

**Double Standards in the Music Industry in Terms of Race, Gender and Expressing  
Sexuality**

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Women are powerful and sexual beings. Women are the givers of life and are the creators of a family. Women are strong, compassionate, and fierce. Women have had power within themselves but have been historically silenced in many cultures. Women have been sexualized, stereotyped and standardized. Men say they want a lady in the streets but a freak in the sheets and to cover up because you will look slutty, but not too much or you are a prude. Women are told to hide parts of their bodies and only to show them at a man's disposal. Women are taught to be property of men and to receive sex and not take an active part in it. There are so many rules and double standards that exist for men and women that cause a toxic culture that pollutes all parts of our society. Over the course of history there have been many different waves of feminisms to confront these happenings and as we reach current times women of color have created a new contemporary methodology of feminist scholarship known as, autobiographical voice(Davalos, 151).

Dwayne Michael Carter, Jr., more commonly known as Lil Wayne, is an African-American rapper. He was born in New Orleans, Louisiana and later became a top-selling artist in hip-hop in the early 21st century. According to an independent music marketing company, Stop the Breaks, a Hip-Hop gem is Lil Wayne's "Lollipop," released in 2008, which was his first number one hit. "Lollipop" spent five weeks on top billboard Hot 100, sold 2.8 million singles by December, "topped the charts all over the world and won him and won Lil Wayne an award for Best Rap Song at the 51st Grammy Awards" ("Stop the Breaks," 2014). His hit song contained lyrics such as: "He's so sweet, make her wanna lick the wrapper. So I let her lick the rapper (hahaha!)," "she licked me like a lollipop," "you know I like to touch, your lovely lady lumps,lumps," "I make her feel right when it's wrong, like lying," "I ain't never seen a ass like hers/ That pussy in my mouth, had me lost for words/so I told her back it up like, urp-urp/ and I made that ass jump like, jerm-p-jerm-p," "I got her on top, she drop it like it's hot/ the

middle of the bed, giving, gettin' head/ I said hmm,mm, I like that" (Lil Wayne, 2008). These profoundly sexual lyrics represent the genre that has been historically sexist towards women. A study was conducted on degrading and non-degrading sexual references from top popular songs in the *Billboard* magazine and found that out of the 279 songs identified, "103 (36.9%) contained references to sexual activity" but "songs with references to degrading sex were more common than songs with references to non-degrading sex (65% vs. 36%)" (Primack et al., 2008).

According to the study, the songs that contained lyrics around degrading sex "were commonly Rap (64.2%) and sung by males, whereas songs with non-degrading sex were most likely Country (44.5%)" (Primack et al., 2008). This historically sexist genre reflects the whole music industry from Popular music artist, Taylor Swift to Hip-hop artist, Cardi B. Although Hip Hop has surpassed rock as the biggest music genre in 2017 and is filled with predominantly Black artists, "there are rarely any Black people in top executive positions that ultimately are pivotal in shaping what content gets produced in the market and even less Black women"(Khong, 2020). This exemplifies how companies are able to capitalize off of the cultural movement due to the amount of popularity and exposure thus, pushing their artists into this archetype. Due to the marketable topic of female empowerment in modern times, the "reductive stereotyping of young Black women can still be pervasive within the music industry and society as a whole"(Khong, 2020). Due to the recent artists fighting with contracting disputes we have to keep in mind that the portrayal of autonomy may not represent their ultimate control over their own music. This is not to say that all artists are controlled but we have to keep in mind that we do not know what happens behind closed doors. We may hope that the progression to a better world is happening but to what extent do people attempt to profit off of it.

On the other hand, the *Journal of Hip-hop Studies*, describe the genre as being "more than just a genre; historically the art form has allowed for generative changing and shaping of

Black politics” which can be seen with the lyrics of Tupac(Khong, 2020). This use of the genre as a means for generative thinking has only been applicable to Black men which explains the different reaction to a Black female artist who personifies the same content done by a Black male artist. As a way to reclaim power, Black women have applied what has historically been used for means to “push boundaries beyond existing racial and gender norms” (Khong, 2020).According to Lauron Kehrer, the authenticity of Hip hop often relies on the “rapper as Black, masculine, heterosexual, cisgender man” and those who do not identify within those parameters, including Black women, “challenge this construction in order to render themselves legible Hip hop audiences” (Khong, 2020).In the music industry, to fall outside of this normative identity through your intersections of race and gender, such as being a Black female singer, one is “coded as anti-intellectual, hypersexual, and commodifiable”(Khong, 2020).The challenge then becomes that sexuality has become a commodity where what sells the most is music that reflects an aggressive masculine pride at the expense of the objectification of women.

The discussions around who is allowed to use Hip hop as a tool for deconstruction of institutions and express themselves has been up for debate for years. Although the birth of rap music can be traced to centuries ago to West Africa where “historians who told rhythmic stories of the past to their villages over the simple beat of a drum” rap music as a genre is credited to DJ Kool Herc in the 1970s (Jukely, 2018). Although Hip hop was created to be used as an art form for generative change, it was dominated by men. Eighteen years later Lana Moorer, or MC Lyte, was described as the pioneer of female rap as the first solo female rapper to release a full length album in 1988. This genre has been male dominated and as is its fan base, which only complicates the “relationship with the female MCs daring to edge in on their turf and spit bars like the best of them” (Nilles, 2020). In spite of this circumstance, “at every point in rap’s storied history, you can find women pulling the spotlight, proving that they just might be the best of

them” (Nilles, 2020). There have been many female artists who dared to enter the genre from pioneers like “MC Lyte and Queen Latifah to the 90s queens like Lil’ Kim and Missy Elliot, to modern divas like Nicki Minaj and Cardi B, to rising stars like Megan Thee Stallion and Doja Cat” and have reminded “these so-called kings that this has never been just their kingdom” (Nilles, 2020).

In this paper I have chosen to focus on two particular artists who created the song “W.A.P” (Wet-Ass Pussy) together on August 7, 2020. I chose to focus on this song as opposed to other songs by other artists of color due to the timing of the release and the amount of conversations it started. The release of the song reignited debates over ideas that women should not be saying these things, especially if they are mothers and how it is anti-feminist to discuss your sexuality as a female. Also, the comments that were released from the artists themselves caught my attention as they contributed to stereotypes and ignored violence against women and the double standard in the music industry. Belcalis Almanzar, commonly known as Cardi B, is a Dominican and Black female artist, daughter of a mother from Trinidad and a father from Dominican Republic. She was raised in the South Bronx (Decker et al., 2020). Megan Pete, commonly known as Megan Thee Stallion, is a Black female artist, daughter of Black parents and mother who was also a rapper (Stewart, 2020). Their backgrounds are important to know in order to understand how their intersectionalities of race, gender, and ethnicity affect their experience in the music industry. The song “W.A.P” contains lyrics such as: “Swipe your nose like a credit card. Hop on top, I wanna ride” (Almanzar & Stallion, 2020, stanza 3). Also, they go against accommodating the needs of men by saying: “Pay my tuition just to kiss me” and “I don't cook, I don't clean. But let me tell you how I got this ring” (Almanzar & Stallion, 2020, stanza 4&5). Lastly expressing their desires by saying: I don't wanna spit, I wanna gulp. I wanna gag, I wanna choke. I want you to touch that lil' dangly thing. That swing in the back of my throat” and

“Your honor, I’m a freak bitch, handcuffs, leashes”(Almanzar & Stallion, 2020, stanza 6).

“W.A.P.” spent 4 weeks on top of the Billboard Hot 100, multiple weeks in other countries and was streamed 93 million time in the U.S. during the first week (Trust, 2020). This song also won them American Music Award for Favorite Song Rap in 2020 (Trust, 2020).

On the surface “W.A.P” and “Lollipop” are very similar, they mention what they want their partner to do, what they like sexually, win awards and have high amounts of streams. But, when we take a look at conversations around these songs we begin to see the very apparent double standard. For example, when “Lollipop” was released in 2008, it was referred to as a “cultural phenomenon” and began to be the must have song on your family party playlist (2014). In 2018, the Youtuber Marvelous Beatz posted a video about reacting to the “Lollipop” video as an adult and these were some of his reactions: “most classic rap song to this day,” “it is so fire,” and “banger that everybody remembers” (Beatz, 2018,). In 2018, a Youtube show interviewed older people from about 60 to 70 years of age, to see their reactions to the “Lollipop” video. The following are highlights of the interview: “he’s really representing an experience,” “more gentle,” “so catchy,” and “he is really showing lifestyle in the industry”(Youtube, 2018). On the other hand we have reactions to W.A.P. which can be shown in videos of children recording their parents reactions with quotes as follows: “no I don’t feel it, how can that be legal for them to do that, being all exposed” and “she bad, they let them put a song out like that? There are some whores in this house.. Why can’t there be no nice ladies” (Youtube, 2020). This is a reference to how they are dressed in the video; they are wearing body suits that show their legs and the top of their cleavage. The double standard in the music industry has been discussed by many Black female artists when they are approached with questions about their sex positive songs. In *Misogyny in Rap Music*, Ronald Weitzer discusses how men reference women in a negative and objectified way in songs, but women cannot discuss their own sexuality which shows the

censorship of women based on who is the one discussing it. They also identify that men can degrade women and there is no issue because it is the “culture” of the industry but when a woman expresses her sexuality it is seen as degrading to women and an inappropriate example (Weitzer, 2009). This idea was seen from the reactions to the release of W.A.P. due to Cardi B’s and Megan Thee Stallion’s lyrics and imagery in their music video. Women, especially women of color, in music videos for male artists’ songs are shown with little amounts of clothing and dancing for them and here they are taking a hold of the narrative and holding agency over their bodies. Although some may view this as enforcing stereotypes of Black women based on their clothing or lyrics, in reality it is the concept of “dialects of doubling” where females “mimic patriarchy even as they struggle against it” because it is a more hopeful and productive concept than internalized oppression (Davalos, pg 159). This allows us to come to a realization that this feminist process as moving “towards another state of consciousness and leading to liberation”(Davalos, pg 159).

The sexual double standard can be described where “men are afforded more freedom and power than women to engage in and direct heterosexual interactions” (Fasula, 2012). The phenomenon can also be described as “whereby men are socially rewarded for engaging in sexual activity, whereas women are socially denigrated for engaging in sexual activity” (Marks et al., 2019). There are a few dimensions to describe the sexual double standard due to it being an intersectional and layered standard. First, we have the good girl or bad girl dichotomy which “defines normative and deviant sexualities for women and facilitates the delicate dance between male access and control over women’s sexuality” by categorizing women as either “the idealized image of the pure, nurturing good girl [which] restricts women’s sexuality to rules of what is acceptable” or “the image of the tainted, promiscuous bad girl [which] serves both as justification for men to define and use women as sexual objects and as a deterrent against

women's sexual expression, desire and autonomy" (Fasula, 2012). 'Good girls' are meant to have little knowledge about their sexuality and not view themselves as sexual beings, but once they are open about their own sexuality, they "are at risk for being deemed deviant with a variety of stigmatizing labels used, such as slut, ho, or freak" (Fasula, 2012). An ethnographic study of young Black women who went to a nightclub weekly "and actively pursued sexual relationships" were deemed by men and women to have a "bad reputation" (Fasula, 2012). This good and bad girl dichotomy portrays 'bad girls' as having the value of a sexual object and are not taken seriously as potential relationship partners. On the other end of the spectrum, "good girls are afforded respect and protection, whereas 'bad girls' are easily dismissed and especially vulnerable to sexual victimization" (Fasula, 2012). There was a focus group study with Black youth and a fourth-grade girl discussed how she can't wear tight pants on the street or she will get raped. Many "young women are often motivated to distance themselves from the 'bad girl' image as an attempt to protect themselves from sexual exploitation and victimization" (Fasula, 2012). Secondly, the sexual double standard of polar reflections between "deviant and normative sexuality become more complex in the context of intersectionality, where dominant status is typically defined normative and minority status is seen as deviant" which means that for "Black women the good/bad girl dichotomy intersects with the historical and social circumstances of slavery and racial inequality in this country" (Fasula, 2012). The dominant culture reinforces images of 'othering' Black women. Thirdly, the sexual double standard creates a real man and wimp dichotomy which also "defines normative and deviant distinctions within young men's sexuality (Fasula, 2012). The deviant or wimp image connects with a "gay male image and the terms, fag or punk," which drive young men to distance themselves by "accentuating heterosexual desire and behaviors" which depends on a man's position in the masculinity hierarchy which is determined by a man's "heterosexual conquests" (Fasula, 2012). Through the



‘good girl’ and ‘real man’ ideologies “women should remain monogamous whereas it is expected and accepted that men will be unfaithful” (Fasula, 2012).

Gendered stereotypes of masculinity and femininity intersect with the sexual double standard by defining women as “nurturing, accommodating and passive women who are expected to subordinate their needs to the needs of men” and men as “inherently strong, successful, and in control of themselves and others” (Fasula, 2012). These gendered stereotypes represent the sexual imbalance between gender polarization and compulsory heterosexuality that creates a “double standard for the roles of men and women” during a sexual encounter (Fasula, 2012). Women are expected to be role models for young women, play a role as a mother, “and be sexual but only at the discretion of their male counterpart”(Marks, 2019). These societal expectations of women affect the reaction to the hit single, W.A.P. because it contains lyrics that are going against the norm of women being submissive during sex, accommodating to the need of men and not expressing their physical pleasurable desires. They go against the norm of women being submissive during sex by being the one in charge of the situation. Megan Thee Stallion immediately called out the double standards in the rap industry and its bias towards women saying, “a man can be as mediocre as he wants to be but still be praised. A man can talk about how he’s about to do all of these drugs and then come and shoot your house up. But as soon as I say something about my vagina, it’s the end of the world?” (Richmond, 2020). Stallion also states when discussing her power of her own self, “when women choose to capitalize on our sexuality, to reclaim our own power, like I have, we are vilified and disrespected”(Stallion, 2020).

Although this song has the intent to empower, some may see it as reinforcing negative stereotypes about Black women which shows how this conversation is more complicated than just discussing empowerment. If it were that simple, we could discuss how according to the

Oxford dictionary, 'empowerment' is defined as "the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights "(6th ed.) Within feminist thought that discloses secrets, there are still gaps that are present which means that even if it is feminism within itself it does not mean that everything may be addressed per occasion. Apart from this, men are telling female artists what is empowering for young women, but how would they know? The only person that can determine if someone is being empowered is themselves. Cardi B spoke in an interview and says that her "pussy is [her] best friend' and that it is empowering to talk about it (Meara, 2020). Empowerment looks different for everyone. Nobody has a right to decide what is empowering for women besides the woman herself. If songs about female sexuality empower and liberates the artists and some women then let it be- if it's not speaking negatively about others and is simply being open, expressive and explicit, let them be liberated. Women should not be confined to gendered stereotypes that limit their expression. By understanding this we are able to address our bias and analyze the ways in which stereotypes and female expectation, harms women especially Black women who claim agency over their bodies. According to a study by McCallum, "female music consumers in their research suggested that music can be used as a tool for empowerment" which is directly showing how young women view these types of songs (McCallum, 2016, pg 399). The female participants also noted how they enjoyed songs like these that have the sentiment of 'I do what I want to do and wear what I want' and that "women should have power over their image" and if that is what they want to do then that is their choice(McCallum, 2016, pg 399). A participant even said,"you know [people say]"this is offensive to women blah blah blah" but like "we've come so much further than this" and all this kind of stuff.. it doesn't offend me"(McCallum, 2016,pg 399)This shows how young women think female artists should be able to sing about what they desire. Cardi B spoke about

how this is meant to be a sex positive song for women because women should be able to enjoy sex too and talk about it freely. The reinvention of norms is disruptive, turning up edges of the public's conceptions of womanhood, particularly black womanhood. This allows for radical reinvention of existing systems and women's positionality in not only hip hop, but society at large. This is the modern way of women of color feminism through being able to use their autobiographical voice. This autobiographical voice draws on personal experience and is significant due to being a "cross-disciplinary method [that] produces social change" (Davalos, pg 153). This new contemporary type of feminism unapologetically "challenge[s] the traditions and systems that have tried to silence" people of color especially women (Davalos, pg 153). Due to these silences, women have begun to feel empowered to speak secrets around the silences of "sexuality, domestic violence, and internalized oppression" (Davalos, 154). This autobiographical voice was one tactic of transdisciplinary methods.

The double standards shown in the music industry are influenced just like all media, by societal views. Music is a contribution to media, and media as a whole can encompass television programs, magazines, music videos, and video games to name a few. In all of these sectors they portray ideas "consistent with gender stereotypes" (Smiler, et.al., 2017, pg 1084). Music has the power to influence, shape minds and the ideas of those who listen to its lyrics. According to the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, when someone listens to a song with lyrics of hostility the person has an "increase in aggressive thoughts" (Anderson, et.al., 2003). Similarly, Greitemayer found that lyrics could cause more "tolerance of racial and sexual discrimination" and songs with violent sexual behavior correlated with the "acceptance of violence against and negative attitudes towards women" (Greitemayer, 2009). He also found through a study in which he had male participants listen to misogynistic rap music they "were more likely to behave in a sexually aggressive way toward a female" (Greitemayer, 2009). On the positive side, Greitemayer

found that by listening to prosocial and neutral songs it “led to more empathy, and fostered helping behavior”(Greitemayer, 2009). These findings show the influence that music can have on behavior as well as ideas towards women. In the *Journal of Sexuality and Culture*, Smiler et al. are concerned with how young adults learn about sex through the media, including music, and the importance of “understanding a full range of sexuality messages”(Smiler, et.al., 2017,pg 1084). Meaning if listening to music that is gender stereotype enforcing young males will feel the need to dominate and females to be submissive. In their research they also found that artists who were “women were more likely to sing about dating and love, and men were more likely to objectify others, particularly women”(Smiler, et.al., 2017,pg 1094 ). This shows how it aligns with cultural expectations and stereotypes where “women are expected to focus on romantic relationships and have sexually objectified bodies, while men are expected to focus on sexual behavior” (Smiler, et.al., 2017,pg 1094 ). According to McCallum, the exposure to “music videos with sexual imagery produces high scores on acceptance of the physical act of rape and violence towards women” (McCallum, 2016, pg 398). It is also important to note the power that music holds. For example, research in 2008 shows “music is well known to connect deeply with adolescents and to influence identity development, perhaps more so than any other entertainment medium”(2008). Not all sexual content in music is equivalent. Media portrayals of sex can be described as “degrading sex” which involves three attributes: one person, usually male, having a “seemingly insatiable sexual appetite, the other person, usually female, is objectified and sexual value is placed solely on physical characteristics”(2008). The social learning model is where you learn by observing others and emphasis on learning that takes place in social citations and how people obtain behaviors from others through imitation(“Modeling:Social Learning,”2021) .These references are able to encourage youth to play out these roles: sex-driven male and acquiescent female. Longitudinal data show that those exposed to more degrading sexual references in

popular music are in fact more likely to initiate intercourse at a younger age as well as imitate roles that were modeled in songs (2008).

Females are viewed as sexual beings while simultaneously being at the center of sexual objectification. This is theorized to stem from three main contexts: depiction of objectification during interpersonal encounters through visual media, focus on a female's body and their body parts in visual media and in actual interpersonal encounters (Cheeseborough et al., 2020). Sexual objectification has been shown to lead to many negative outcomes for women such as: elevation of body shame, anxiety, and engrossment with bodily appearance which often lead to "poorer mental health, eating disorders, and sexual dysfunction"(Cheeseborough et al., 2020).

Sexual objectification can be internalized by women based on an outsider's perception on the self and therefore they will see "themselves as objects to be evaluated based on their appearance" which could contribute to consequences such as "street harassment, sexual violence and rape" (Cheeseborough et al., 2020). Race and sexualization intersect to form stereotypes of Black women being "animals and sexual objects [which] exacerbate the negative consequences of sexual objectification" (Cheeseborough et al., 2020). Sexual objectification is meant to dehumanize women "and to contribute to the perception that they are objects for the consumption and use of others" and evidence suggests that "the interpersonal sexual objectification is related to violence against women" and is linked to "the denial of women's personhood" (Cheeseborough et al., 2020). The stereotypes that Black women are aggressive and sexual beings can result in victim blaming and disregarding of experiences. Women who are perceived as more animal-like are objectified more and "men who implicitly associate women with animals reported a greater willingness to engage in sexual harassment and rape towards objectified targets and reported more negative attitudes towards female rape victims" (Cheeseborough et al., 2020). Also, Cheeseborough et al. found that "sexually objectifying

women is related to harmful violence attitudes, including victim-blaming beliefs, and lower willingness to help objectified women when they experience violence” (Cheeseborough et al., 2020). Through using eye-tracking software, they found that “white participants focus more on the sexual body parts of Black women targets to a greater extent than white women targets,” which suggests that “race impacts women’s susceptibility to being sexually objectified” further showing how the “consequences of sexualization on victim-blame may be influenced by societal stereotypes of Black women” (Cheeseborough et al., 2020). These conclusions support the idea that “people may be less willing to intervene to help Black women when they experience violence” (Cheeseborough et al., 2020).

This ill treatment and double standard of Black women is not something new, the stereotypes of hypersexuality and promiscuity “can be traced to slavery” (Collier et al., 2017). Enslaved women were labeled lascivious, lewd, and sexual for the justification for rape by their owners. White people gave the name “Jezebel” to refer to prototypical hypersexual Black female slaves (Collier et al., 2017). In comparison to white women of the time, they were seen as virtuous, pure, mothers, whose sexuality was formed around maternity. The stereotype of Jezebel, where Black women are portrayed as having natural hypersexual behavior, “has been historically utilized as a tool to control the sexual [image] of Black women, reinforcing their racial and sexual oppression, while also simultaneously uplifting ‘pure white womanhood’ (Khong, 2020). Through this stereotype Black women are “reduced to [their] [bodies] and treated as little more than a tool that exists for the pleasure of others” which signifies their inferior status (Anderson et al., 2018). These Jezebel stereotypes portray Black women as sexual beings who are sexually irresponsible and always available for other people’s pleasure. Over the course of history, black women’s sexuality has been minimized to, as Evelyn M. Hammonds explains, “metaphors of speechless, space, or vision; as a ‘void’ or empty space that is simultaneously

ever-visible and invisible, where Black women's bodies are always colonized" (Khong, 2020). A historical example of this was Saartjie Baartman, "who was a South African slave unwillingly sent to London in the early 1800s to be exhibited as part of a freak show"(Anderson et al., 2018). She was "displayed in a cage and wearing next to nothing" and "was paraded around circuses, museums, and bars where onlookers poke, prod, and gawk at her atypical large buttocks and features"(Anderson et al., 2018). To the White onlookers she was not "considered fully human, justifying her subjugation and objectification"(Anderson et al., 2018). Instances of dehumanization and objectification of Black people still linger in dehumanizing perceptions with damaging consequences. Black women have been dehumanized by being linked to objects which can occur "through being transformed into a sexual object, whereby the individual is reduced from being a person to the status of a mere instrument, who can then be used and consumed for the pleasure of others"(Anderson et al., 2018).

The historical stereotyping of Black women paved the way for the modern sexualization of Black women and their treatment as property. Cardi B has had reactions on social media that range from praising her body, sexualization of her body, to degrading her body and although the comments vary from positive to negative, they are all "associating the subjects' image and existence with sex and their bodies in a way that removes individual personality, background, and agency and promotes a jezebel-like image" (Sims, pg 41). The comments that are posted on social media under pictures that are expressing the comentor's sexual fantasies are pushing a status of the person being a sexualized object and "completely disregarde[s] concepts of consent in a move reminiscent of rape fantasies"(Sims, pg 41). This concept discussed further shows the power of media and how it is used to enforce the stereotype that Black women are "promiscuous, always consenting, and are physically ready and available for sexual encounters"(Sims, pg 42). Being a Black female artist who promotes female empowerment through their body and sex, they

battle the jezebel stereotype and society that already hypersexualizes them and being a female who are not supposed to be sexually liberated. This circumstance affects any woman of color and can be seen through the analysis of personal experiences. But, by reclaiming their own bodies and taking sex as an act for themselves and not for someone to do to them, is empowering and can help dismantle the double standard of who is allowed to talk about wanting sex.

Female artists of color are able to reinvent the game and disrupt oppressive gendered systems through their music. According to the *Journal of Hip Hop Studies*, there is a word used in the industry, ‘wreck’ which is used to refer to a “Black woman’s discourse [that] disrupt[s] dominant masculine discourses, break[s] into the public sphere, and in some way impact[s] or influence[s] the U.S. imaginary” (Khong, 2020). By Black women bringing ‘wreck’ they not only outshine “their competition in music but erode the stereotypes and marginalization that inhibit their interaction in the larger public sphere”; through this process these artists are engaging in acts of resistance that eat away at our sexist institutional frameworks which perpetrate the double standard (Khong, 2020). Due to hip hop's historical roots as an art form that allows for changing and shaping Black politics, we can understand why Black women are pushing boundaries beyond existing racial and gender norms and “manifest[ing] resistance to oppression within and outside of their own communities” (Khong, 2020). By expressing resistance, collaboration and discussion emerges which develops feminist theory “from and through partnerships and conversations or, the process of debate and dialogue” (Davalos, pg154).

This issue goes deeper than empowerment, although it is important to note, we need to look at the negative effects of these stereotypes and hypersexualization of Black females. This idea can be seen On July 15, 2020 where a female rapper Megan Thee Stallion, an Afro-American female, was shot twice by a man leaving a party. Her first instinct was to be



silenced out of fear of skepticism and when she spoke out she was met with being publicly questioned “whether [she] played a role in [her] own violent assault” (Stallion, 2020). She indicated that violence against women is not only in relationships, but happens because “too many men treat all women as objects, which helps them to justify inflicting abuse against us when we choose to exercise our own free will”(Stallion, 2020). She also points out that for Black women it is even harder to speak out for themselves or others because they are viewed as angry and threatening, leaving little room, “for passionate advocacy if you are a Black woman”(Stallion, 2020). Not only does this stereotype lead to victim blaming, lower rates of helping Black women but internalizing the stereotypes of Black women which prevents them from speaking up. The double standard is reflected in music and can show us how impactful and dangerous these stereotypes and hypersexualization on Black women truly are. Although this song has brought about many important topics to conversation and has “aims to root out injustice and expose artificial hierarchies and methods of exclusion” is it enough that it is sung by Black women? (Davalos, pg 169). Yes, because of their intent to use their autobiographical voice to empower; take back their agency over their sexuality; and reclaim expression of their own sexual desires.

This isn't the first song sung by females of color about their sexuality that had this type of negative response. This is a bigger problem than just men objectifying women, but also women speaking out against other women who are showing their bodies and saying what they want sexually then they turn around and speak about being progressive and united as women. We all have a role to play to battle these gender norms and racial stereotypes to ensure that everyone is safe and can express themselves. Women have been pitted against each other for as long as we can remember and this shows true in the music industry. Megan Thee Stallion said it well, “Us

women have always been talented. But it was a thing where there could only be one woman rapper at a time” (Stallion, 2020). Rapsody told Billboard, “there’s room for all of us- and we’re doing it at elite levels. We don’t have to fight each other for one spot” (Gracie, 2019). Women are set up for competition which leads to negative comments instead of empowerment. Cardi B tweeted “man be hating but it really be women in these comments & on Youtube talking the most sh t putting women down but fake preach unity and women progression”(Almanzar, 2021).

This phenomenon of Black women being oversexualized and not being “allowed” to have lyrics about certain topics relates to LatinX artists as well. Feminists have looked at corridos, Mexican ballads, and have determined that they “present misogynist stories which indicate a cultural fear of women's sexual freedom" and can be “understood as didactic tools to instill obedience in young women”(Tatar, 2015). This shows this as the Mexican version of male rap double standards that enforce these gender roles and stereotypes. Over time, corridos with warrior women who “challenge patriarchal norms of behaviors” have “revealed that the changing portrayals of women in balladry, in fact represent changes in gender roles in the wider society”(Tatar, 2015). For example, Amparo Ochoa who is known for her feminsit songs such as ‘La Chicanita de Aztan’ where a female protagonist disarms a male antagonist after she rejects him. Through her songs she was able to challenge the patriarchy and the traditional music industry. Similarly, “ballads represent the efforts of individuals and communities to adjust to patterns of social change” where women are viewed as having agency over themselves and rights to sexual and any expression (Tatar, 2015). Jenni Rivera was an American singer in the Regional Mexican music genre who focused on Banda, Mariachi and Norteno which are male dominated music genres. Her legacy has continued after her death by seeing women grow more visible within the varied regional Mexican music genres (Raygoza, 2019).

Women of color are constantly being hypersexualized and violence against them is dismissed due to these misconceptions. For example, in Atlanta March 2021, a man murdered 6 Asian women and later “told the police that he had a “sexual addiction” and had carried out the shootings at the massage parlors to eliminate his ‘temptation,’ the authorities said on Wednesday. He also said that he had frequented massage parlors in the past and launched the attacks as a form of vengeance” (Fausett et al., 2021). Although the story gained attention it quickly disappeared from people’s minds similar to the attack of Megan Thee Stallion.

This double standard in the music industry has many causes and effects cycled through impact and influence of society. It has roots that run deep in our society but that does not mean we can’t self reflect, discuss, unlearn, and relearn. We are stuck in a cycle but that does not mean we can’t stop it, we have to legitimately unite and fight for our change for the safety of our communities. We need to encourage ourselves and others who have been silenced, to use our autobiographical voice in order to create dialogue, put pressure on the patriarchy, provide visibility, reconsider social positions, root out injustice and expose artificial hierarchies.

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