

Sexism and Misogyny in Music Land

SECTION ONE

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Gangsta Misogyny: A Content Analysis of the Portrayals of Violence Against Women In Rap Music, 1987-1993*

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ABSTRACT

Gangsta rap music is often identified with violent and misogynist lyric portrayals. This article presents the results of a content analysis of gangsta rap music's violent and misogynist lyrics. The gangsta rap music domain is specified and the work of thirteen artists as presented in 490 songs is examined. A main finding is that 22% of gangsta rap music songs contain violent and misogynist lyrics. A deconstructive interpretation suggests that gangsta rap music is necessarily understood within a context of patriarchal hegemony.

INTRODUCTION

Theresa Martinez (1997) argues that rap music is a form of oppositional culture that offers a message of resistance, empowerment, and social critique. But this cogent and lyrical exposition intentionally avoids analysis of explicitly misogynist and sexist lyrics. The present study begins where Martinez leaves off: a content analysis of gangsta rap's lyrics and a classification of its violent and misogynist messages. First, the gangsta rap music domain is specified. Next, the prevalence and seriousness of overt episodes of violent and misogynist lyrics are documented. This involves the identification of attributes and the construction of meaning through the use of crime categories. Finally, a deconstructive interpretation is offered in which gangsta rap music's violent and misogynist lyrics are explicated in terms of the symbolic encoding of gender relationships.

THEORY

Postmodern perspectives share the view that "culture is reality" (Kotarba 1994: 148). Signifiers are signs in themselves that take on a life of their own (Manning 1995). Speech is seen as action; a text is axiomatically an ethnography (Van Maanen 1995). Postmodern criminologists attend to the meaning of what is said or written as expressed [End page 96] by the language one uses and show that different positions in the justice system (e.g., police, drug dealers, court officials) have their own language systems (Vold, Bernard, and Snipes 1998). The sociological study of deviant behavior

anticipated the contention that language, as symbolic interaction, is behavior itself ([Bryant 1982](#)). Postmodernism draws attention to the increasing role of symbolic violence in shaping interpersonal relations ([Manning and Singh 1997](#)). But feminist theory has taken a more fully developed textual turn, emphasizing the discursive construction of social reality ([Smith 1990](#); [McClary 1991](#); [Klimenkova 1992](#); [Alway 1995](#); [Mumby 1996](#); [Kasinky 1998](#)). Language is a constitutive force that creates a particular view of reality ([Richardson 1991](#)). Words are acts, essentially the practices they constitute rather than the expressions of the ideas they embody ([MacKinnon 1993](#)). The theory of discursive violence problematizes the distinction between words and deeds and attends to the real-world anguish of the verbally abused. This is not to say that real rape and its fictional representation are equally grave offenses ([Douglas 1995](#)). But as the physiological effects of discursive violence make evident, "linguistic violence is in fact a form of physical violence" ([Gorsevski 1998: 513](#)). More to the point: sexual and violent imagery "indeed *is* violence against women" ([Levine 1992: 146](#)).

The postmodern and feminist vision holds that words, music, and other discourses are performative utterances that instantiate a condition or state of affairs ([Swidler 1996](#)). One variant of this viewpoint: the Equal Opportunity Commission's guidelines defining sexual harassment under Title VII includes verbal conduct – words that can poison a workplace or classroom ([Dooling 1996](#)). A key element of the idea of "hate speech" is the understanding that people do things with words, that speech acts assault their victims ([Walker 1994](#)). Violent metaphors are not simply figures of speech ([Eisikovits and Buchbinder 1997](#)). Rappers create a commercially available everyday reality and it is in accordance with the lyrics provided by gangsta rap music that individuals structure their perceptions.¹

DATA AND METHODS

When a text accompanies music it provides an explicit conceptual framework that answers questions concerning musical meaning and social significance ([Miles 1995](#)). Postmodern sociological readings of music begin with the centrality of the text – the lyrical narrative ([Kotarba 1994](#)). The nature of rap music dictates just such a concentration on language. Rap's harmonies are "simple," based on one tonality as defined by a simple bass line ([Bitz 1998](#)). Instead, the genre is predicated on lyric content ([Roberts 1994](#); [Guevara 1996](#)), that is, the power of the word ([Keyes 1996](#); [Smitherman 1997](#)). Words are spoken, not sung ([Dixon 1989](#); [Edwards and Sienkewicz 1991](#); [Shusterman 1991](#); [Cawker 1994](#)). Ray Charles comments that rap is just "talk with music" (quoted in [Silver 1997: 76](#)). Public Enemy's Chuck D even declares that "rap is a vocal culture" and "is not music per se" (quoted in [Chambers and Morgan 1992: 85](#)). Snoop Doggy Dogg (now just Snoop Dogg) summarizes the nature of his raps in these terms: "I just be conversatin'" ("Week In Rock," MTV, 9/12/93). Rappers avoid word play and metaphor, substituting instead the communication of straightforward meaning ([Dimitriadis 1996](#)), and they eschew lyrical subtlety ([Danaher and Blackwelder 1993](#)). Nearly all raps are first-person narratives, retellings of what the artists (allegedly) have seen or done, recounts of events that happened personally and specifically to them ([Light 1992](#); [Steaman 1992](#); [Rose 1994b](#); [Allen 1996](#); [Kelley 1996](#); [Perkins 1996](#); [Barrett 1999](#); [Snoop Dogg 1999](#)). This self-referential quality is central to gangsta rap music. In gangsta rap music, the first-person point of view brings both the narrator and the listener into the heart of modern urban terror ([Gilmore and Karl 1990](#)). By telling their tales in the first-person, rappers appear to commit themselves to the worst impulses in their scenarios.

Rap is best understood as verbal art (Keyes 1984; Jeremiah 1992).² The nature of rap facilitates its content analysis, the transcription and interpretation of lyrics. Postmodern ethnographies are a kind of content analysis because they describe textual imagery by comparing and contrasting the meanings of the elements of a code (Manning 1991). A genre such as gangsta rap music is a code in itself (Dunbar-Hall 1991). This interest in codes parallels the ethnomusicological concern with collections, the raw material that is a prerequisite for establishing the set of traits that combine to convey an image of a genre (Nettl 1964; Davis 1992). Ethnomusicologists divide the collection of songs into smaller, more homogeneous groups (Nettl 1964). The research enterprise moves to classificatory analysis, a systematic paradigmization of units (Nattiez 1990). Both ethnomusicology and postmodern ethnography are accomplished by classification and categorization (Manning 1995). In this article the collection is constituted by songs manifesting violent and misogynist lyrics. Content analysis is used to determine whether a song depicts violent and misogynist lyrics and, if so, the kind of crime and the nature of the violence portrayed. To begin, however, a specification of the gangsta rap music domain is needed.

COLLECTION AND CLASSIFICATION

Lyrics were gathered from 490 songs produced by thirteen artists from 1987 to 1993. Following ethnomusicological guidelines (Nettl 1995), attention is directed toward artists who provide gangsta rap music's "central repertory" and who are considered gangsta rap music's "ruling class." The criteria applied in establishing this repertorial centrality are historical priority, popularity, and reputation – a function of cultural criticism. Part of the present analysis is occupied with specifying membership in the gangsta rap music domain.

The history of gangsta rap music begins with Ice-T (McAdams 1992; Rose 1994b).³ His "6 'N The Morning" (1987) served as the blueprint for the gangsta rap music style (Ice-T 1994). But two groups, N.W.A (Niggaz Wit Attitude) and the Geto Boys, and the spin-off solo careers of their members, eclipsed Ice-T's success. N.W.A billed itself as "the World's Most Dangerous Group." The late Eazy-E founded the group. Until Ice Cube left the group in early 1990, he served as its chief lyricist (Nelson and Gonzales 1991). **[End page 98]** MC Ren acted as the group's hardcore center (Nelson 1993). Dr. Dre, N.W.A's non-rapping producer, coined the term gangsta rap music to refer to the albums he produced (Gold 1993). In 1991, their Efil4zaggin (Niggaz4life spelled backwards) became the first gangsta rap music album to reach No. 1 on the *Billboard* charts. In 1992, Dre's *The Chronic* became the most popular gangsta rap music album. Only a year later, Snoop Doggy Dogg's Doggystyle, which Dre produced, surpassed *The Chronic*. Snoop's album, the first by a solo artist to reach No. 1 prior to its release, sold over 4.5 million copies and made him the best-known rapper (Pareles 1995). Unlike N.W.A, members of the Geto Boys had separate careers until joined together in a business partnership. In 1990, their Grip It On The Other Level sold more than 500,000 copies without major-label sponsorship or radio air play (Kot 1990). The Geto Boys spawned multiple solo successes: Bushwick Bill, Scarface, and Willie D. They also collaborate with the members of Too Much Trouble, a group with the allonym, "The Baby Geto Boys." Too \$hort, another artist of eminence, added a sense of humor to the gangsta rap music pose (Nelson and Gonzales 1991). At the mid-point of the 1990s, Too \$hort was the largest-selling rap artist (Perkins 1996).

Temporal limitations to the specification of the gangsta rap music domain are central. When gangsta rap music reached the height of its popularity, Luther Campbell (formerly Luke Skyywalker), founder of 2 Live Crew, Hammer (formerly M. C. Hammer) and Vanilla Ice (Jones 1994a; "Week In Rock," MTV, 4/24/94), artists who had fallen on hard times, advanced "tougher"

stances and demanded categorization within gangsta rap music's stylistic boundaries. Because of the expanding nature of membership, only the foundational period of gangsta rap music, from 1987 to 1993, is assessed (see [Appendix A](#) below for a gangsta rap music discography).⁴

Questioning the frequency and the nature of presented themes is the first concern of a media researcher ([Altheide 1997](#)). Of course, violence ranges in severity from an intimidating look and harsh words to rape and murder ([Berger 1994](#)). As members of the renowned Cultural Indicators Project point out, the way violence is defined directly determines the amount and nature of the violence that is isolated ([Signorielli, Gerbner, and Morgan 1995](#)). Here attention is limited to three serious personal offenses directed at women: assault, forcible rape, and murder, and a fourth category combining rape and murder. Analysis of lyric content shows that 22 percent (N = 107) of the 490 gangsta rap music songs had violent and misogynist lyrics. Assault was the most frequently occurring criminal offense, portrayed in 50 percent of the violent and misogynist songs. Other rankings: rape only = 11 percent; murder only = 31 percent; rape and murder = 7 percent. [Table One](#) presents a breakdown of the variety of violent and misogynist lyrics by artist. But categorization according to crime type does not reveal the manner in which violent and misogynist lyrics are presented. Because similar kinds of violent and misogynist lyrics have different meanings, the messages inherent in the lyrics need specification. A way of deconstructing these meanings is by detailing the manner in which the criminal acts are depicted. **[End page 99]**

DESCRIPTION OF VIOLENT AND MISOGYNIST LYRIC CONTENT

Assault

Ice-T's (1987) "6 'N The Mornin'" and Eazy-E's (1988a; 1993; and N.W.A's (1989b) "Boyz-N-The-Hood" anticipated and affected gangsta rap music's matter-of-fact depictions of violence and misogyny. These songs gave thematic centrality to assault and signaled the coming age of gender-based conflict as a staple of the genre. In "6 'N The Mornin'", Ice-T batters a woman, heretofore a stranger, because she called him a name. "Boyz-N-The-Hood" suggests corporal punishment for women who "talk shit." Dr. Dre (1992) presents the identical message in "Nuthin' But A 'G' Thang," the No. 1 rap song of all time ([Krohn and Suazo 1995](#)). Talking back ([Ice-T 1989a](#); [Too \\$hort 1987b](#) and [1993d](#)) and showing disrespect (dissin') ([N.W.A 1991b](#)) cause men to react violently. MC Ren (1992b) hits, with a shoe, women who complain. Rejecting a proposition provokes a physical attack ([Eazy-E 1992b](#)). Too \$hort (1993a) hurled this tirade:

You fuck with us, bitch, something gettin' broken
Your leg, arm, jaw, nose, pick a part.

In N.W.A's (1989a) "A Bitch Iz A Bitch," money-hungry or stuck-up women are subsumed under the same solution: "Slam her ass in a ditch." Too \$hort slaps women who act "shitty" (1988b) or bold (1992b). Responses to mental slowness are equally harsh. Bushwick Bill (1992c) kicks a woman's ass if her "brain don't click." By choosing the wrong friends, "bitches" either "need stitches" ([Willie D 1992b](#)) or get drop-kicked ([Ice-T 1993](#)). Personal characteristics also induce violence. In "Punk Bitch," Too \$hort (1990b) expresses his desire to slap all bald-headed women. Ice-T (1991b) pushes a woman to the floor because "she looked like Godzilla." Because a woman had "more crabs than a sea-food platter," Eazy-E (1988e) "slapped the ho" and proudly proclaimed himself a "woman-

beater." The Geto Boys (1993d) handed down comparable excesses when they threw an "unsanitary bitch" into a ditch.

Violence and criminality are linked. The Geto Boys (1990g) kick a female employee for not quickly complying with their commands during a robbery. Ice-T (1987) mentions another woman's positioning as the object of opposition to drug use. A homeboy broke his girlfriend's jaw "for smokin' cane." The desire for drugs even destroys a parent-child relationship. Snoop Doggy Dogg (1993b) meets a woman who wants to take over her daughter's source of drugs – Snoop himself. The mother hits her child "in the face" and punches her "in the eye" and "in the belly."

Pimp-prostitute associations are the locales of violent and misogynist lyrics. In documentary fashion, Too Much Trouble depict themselves as pandering pimps in seven selections from their album, *Players Choice*. The lyrics of five of these songs are formulaic – workers get "smacked" if they fail to meet their financial quotas (1993a; b; c; g; and h). [End page 100] Ice Cube (1990c) recommends similar actions. Alternatively, in "Little Hooker," Willie D (1992a) beats a young girl because she became a prostitute.

Intimate relationships are also riddled with violence. When one's "lady," as opposed to one's "bitch," talks to another man, she gets physically punished (Geto Boys 1990f). Tardy breakfasts are hard to handle. Violence accompanies the command to put some "eggs in the goddamn skillet" (Too Much Trouble 1992c). Identification of rappers as putative parents generates physical responses. Ice Cube (1990b) plans to end a pregnancy by kicking a woman "in the tummy" and by looking in a closet "for the hanger." The Geto Boys (1989a and 1990b) handle a false accusation of paternity by trying to break the woman's neck. Too \$hort (1993d) deals with a similar situation by surprising the woman "like a mack" and then dropping "her ass off at Kaiser [hospital]." Women are hit (Ice Cube 1993), slapped (Too \$hort 1988a and 1990c), tossed (Eazy-E 1988d), thrown into a trunk (Too \$hort 1992c), smacked (Too Much Trouble 1993f; Too \$hort 1988e) and kicked (Too \$hort 1990d), all for no apparent reason. For instance, Too Much Trouble (1993d) mention only that "a bitch is just like glass – easy to break." N.W.A (1988a and 1989c) tell of a woman who "got a black eye cause the dope man hit her." Bushwick Bill (1992d), in his autobiographical "Ever So Clear," travels to the home of the women "closest" to him. Upon arriving, he "provoked her, punched her, kicked, and choked her." After trying to throw her baby out a window, he's shot in the eye. (Until the releases of Eminem's *Slim Shady LP* (1999) and *The Marshall Mathers LP* (2000), this was gangsta rap music's only mention of infanticide.) Marriage is also depicted with violent and misogynist lyrics. Consider "Bitches 2," where Ice-T (1991a) mentions a friend who regularly "kicks his wife's ass." Too \$hort's (1992d) domestic sexual encounters begin when he whips "ass like a world champ." Violent and misogynist lyrics also take the form of overly aggressive and rough sex. Scarface (1991b) brags that "bitches walk out of the crib with a limp," while Ice Cube (1992a) nearly breaks "that thing in half" during sex with a new partner. Too Much Trouble (1993e) say that after oral sex, they "leave some stretch marks" on a woman's jaw. Ice-T (1989b) attests to the actions of Evil E who "fucked the bitch with a flashlight." Because he left the batteries in, "the bitch's titties started blinkin' like tail lights."

Rape

Willie D (1989b) and Too \$hort (1993c) advocate raping women who do not submit to their sexual advances. Another rape narrative has Too \$hort (1987d) beating his victim's "ass with a billy-club." In

"She Swallowed It," N.W.A ([1991d](#)) recommend specific procedures for attacking a fourteen-year-old:

Punch the bitch in the eye/then the ho will fall to the ground
Then you open up her mouth/put your dick, move the shit around. **[End page 101]**

Ice-T ([Body Count 1992a](#)) proposes sex "with Tipper Gore's two twelve-year-old nieces." This is a clear case of seeking revenge against one of the founders of the Parents' Music Resources Center (PMRC).

The substance of the rape songs becomes far more execrable than the criminal category ostensibly prefigures. Eazy-E ([1988c](#)), Snoop Doggy Dogg ([1993a](#)), and Too \$hort ([1990b](#)) casually mention gang rapes. MC Ren ([1992a](#)) tells of "ten niggas" who rape a child and then violate her with a broomstick. In Ice Cube's ([1991](#)) "Givin' Up The Nappy Dug Out," "fourteen niggas" line up to take turns placing themselves "two on top, one on the bottom" of an underage girl. Too \$hort conceives of an array of alternatives in his consideration of the pluses and minuses of statutory rape. In "She's A Bitch" ([1987c](#)), he adapts a crude aphorism: "Fourteen, fifteen, all the way up/if she can bleed then she can fuck." He recites similar words in "Hoes" ([1992a](#)). But in "Little Girls" ([1988c](#)), after an attempted rape fails, he rallies against sex with children.

Murder

Although the police targeted Too Much Trouble ([1993i](#)), they mistakenly shot and killed a "bitch." Other songs by Too Much Trouble have women dying in defense of personal possessions ([1992b](#)) and their employers' property ([1992a](#)). During another robbery, one "old bitch got her neck broke" ([1992e](#)). MC Ren ([1993a](#)) shoots a woman who set him up to be robbed. In "To Kill A Hooker," N.W.A ([1991f](#)) drag a streetwalker into a car and kill her because she demanded money in exchange for sex. Women are also murdered for choosing the wrong companion ([Eazy-E 1992a](#)), becoming nosy ([Geto Boys 1993c](#)), and for remaining silent. Ice Cube ([1992b](#)) fed a girl to the wolves because the "little ho had no words." Three other personal traits stimulate violent and misogynist lyrics. N.W.A's ([1989d](#)) Eazy-E tied to kill a "fat girl" with an elephant gun. When that didn't work, he "grabbed a harpoon" and left the woman on the avenue "like a beached whale." MC Ren ([1993b](#)) mulls over shooting and burying a "bitch" whose "pussy really stinks" and who has "crabs on her pussy." In "Bald Headed Hoes," Willie D ([1989a](#)) proposes "a bill on Capitol Hill to kill all bald-headed women at will." Rappers plan murders to pay back women who, in their opinion, did something wrong. Transgressions include telling a lie ([Scarface 1993](#)), failing to make bail ([Eazy-E 1988b](#)), transmitting a venereal disease ([Geto Boys 1988 and 1990a](#); [N.W.A 1990](#)), calling the cops ([N.W.A 1991e](#)), and cheating. N.W.A's ([1991c](#)) surprise discovery of a cheating mate propel them to dump the unfaithful partner, now wearing cement shoes, into a river. Willie D ([1989c](#)) and the Geto Boys ([1993a](#)) also kill cheaters.

Two Too \$hort ([1988d and 1990a](#)) songs tell of killing women but never offer a hint at what precipitated the acts. Bushwick Bill ([1992a](#)) simply brags that he is the "neighborhood bitch slayer." The Geto Boys ([1989b and 1990c](#)) recommend putting "a ho in front of a trigger." Without supplying any explanation, N.W.A ([1991a](#)) mention taking the life of a wife and daughter. N.W.A ([1988b](#)) also recollect "bitches" that they have shot and announce their plans to "smother" someone's mother. The Geto Boys kill a **[End page 102]** person's wife "for kicks" ([1993b](#)) and pump anonymous women "full of lead" ([1989d and 1990e](#)). Scarface ([1991a](#)) recounts the same senseless killings. Songs

combining murder and mutilation exemplify a virulent positioning of women as objects of violence. The Geto Boys (1991) attack someone's nieces and cut the girls' heads into "88 pieces." Bushwick Bill (1992b) recalls this incident in a song where his breakfast menu is "bacon and legs." Ice-T (Body Count, 1992b) sets his mother on fire, beats her to death with a baseball bat, and cuts up her body. In a Geto Boys' (1988 and 1990a) act of murder, the weapon of choice is a machete: "I sliced her up until her guts were like spaghetti."

Rape and Murder

Too Much Trouble (1992d) kill an elderly rape victim whom they caught crawling for the telephone. First, they hit her on the head with a hammer, and the sound of a hammer hitting someone's head accompany the lyrics. Then they "beat her head with the phone until her skull caved in." An operator's recorded message echoes in the background. Too \$hort (1987a and 1993b) slaps a young girl to convince her to perform oral sex after which the child dies: "She choked on sperm in her windpipe." In "One Less Bitch," N.W.A (1991c) tie a woman to a bed, rape, and then shoot her. Compared to the lyrics that follow, this song seems almost benign. The Geto Boys (1989c and 1990d) produced two versions of their signature song, "Mind Of A Lunatic." Both begin by noting the identical initial actions of a peeping tom turned rapist. In one, the perpetrator cuts the victim's throat and watches her "shake like on TV." The second version heightens the macabre as the killer has "sex with the corpse." In a different song, Bushwick Bill (1992e) recites the same lyrics. Another Geto Boys' (1993c) song depicts a similar rape/murder, only this time they slit the woman "like a pig."

RESULTS

This project is an initial move to fill an analytical void. Although lyrics are a most accessible kind of text, feminist semiologists have neglected this area (Bayton 1992). Scholars have been particularly slow to analyze and critique gangsta rap music's content (Williams 1992). On the one hand, gangsta rap music has been identified with its violent and misogynist lyrics. At the beginning of the decade, *Billboard* (1991) editorialized against gangsta rap music because it purveyed a "gangsta ideology," an unabashed espousal of violence and misogyny. A *New York Times* (Staples 1993) editorial did likewise. C. DeLores Tucker, chair of the National Political Congress of Black Women and the most famous opponent of gangsta rap music, considers the genre a profane and obscene glorification of murder and rape (Waldron 1996). Gangsta rap music, according to Tucker, is more suitably called "gangsta porno rap" (Kramer 1997). On the other hand, the notion that gangsta rap music manifests violent and misogynist lyrics is condemned as the myth of aural violence (Maxwell 1991).⁵ This research establishes the frequency and describes the details of gangsta rap music's violent and misogynist lyrics frame, where physical aggression is presented as a way of dealing with women and handling male-female interaction. An immediate consequence of this content [End page 103] analysis is a "both/and" resolution to the debate – "only" 22 percent of gangsta rap music songs dealt with violent and misogynist lyrics.

Another result of this study is to challenge prevailing wisdom on the existential basis for gangsta rap music's violent and misogynist lyrics. Verbal deviance has commercial configurations (Bryant 1982). Late capitalism promotes sexual and violent cultural industries (Denzin 1985). Yo Yo clarifies the issue with regard to gangsta rap music: "The harder that you are, sad to say, the more you sell" (quoted in Jones 1993: 6D). Allegedly, rappers created gangsta rap music when their focus shifted from music to money and they discovered that the best way to make money was to rap about sex

and violence ([Salaam 1995](#)). Bill Stephney, rap historian and CEO of Stepsun Entertainment, underscores the issue by claiming that the marketplace and capitalism motivate what gangsta rappers do and don't do ("Gangsta Rap," MTV, 9/13/94). Here we have numerous indictments of the "greed-artists" of gangsta rap music ([Shocked and Bull 1992: 6](#)) and the gangsta rap music's "shock-for-sales rantings" ([Jones 1994b: 10D](#)). Not surprisingly, a reporter for *The Wall Street Journal* agrees with this contention and supplies a quotation from rap producer David Dickerson as further evidence: "The sad truth is the harder the rapper's image, the more music they sell" ([Pulley 1994: A1](#)). But the present analysis contradicts the direct association between violent and misogynist lyrics and popularity in three ways. First, assault, the least serious of the specified criminal acts, is the modal violent and misogynist lyrics category. Next, the least popular gangsta rap music group has the highest frequency of violent and misogynist songs. Too Much Trouble, the Baby Geto Boys, are far less commercially successful than other representatives of the genre. Finally, Dr. Dre and Snoop Doggy Dogg, the two premier gangsta rap music artists, combine for only three of the 107 cases of violent and misogynist lyrics.

DISCUSSION

A deconstructive reading of gangsta rap music's lyric content immediately suggests the core element of the gangsta rap music domain. As with other European-American popular songs, interpretations of gangsta rap music must fall within the context of, and as contributing to, patriarchal hegemony ([Davis 1998](#)). Indeed, every variety of Western music, including classical symphonies and opera, is an almost exclusively male domain ([McClary 1991](#)). Rock lyrics are lopsidedly male, circumscribed by male dominance over women ([Pattison 1987](#)). Punk rock retained misogynist imagery ([Levine 1992](#)). Paralleling rock's sexism, rap is a haven of male hegemony ([Guevara 1996](#)). To begin, recall that gangsta rap music is self-referential. The self-referential reportage that frames the gangsta rap music enterprise is initial evidence for gangsta rap music's essential sexism. This kind of presentation of self is characterized as a "masculinization" of ethnographic narrative. Literary scholars note a strong male proclivity toward elaborating their life stories in order to project a poised self-image ([Tedlock 1995](#)). The self images that women's memoirs project are often an understated and fragmentary clarification of personalities detached from (male) self-glorification. Further, narratives **[End page 104]** are cultural stories that have real holds on the imaginations of men and women. When the cultural stories are told from the point of view of the male, the central character in the patriarchal system, they reaffirm the status quo ([Richardson 1995](#)). In gangsta rap music, as elsewhere, relations of power over sex are maintained through language ([Foucault 1980](#)). Part of the ongoing work of gender construction occurs within the gangsta rap music arena. Gangsta rap music is a constitutive element in a complex web of meaning formation and power relations.

The hegemonic dimension of gangsta rap music's narratives is immediate evidence of a rape culture ([Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth 1993](#)). In fact, gangsta rap music is a "celebration" of rape culture and its most powerful contemporary voice ([hooks 1993](#)). A rape culture is a complex of beliefs supporting a continuum of threatened violence against women that ranges from sexual remarks to rape itself. It is a "generic culture," part of the social construction of gender, how individuals "do gender" ([Boswell and Spade 1996](#)). When members of the National Political Congress of Black Women staged a protest outside a store selling gangsta rap music, one of the marchers carried a sign with the slogan, "Gangsta Rap Is Rape" ([Herrmann 1994](#)). Minimally, gangsta

rap music's typifications of violent and misogynist lyrics are rather dramatic examples of what Dworkin (1981) terms the male use of language as violence. Deconstructing gangsta rap music's violent and misogynist lyrics, the symbolic working toward the denigration of women, enables its reevaluation.

CONCLUSION

Recently, two syndicated columnists have linked social problems directly to gangsta rap music's foundational period. For Leonard Pitts (1999) of the *Miami Herald*, gangsta rap music helped promote urban decline by romanticizing value-free visions, which included a celebration of women pimping in a scabrous and explicit way. For Stanley Crouch (2000) of New York's *Daily News*, gangsta rap music, beginning with N.W.A's 1989 arrival, caused a decline in American values and promoted the way thugs and sluts live by "any means necessary." What these writers could not have known was that gangsta rap music in the year 2000 would make prior lyrical presentations seem tame.

In 2000, gangsta rap music continued to dominate rap music. Its popularity was such that Pareles (2000) categorized artists offering an alternative to gangsta rap music as part of the "non-gangsta wing of hip-hop." The "Up in Smoke" tour, featuring Dr. Dre, Ice Cube, Snoop Dogg, and Eminem, became the most popular rap tour ever. The show even presented a reunited and reconstituted version of N.W.A with Snoop Dogg replacing the late Eazy-E. Moreover, Eminem's *Slim Shady LP*, which Dr. Dre produced, won the Grammy for the best rap album of 1999. In the *Slim Shady LP*, women are killed by guns and knives and by an innovative means, such as poisoning. Further, violent and misogynist lyrics are enhanced by an act of infanticide. Eminem's *The Marshall Mathers LP* became the fastest selling rap album of all time. Violent and misogynist lyrics are [End page 105] found in eleven of the album's fourteen songs. Worse still, nine of the eleven songs depict killing women, with drowning becoming a new *modus operandi*. Comparing the lyric content of gangsta rap music's foundational period with that of Eminem shows the following: In terms of violent and misogynist lyrics, gangsta rap music (1987-1993) scores a 22 percent while Eminem (2000) reaches 78 percent. Concerning the percent of the violent and misogynist lyrics dealing with women's murder: gangsta rap music (1987-1993) yields 31 percent and Eminem (2000) 82 percent. As a reward for extending the presence of violent and misogynist lyric content beyond his musical progenitors, Eminem has made the cover of *Rolling Stone* (8/3/00), *The Source* (7/00) and *Spin* (8/00). Gangsta rap music continues to teach, promote, and glamorize violence and misogyny (Bok 1999). Introduction of discursive vehicles for unlearning, resisting, and deglamorizing violent and misogynist lyrics has become more important than ever with the increasing popularity of the gangsta rap music genre. [End page 106]

ENDNOTES

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1. The question, "Does rap music contribute to violent crime?" is the subject of scholarly debate (see, for example, [Martin, 1998](#) versus [Hamm and Ferrell 1998](#)). Research confirms that listening to

gangsta rap music motivates sexual aggression (Barongan and Nagayama Hall 1995; Johnson, Adams, Ashburn, and Reed 1995; Johnson, Jackson, and Gatto 1995) and inappropriate behavior (Harris, Bradley, and Titus 1992). Wester, Crown, Quatman, and Heesacker (1997) found that gangsta rap music lyrics significantly increased men's adversarial sexual beliefs. Other studies, however, fail to find any causal link between rap lyric content and behavior problems (Epstein, Pratto, and Skipper 1990; Took and Weiss 1994). Likewise, the hypothesis that rap lyrics cause either anxiety or suicidal ideation has been experimentally rejected (Ballard and Coates 1995). Attempts to link rap and violence are critically categorized as part of the so-called "danger to society frame" that allegedly emphasizes that rap creates legions of misogynist listeners who are a danger to women (Binder 1993).

2. Historically, rap is part of an oral heritage and as such preserves the cultural past of West African slaves whose flowery language was the sign of the speaker's verbal skill and of the social code shared by the oral community (Edwards and Sienkewicz 1991; Stephens 1991; Perkins 1996; Smitherman 1997). Attention to rap as verbal art leads to deliberations on the production of the object, explorations of the art form as socially contingent. Here rap is seen as an articulation of contemporary black culture (Pressley 1992; West 1993), black nationalism (Muwakkil 1992; Decker 1993; Henderson 1996), and the socio-economic problems encountered by inner-city youth (Baker 1993; Berry 1994; Kelley 1996; Keyes 1996; McCall 1997).

3. Philadelphia artist Schoolly-D is also considered the original gangsta rapper (Jackson 1994) and the producer of the seminal hardcore release (Nelson and Summers 1993), but Schoolly D has not been commercially successful and remains virtually unknown (Jackson 1994). Cross (1993) believes that Schoolly D and Boogie Down Productions (BDP) were at gangsta rap music's vanguard. BDP's KRS-One, however, quickly moved to espousals of political and non-violent agendas. Another candidate for inclusion is the late Tupac Shakur (2Pac/Makaveli). But Tupac stressed that he was "a thug" not a gangsta rapper ("Gangsta Rap," MTV, 9/13/94). His violent recitations were never directed at women and many of his raps dealt with the elevation of women's status (Watts 1997). During Tupac's funeral, Naughty By Nature's Treach emphasized that Tupac "weren't no gangsta" (Rhyme & Reason 1997). [End page 107]

4. Gangsta rap music underwent other changes as well. In 1995, Ice-T, gangsta rap music's progenitor, ceased using gangsta rap music to describe his music (McLaren 1995). A year later, Dr. Dre, the artist/producer who coined the term "gangsta rap," announced that the musical style was "over" (MTV 9/2/96), that it had "run its course" (quoted in Samuels and Gates 1996), that gangsta rap music "is definitely a thing of the past" (quoted in Reilly 1996: B2). A book published during December, 1996, was entitled *Gangsta Rap Is Dead* (Osayande 1996). In 1997, Death Row Records, the genre's key label, started to unravel, dismantling gangsta rap music's most potent artist lineup (Branch 1997). A common viewpoint was that the "reign" of gangsta rap music had ended (Klein 1998) and that gangsta rap music was "in ruins" (Smith 1997). But after a mid-decade sales dip, the genre's popularity increased dramatically (Clark-Meads and Legrand 1998). Both Ice-T (James 1999) and Dr. Dre (Pareles 1999) returned to their gangsta rap music roots and reclaimed their places at the center of the gangsta rap music enterprise. In 1998, rap became America's top-selling format and because of this, *Time* labeled the United States the "hip-hop nation" (Farley 1999). After accessing the global popularity of the music, *The Christian Science Monitor* disagreed, finding not just a hip-hop nation but a "hip-hop world" (Terry 1999). Gangsta rap music still remains the most popular of rap's major categories (Pinn 1999).

5. Many commentators challenge the notion that gangsta rap music has violent and misogynist lyrical content. For Wahl (1999) gangsta rap music offers only a "seeming" glorification of violence and misogyny. Kitwana (1994) calls critics of gangsta rap music "uninformed" and suggests that they should listen to the music. Rose (1994a) finds that opponents of gangsta rap music operate out of genuine ignorance when they give their shallow readings of gangsta rap music's violent and misogynist lyrics. Gladney (1995) claims that critics fail to analyze the lyrics critically and intellectually. Dyson (1993) sees negative appraisals of gangsta rap music as rooted in a shallow understanding of rap which results from an unwillingness to listen to the lyrics. During one conference, rappers and their fans criticized noted psychiatrist Dr. Alvin Poussaint, claiming that he disparaged rap without having listened to it (Williams 1992). Keyes (1996) concludes that gangsta rap music's critics cannot "decode" its language. Potter (1995) and Yancy (1997) hold that criticisms of gangsta rap music's violent and misogynist lyrics unfairly remove the lyrics from their "context." According to Rosen and Marks (1999), gangsta rap music's violent and misogynist lyrics are "parodic signifying." The lyrics are humorous poetic contrivances.

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APPENDIX A

Discography of Gangsta Rap, 1987 to 1993

(DELETED)

TABLE ONE

Gangsta Rap Artists and Violent/Misogynist (V/M) Lyrics

<i>Artist</i>	<i>Number of Songs</i>	<i>Number with V/M Lyrics (% Total Songs)</i>	<i>Lyrical Portrayals of Assault (% V/M)</i>	<i>Lyrical Portrayals of Rape (% V/M)</i>	<i>Lyrical Portrayals of Murder (% V/M)</i>	<i>Lyrical Portrayals of Rape and Murder (% V/M)</i>
Bushwick Bill	12	5 (42%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)
Dr. Dre	16	1 (6%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Eazy-E	25	8 (32%)	5 (20%)	1 (13%)	2 (25%)	0 (0%)
Geto Boys	65	17 (26%)	5 (29%)	0 (0%)	9 (53%)	3 (18%)
Ice Cube	69	6 (9%)	4 (67%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)
Ice-T	83	8 (10%)	6 (75%)	1 (13%)	1 (13%)	0 (0%)
MC Ren	16	4 (25%)	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	0 (0%)
N.W.A.	42	13 (31%)	5 (38%)	1 (8%)	6 (46%)	1 (8%)
Scarface	29	3 (10%)	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	2 (67%)	0 (0%)
Snoop Doggy Dogg	16	2 (13%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Too Much Trouble	29	14 (48%)	9 (64%)	0 (0%)	4 (29%)	1 (7%)
Too \$hort	60	21 (35%)	12 (57%)	5 (24%)	2 (9%)	2 (9%)
Willie D	28	5 (18%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)
Totals	490	107 (22%)	54 (50%)	12 (11%)	33 (31%)	8 (7%)

SECTION TWO

This Female Hip-Hop Fan Says 'Time's Up' on the Music Industry

By Sarah Gidick

SOURCE: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/female-hip-hop-fan-says-times-up-music-industry-1078983>

Feeling disenchanted by the music industry? Me Too.

Stories about how the music world is a boys' club rife with abuse have been around since before there was a thing called rock 'n' roll, and yet the industry has stayed remarkably silent in the wake of Hollywood's massive shakedown of sexual predators.

On Grammys Sunday, Kelly Clarkson, Rita Ora and more will wear white roses in solidarity with the Time's Up movement. A white rose is nice, but it's not women's responsibility to make change in an industry where they are the minority. And it's going to take more than white roses to do that.

I, like many women, am part of the problem. I have nodded my head in agreement to songs that are demeaning, yet good to work out to. My relationship with hip-hop is much like any other 30-something's. Depending on what coast you grew up on, for me, the East, that's who you listened to. Listening to Biggie, Mary J. Blige, Wu-Tang and Nas transports me back to a time where my biggest worry was boys and homework. I didn't know how I would fit in, I just gathered that men wanted women to act this way, and one day I would have to, but it would be cool and easy, like the song says.

Rap taught me how to slut-shame. I thought women who were promiscuous were "hoes," I still have to catch myself judging a woman's outfit or behavior. I wasn't taught by my parents, movies or in school that men will want to ejaculate on your face. Music gave me an X-rated crash course in sexual education.

Unfortunately, in my adult life, I had firsthand experience with sexual assault. I'm lucky to be alive, that I worked tirelessly to get my rapist off the streets and registered as a sex offender. The irony doesn't escape me. It wasn't easy, and it wreaked havoc on my relationships and my life. In light of the Me Too movement, I've started to think differently about the music I listened to before I understood the implications.

"It's just a song," said a boyfriend once. But it's not just a song. It's repetitive, a mantra. The meditative power of rap seems to escape people. My ex-boyfriend works for one of the most famous rappers in the industry. After I was drugged and raped by a stranger after a Juicy J

concert, my ex left my life, only popping up here and there. I was too shell-shocked to care. A witness in my case, he skillfully evaded my detective for years.

Denial and misogyny seem to plague this industry, where, at times, it feels like women simply aren't welcome. According to the [Annenberg Inclusion Initiative's inaugural study](#), in 2017, female artists made up only 16.8 percent of the music industry. And nothing says "you're not welcome" like lyrics (from some Grammy nominees, Childish Gambino, Travis Scott and Big Sean among them) calling women bitches, hoes, pussy, gold diggers and status symbols.

In 2011, Grammy-nominated Big Sean was arrested in Buffalo, New York, for third-degree sexual abuse, second-degree unlawful imprisonment and forcible touching of a 17-year-old. [Cleared of sexual assault charges](#), the artist pleaded guilty to misdemeanor unlawful imprisonment of the 17-year-old fan. If he were anyone else, Big Sean would have been forever banned from teaching, flying an airplane or myriad other types of work for this charge. In the music industry, well, Big Sean is nominated for a Grammy this year.

How will the industry respond to Time's Up at the Grammys? I hope with grace. Recording Academy CEO Neil Portnow [can't confirm](#) that he will wear a white rose in solidarity because he's still "learning" about the movement. Grammys executive producer Ken Ehrlich said, "We're more concerned with allowing artists that we work with to express themselves and have artistic freedom." Spoiler alert: It's pretty straightforward, guys.

Artistic freedom and supporting an initiative that promotes equal pay and a safer workplace can be harmonious. Now it's more important than ever. On March 27, 2017, [President Trump rescinded Executive Order 13673](#), which ensured fair pay and safe workplaces. As a result, workplace sexual harassment and assault cases are harder than ever to bring to court. The music industry needs to step up.

One has to wonder if inciting violence against women, disrespecting women, is part of the music industry's marketing strategy. This business model does not jive with this moment in history, and it's probably not going to change just by wearing a white rose.

It is simplistic and utterly naïve to say, "Just don't listen to it, then," or, "It's up to the parents." No, artists, it's up to you. As a listener, I'm guilty, too. Misogyny has been a successful branding strategy for decades, and it's time to call "Time's Up" on that.

SECTION THREE

by [Kiana Konders](#) July 27, 2017

SOURCE: <https://massappeal.com/misogyny-in-hip-hop/>

Hip Hop's Misogyny Problem Keeps Getting Worse At what point do we draw the line?

Where to start? The anecdotes are too plentiful. How about the day before yesterday, when Rick Ross went on air and said he'd never sign a female rapper because he'd just have to smash—so he'd rather pass instead. *Buzzfeed's* [investigative piece](#) on the R. Kelly sex cult and its rapid [trivialization](#) all happened within the past week. The week before, [a video surfaced](#) of VLONE's A\$AP Bari pulling a naked girl out of bed in a room with two other men and forcing her into another room, saying she would have to have sex with him. Days later, Bari and A\$AP Rocky were out [chilling together](#) at FYF.

Hip hop has always had a serious problem with the female gender. Most of the time women are viewed solely as a visual accessory or sexual object. This is nothing new, right? I mean, how long has it been since Dr. Dre assaulted Dee Barnes? And the list of incidents in recent memory goes on, including [Famous Dex](#), [Ian Connor](#), [Kodak Black](#) and let's not forget Chris Brown, who managed to get off or get over in the court of public opinion, becoming a worldwide icon again thanks to people's short memories and attention span not to mention their willingness to overlook violence against women.

R. Kelly is never going to get jail time, the justice system is too busy vibing off of his music pic.twitter.com/4FpEGtXf6n

— Black Queen (@amour_key98) [July 17, 2017](#)

While some listeners, DJs and publications have removed these artists from daily rotation, most have not. Aside from all of the similar allegations, what do these artists have in common? Not only what seems to be a hatred for women, unless they offer some sexual benefit, but also a cult-like following that builds a sense of "untouchability" and normalizes their behavior. While criticism of the artists is plentiful, they still have huge followings, regardless of what they do.

Although all of the artists mentioned are still doing well for themselves, there have been some repercussions. When bubbling Chicago rapper Famous Dex was caught beating his girlfriend on camera, he lost his spot on the XXL Freshman list. Rick Ross lost his Reebok deal due to the scandal over lyrics about slipping molly into an unwitting girl's drink.

But for the most part, these artists see little in the way of repercussions. Rocky not only continued to publicly support Bari, he also keeps Ian Connor [at his side](#), despite [multiple rape allegations](#). Kodak Black not only earned himself a rape charge, but was also seen on Instagram Live receiving oral sex. Regardless of whether that situation was consensual or not, the decision to broadcast a sex act on social media displays a lack of sensitivity and an unwillingness to learn from one's mistakes. But he's still topping the charts.

The most egregious of all these cases may be the rapper [XXXTentacion](#), who blew up while he was in jail for six months after his then ex-girlfriend accused him of brutally beating her to the point where she was blinded. He also bragged about beating up a gay man while locked up. In his case, his predicament actually seems to be part of the reason he's so popular. His mugshot is actually his cover art.

These men are entertainers. Their purpose is to produce art, not be role models. Still it's only natural that their followers look up to them. Conversely, this cult-like following enables the artists to engage in further acts of sexual harassment, domestic violence, and rape. Their rise on the

charts only reinforces the wider problem of misogyny and rape culture. It also diminishes hope for any help that these victims may receive.

Although they are simply entertainers, everyone should be held to the standard of being a good human. They floss their possessions: money, cars, clothes... and women. They have every thing a boy could ever want. But a human is not property, regardless of gender.

Watching the rise of somebody like XXXTentacion is frightening for me as a woman. The continued support of Kodak Black is no different. Despite all the charges and rape allegations, there was no end in sight for the heavy following that the Tallahassee rapper created. If anything, all we saw was more #FreeKodak tweets.

We live in a society that shrugs off domestic violence and sexual assault with statements like "boys will be boys." Girls hear it when we're beginning to interact with different genders in elementary school; we hear it when we're starting to form more intimate relationships with them. The phrase remains prominent even when these boys should be turning into "men."

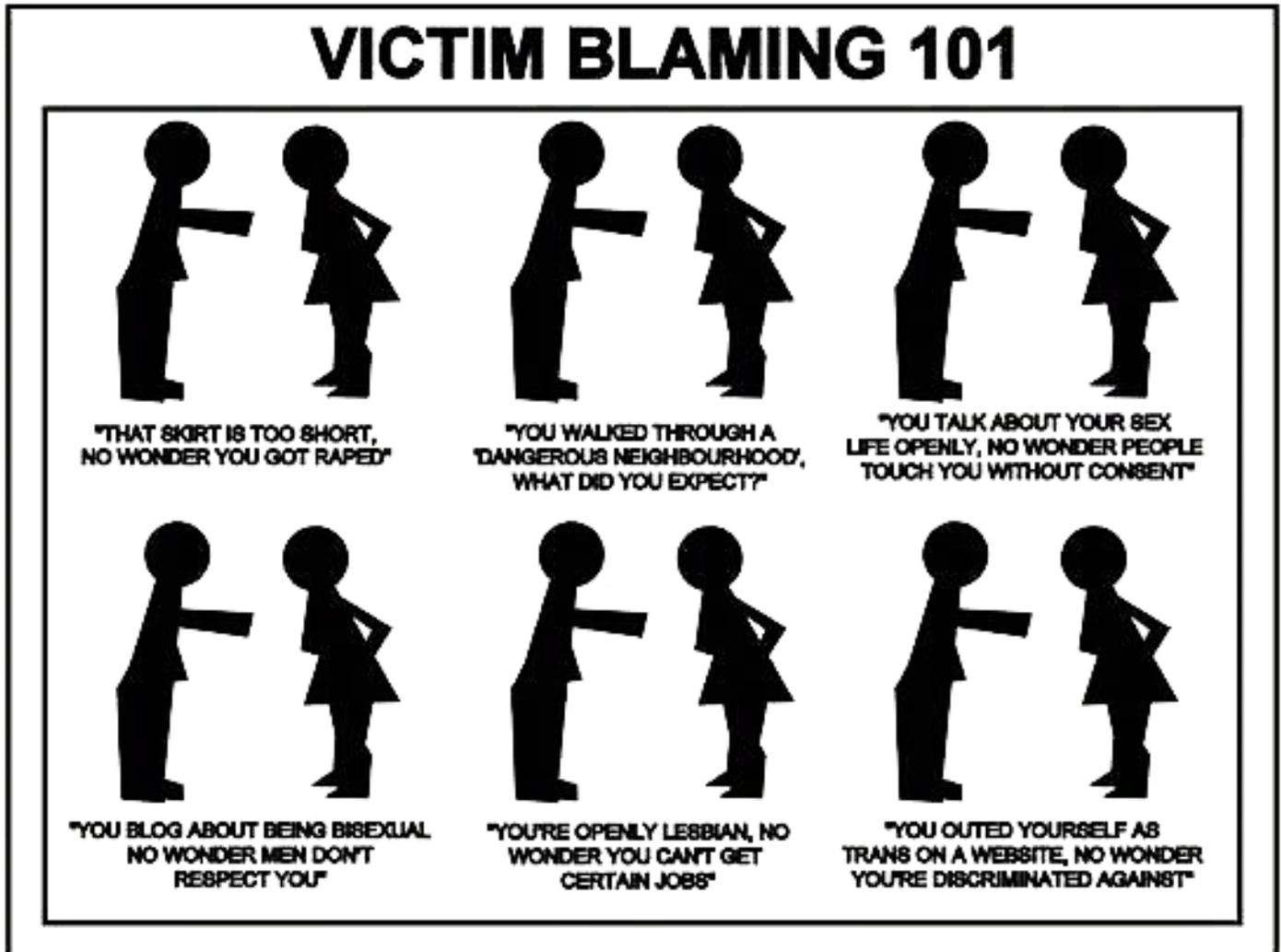
In his latest album, *4:44*, [JAY-Z opens up to us](#) about his journey to becoming a man. On the brutally honest single, "4:44," he outright acknowledges his immaturity and battles with infidelity. Aside from admitting to personal struggles and cheating on his wife, "4:44" is a true demonstration of Jay-Z becoming a "man" in his final form. The lyrics are almost completely opposite from some of his earlier work, epitomized by the classic "Big Pimpin'" cut where he brags "You know I, thug em', fuck em', love em', leave em', cause' I don't fuckin' need em'."

While it took until he was 47 years old to admit his wrongdoings, JAY-Z offers a great example of how power and enablement go hand in hand. This type of insight from an older, widely respected figure is exactly the type of example many young men need. We teach young girls how to avoid rape and sexual harassment, as opposed to teaching young men the importance of mutual consent. Clearly the enabling begins at a young age for many men, but as power is acquired bad behavior tends to get worse.

Out of every 1000 rapes, it's [estimated](#) that only 310 are reported. If we've been shown over and over again that there is no recourse for these actions, pressing charges just seems like more risk—especially when the perpetrators are as powerful as these artists are. It seems as though rappers are held to no standard *because* of their status.

As an avid hip hop lover who also happens to be a woman, I find myself rapping along to lyrics that are blatantly degrading my own kind. Although I can listen to Cam'ron's "Suck It Or Not" without being bothered, it doesn't mean some songs just don't make me feel uncomfortable: Eminem's "Kim" sticks out to me, or Kool G Rap's "Hey Mister Mister." Hearing about brutally beating or raping a woman will never sound appealing in any context. Sometimes I'll pause when it hits me how dehumanizing to women a particular lyric is, and then I'll turn the music back up and go on with my day. I know I'm not the only one guilty of this—as awful as it is. To love hip hop, I've learned to separate the artist from the art. I further separate the lyrics from their actual meaning, rather than taking them at face value. If I thought deeply about every demeaning rap lyric I'd be forced to hate the genre as a whole, and that's impossible for me.

Though the separation of the art and artist is easily doable, things still can get iffy. Streaming and downloading their music contributes to their success. But I love hip hop, despite its flaws. That doesn't mean I don't want it to become better. And being able to love the culture despite its major downfalls comes from a place of privilege. I personally have been fortunate enough to never have been in a situation where some of these foul lyrics really hit home. Many other women, unfortunately, cannot.



We must not deify these artists and give them an even stronger sense of invincibility. We must not shame and blame the women who are brave enough to speak out about the awful things happening to them. Sometimes there are, unfortunately, false accusations, and not all scenarios are black and white. But we need to push for higher standards in those we elevate. We owe it to any and all victims of these life-altering incidents, to ourselves, and to the already stereotyped culture that we love so much.

For hip hop to continue growing, we must be the better example. Listening to any of the above-mentioned artists does not make somebody a bad person. Maybe some of the artists will eventually grow and evolve into better people. Hey, anything is possible. But until that happens we can't feed into the already counterproductive culture that exists within our broader society. Hip

Hop is a beautiful thing with an electric history and global influence. As members of this community, it is our duty to keep it as positive and healthy as possible.

SECTION FOUR

The Long and Pathetic History of Misogyny in the Music Industry

By [Sarah](#) Mar 2 2016

SOURCE: <https://www.elitedaily.com/elite/kesha-and-music-industry/1393955>

For many of us, music is an inextricable part of our lives. It serves as the playlist for everything from gym workouts, breakups and road trips to crazy nights out on the town.

Some artists have an uncanny ability to express our feelings so well, it feels like they ripped pages from our diaries and sang them (only way better than we could, of course). We feel as though they get us, and we love them for that.

So, it's disturbing to realize the music industry has an insidious dark side, one that treats the women who work within it so badly. I first read about sexism in the music industry in 2015, when music editor Jessica Hopper [asked women on Twitter](#) to recount a time when they were made to feel second rate, whether as a journalist, artist or fan.

The cringe-worthy responses ranged from double standards to sexual harassment. But some were infinitely worse than others:

@jesshopp Was sexually assaulted on tour when I was TM. Told the band who said, 'I don't know what you were expecting, coming on the road.' — Cat Jones (@catjonessoda) August 27, 2015

Wow. And there is also [this](#) response from author Meaghan Garvey, who recounted in a series of tweets being sexually assaulted and then harassed by her assailant during a work trip to LA.

@jesshopp I went to sleep & wake up to the guy, who's told me I'm the 'best journalist,' ripping off my clothes. i try to push him off. — Fire Marshal Meaghan (@meaghan_garvey) August 26, 2015

@jesshopp I physically can't. when I wake up, I throw up for about 45 minutes. my rapist & 'patron' walks in whistling. literally. — Fire Marshal Meaghan (@meaghan_garvey) August 26, 2015

@jesshopp he says 'Do you remember last night? You threw yourself all over me.' I know it's a lie but there's nothing for me to say. — Fire Marshal Meaghan (@meaghan_garvey) August 26, 2015

Her story ends with her escaping on an \$800 flight back home, crying the entire way.

"It's an open secret that the business is sexist," says Lizzy Goodman in her [response](#) to Hopper's Twitter project, titled "No More Secrets: Squashing Sexism in Music And Why This Is Just The Beginning." She writes,

It was as if an entire community of oppressed people had been holding their collective breath since the moment they were first violated, just waiting for someone to ask: are you being, brazenly, routinely abused? And the answer was a resounding yes.

Unfortunately, this industry doesn't seem to have made any progress since these female authors shone a light on its inherent sexism last year. Take what happened on Friday, when the Manhattan Supreme Court judge denied [Kesha's request to be released from her contract with Sony](#) after the singer suffered alleged sexual, physical and mental abuse at the hands of her producer, Dr. Luke.

In a cruel stroke of irony, the judge ruled Kesha must honor her contract to create [six more albums](#) in collaboration with the label of the man who hurt her. This has enormous and disheartening implications for female artists within the music industry and for the women everywhere who listen to their work.

Sony's stance, inexplicably upheld by the US justice system, says that a legally binding contract is more important than a woman's safety. It implies that if a corporation has invested \$60 million in your career, [as Sony has done for Kesha](#), it owns you and can treat you however it wants — however inhumanely — without having any legal repercussions.

It propagates the helplessness felt by victims everywhere, and that if you come forward and speak up against sexual assault, you will not be heard. Sony had a tremendous opportunity to send a message about the direction of the music industry and women's place in it. It had a chance to show that women's allegations of abuse would be addressed compassionately and seriously, as doing what was morally right would be put above doing what was profitable.

What a missed opportunity it turned out to be. Still, the outpouring of support from fellow stars Taylor Swift, Demi Lovato, Kelly Clarkson, Ariana Grande, Halsey and Lady Gaga offer a silver lining in an otherwise heartbreaking resolution to Kesha's legal saga.

With more and more women working in the music industry supporting each other, one day sexism in this field will be a thing of the past. But sadly, for now it seems it is here to stay.

SECTION FIVE

[WOMEN](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/hip-hop-misogyny-double-standard_us_55cdf7b9e4b07addcb42a7b8) SOURCE: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/hip-hop-misogyny-double-standard_us_55cdf7b9e4b07addcb42a7b8

What We Forget When We Talk about Hip-Hop's Women Problem

By [Zeba Blay](#)

The sexism we see in some hip-hop music is a reflection of the sexism that we see in society as a whole.

Consider this: there is a glaring double standard in the way that we talk about hip-hop music and misogyny.

There's been a resurgence of both interest and criticism of the '90s rap group N.W.A ever since promotion for the new music biopic "Straight Outta Compton" began earlier this year. The film, chronicling the gangsta rap group's rise to fame, has been [praised](#) for highlighting the parallels of racial tensions between 1987 and today. It has also been commended for humanizing a group that was largely demonized in their day for their blunt lyrics about life in the hood.

But "Straight Outta Compton" has also faced some harsh (and valid) [criticism](#), mostly because it largely [glosses over the rap group's unapologetic sexism](#). Key female N.W.A collaborators like rap artist Yo-Yo have been omitted entirely from the film, while the overall presence of women has been relegated to mothers, girlfriends, and groupies, all in the periphery. The group's most notorious instance of violence and misogyny, where Dr. Dre viciously [assaulted hip-hop journalist Dee Barnes](#) in 1991, isn't addressed at all.

The film's release has forced the remaining members to address their treatment of women in the past. In an interview for the August 2015 issue of [Rolling Stone](#), rapper Ice Cube vehemently defended use of the words "bitches" and "hoes."

"If you're a bitch, you're probably not going to like us. If you're a ho, you probably don't like us. If you're not a ho or a bitch, don't be jumping to the defense of these despicable females," the rapper/actor explained.

He continued, "I never understood why an upstanding lady would even think we're talking about her."

The interview has added fuel to the ongoing scrutiny that Ice Cube, Dr. Dre, and N.W.A have received over the past few weeks.

Since the 1980s, hip-hop artists have been accused of objectifying women, demeaning women, and promoting violence and sexual abuse against women. They're guilty of colorism, too — the

praise of "lightskinned hoers" and the denigration of darker skinned women is evident even in the [controversial casting call](#) for "Straight Outta Compton."

In examining hip-hop's past treatment of women as it relates to N.W.A, we're forced to appraise how hip-hop treats women today. It's safe to say that not much has changed.

Last year, Rick Ross ignorantly included a [drug-rape lyric](#) in a verse for the song "U.O.E.N.O," while Lil Wayne had to [apologize for the lyric](#), "beat the pussy up like Emmett Till." Kanye's West's last album "Yeezus," highly divisive, has been called out as [one long hate letter to women](#), and objectifying music videos from artists like [Drake](#) and [2 Chainz](#) persist.

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Kanye West holding a woman's decapitated head in the video for "Monster"

Hip-hop has a long, sordid, and complex relationship with women. Female MCs including Queen Latifah, MC Lyte, Salt-N-Peppa, Lil Kim, and Nicki Minaj still aren't taken seriously as lyricists in a male-dominated genre driven by bravado and machismo, where the distinction between "despicable females" and "upstanding ladies" is made on the whim of male artists.

But it's not just hip-hop that has a misogyny problem. All music does. Rap music isn't the only genre with [degrading and demeaning lyrics](#) about women. Videos like Warrant's "[Cherry Pie](#)" featuring scantily clad models came before, during, and after some of the most objectifying rap videos.

Sexism is rampant in the [punk](#), [metal](#), and [indie rock](#) scenes. And while there's been criticism of non-rap genres before — the campaign for parental advisories and [censorship of hair metal bands in the 1980s](#) for instance — hip-hop seems to be an easy and constant target.

It makes sense why it's most often the scapegoat. Hip-hop is global, wildly popular, and mainstream in a way that many rock genres aren't nowadays. But there are complexities in the way that hip-hop misogyny must be approached. We can't talk about hip-hop, an art form born in the Bronx and popularized by black and Latino youth, without talking about race. Tied up in these critiques are perceived ideas about black masculinity as aggressive, toxic, inherently dangerous. It's not just the music, but who is *making* the music that seems to make it so offensive.

So how do we reconcile this?

This isn't an argument for absolving hip-hop of its ongoing sins. And it isn't to say that one form of misogyny in music is worse than another — a Dr. Dre song called "Bitches Ain't Shit" should be critiqued the same way as a NOFX song called "Punch Her In The Cunt." But we must also address the fact that the narrative of male hip-hop artists universally hating women persists, while there continues to be very little critique of other, white-dominated genres.

Critiques of hip-hop must be contextualized. First of all, not *all* hip-hop perpetuates sexism. And rape, violence, and the degradation of woman are not a "black thing." Sexism in rap music didn't spring forth solely from black culture, which seems to be implicit in commentary about hip-hop. Rather, the sexism we see in some hip-hop music is a reflection of the sexism that we see in society as a whole. It's important to remember this.

Failing to critique other genres of music ultimately does a disservice to *all* women. When we focus the debate solely on hip-hop, we narrow problems like sexual violence and abuse to a very specific group, but don't talk about the ways these issues manifest in other genres and impact a much wider range of women. With the scope so limited, how much change can we actually expect?

Hip-hop most definitely has a problem with women, and it's one that needs to be addressed in a real way. That's clearly evident by the fact that, 20 years later, Ice Cube can still defend the music he made with N.W.A — seminal, but still highly problematic. What's disturbing though is that while we're at least reckoning and grappling with the realities of hip-hop, how we can both love the music and critique it in a meaningful way, the same conversation about other genres hasn't really started. It isn't right that the totality of hip-hop is thrown under the bus while the rest of a super sexist industry gets a pass from having to actually deal with its relationship to women. It's a subtle, but profound double standard, and it needs to be acknowledged.