themselves in current music and pop culture. The sizeable difference between findings for males and females is due to the concept of the Self and the Other. The genders are presented as virtual opposites, despite the other possibilities for unequal positioning in society. Therefore, each is the Other of the opposite sex. Due to the presence of stereotyping that presents females as weaker beings, it is females that are targeted more forcefully by this theme and its manifestations in lyrics.

The second section, linguistic-based analysis (Fig. 4.2) provides largely more definitive data. Analysis showed that only six of the 20 songs analysed had grammatical power allocations in favour of the female character in the relationship. There was no visible relation between gender of the artist and the power distribution, as 4 in 14 songs in favour of the male character and 2 in 6 of songs in favour of the female character were performed by female artistes. Additionally, the average ratio of power allocated to males to power allocated to females is approximately 1.9943, indicating that on average, the language of the songs allocated almost twice the amount of power to male characters than it did to female characters. This is clear evidence that the songs demonstrated relationships depicting male characters having power over females. It is this power dynamic that is fundamental to the workings of gender balances in the real world.

The significantly greater amount of sexism against females determined by the second part of the analysis, along with the slightly less conclusive results of the theme-based analysis, show that the songs analysed contained gender ideologies in favour of males and discriminatory of females.

Section 6: Conclusions

The results obtained answer the predetermined research questions.

Many sexist themes are present in the songs; all ten of the themes established for analysis were present in the songs selected. The themes in descending order of total instances are as follows; portrayal of females as stereotypes, objectification of females, portrayal of males as inferior to females, objectification of males, portrayal of males as stereotypes, portrayal of females in traditional gender roles, portrayal of violence against males, portrayal of males in traditional gender roles, portrayal of females as inferior to males, and finally portrayal of violence against females. In total, there were 140 instances of sexism against females and 125 instances of sexism against males. It is possible to conclude that sexism against males and females exists in almost equal magnitude, and that music as a whole is only slightly more sexist towards women.

Regarding power distribution, males are allocated far more grammatical power than females are, with an average male to female score ratio of 1.9943, and while the ratios range from as low as 0.40969 in "Take Me to Church", it has maximum of 6.3077 in "Honey, I'm Good". This definitive pattern in power distribution demonstrates strongly that in music, females are much less powerful than men.

The final secondary research question concerns the difference in findings for male and female artists. Contrary to the expectation that songs by males would contain more sexist themes towards women and allocate female characters less power, the findings showed no such pattern; 4 of the 14 songs in favour of the male character and 2 of the 6 songs in favour of the female character were performed by female artistes. These are almost equal percentages, indicating no visible relationship between the gender of the artist and the sexist ideologies communicated.

We have seen previous studies starting off biased against males and since this study also explored sexism against males, we realised that the presence of biases for both genders are almost equal, with greater sample size. This goes to show that should not approach study with preconceived notions as sexism against males also highly prevalent.

To come to a final conclusion regarding the primary research question, all the above are taken into account. It is possible to claim that gender ideologies present in English contemporary popular music in 2015 are more sexist towards females, but sexism still exists in immense quantity against males.

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Section 7: Reflections

Nicole Rae Nair:

This project has allowed me to develop greatly as researcher and collaborator and gain deep insight into this topic. As a researcher, I have learned the importance of ensuring the credibility of my sources in order to produce valid contributions to the field. I have also improved in effectively and efficiently finding relevant information through the background research portion of the project. My most important takeaway from this project was the ability to plan ahead, work around obstacles, and adjust the research process when problems arise. In the future, I plan to keep a better record of meetings, discussions, source evaluation, and work plans from the beginning of the project so as to maximise productivity and ensure that no research must be repeated. The topic of sexism in music is something that has greatly interested me from the start, and I have now gained much knowledge about using critical discourse analysis to understand media, and how language is powerful in ways beyond superficial meaning. I am now far more aware of my own communication with others, and able to interpret texts in a way that will enrich my understanding. My greatest strength was my awareness of the methodology for our project. I was active in the process of formulating our methodology and implementing it with integrity and consistency. I also completed my portion of the work on time and encouraged others to take responsibility for their own work, consistently working to be a valuable group member. My main weaknesses were that I often set unrealistic expectations for our group that I was unable to follow through with, and so had to repeatedly adjust our work plan in order to finish on time.

Joan Yee:

Through this Research Studies project, I have developed as a researcher as I have learned how to infer from what I have derived from the analysis of songs and their lyrics. I was able to understand better the different parts of the research project, especially the part on methodology. I have also learned to be more conscientious, especially while counting participant power. Through the project, I have learnt about the different process involved in transitivity analysis and learnt how to apply that to the analysing of song lyrics. I was good at counting the participant power allocated for both male and female characters so I helped my group with that. My weaknesses would be I was not sure of the methodology and process at the start and hence that affected my group's progress. In addition, I have gained more insight to this topic on sexism in western pop songs and about how sexism in males are actually prevalent as well. I have also understood how language and communication can go beyond superficial meaning and how we should not approach studies with a preconceived mindset. I feel that my team had collaborated well and we worked together to achieve our final goal of completing this project.

Edna Leong:

Through this Research Studies project, I was able to develop as a researcher as I learned how to analyse different song lyrics and make the necessary conclusions based on my findings. I now have a better and clearer understanding of the process in determining the degree of sexism in pop songs. I helped out my group by completing my portion of the work and diligently coming online to work on our report and presentation. I was able to count the participant power of the male and female powers well, but was quite slow on the lyrical analysis part. However, our group did well in redistributing the work based on our various strengths to quicken the whole process. This experience has allowed me to grow as a learner and to better help me in the various projects I may take part in in the future. In the next research project I embark on, I plan to have better time management and work ahead of time, to ensure plenty of time complete our project.

Celeste Chin:

Through this Research Studies, I was able to learn about how the structure and phrasing, as well as diction, can affect an allocation of power between two individuals. I was able to better understand and am now more aware of the underlying references that popular songs contained in relation to sexism, and how susceptible our society really can be to influencing factors that may introduce biased ideologies to us. I feel that I was a responsible member of the group as I took the initiative to complete my work early and dutifully completed my analysis. I also helped to support the team leader and the other members with their tasks by polishing up their analysis and their sections of the report. The critical thinking skills and in-depth literary analysis that I have learnt now will allow me to be able to exercise them in future projects and be able to grasp a more solid understanding of certain concepts that may only be uncovered through a deeper analysis.

Mira Dewan:

The topic of sexism in is one that I have always been passionate about, and I became more aware of sexism in music and the impact it can potentially have on people's mindsets from personal experience. I was able to refine my ability to express ideas logically and concisely, which I feel is a useful skill which can be applied in any context. This project also gave me room to grow as a team player - I was able to complete my own tasks, and collaborate with my team members by checking and editing each other's work. One thing I feel we could have improved is to be more organized in terms of defining our project clearly from the beginning, and sticking to a work plan so that all members are able to contribute meaningfully and we are able to progress as a group more efficiently. I was able to engage in critical thinking in various stages of the process - while we were defining the project, as well as during the analysis and discussion stages. Although I

was able to come up with I faced some difficulties in expressing my ideas coherently in prose, and this is something I can improve on in future projects. I also learnt the importance of making presentations clear to people who have not been a part of the research process, as research is only meaningful when it can be understood and used by others.

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