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Sexy Songs: A Study of Gender Construction in Contemporary Music Genres

Lea Tessitore
Union College - Schenectady, NY

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“Sexy” Songs: A Study of Gender Construction in Contemporary Music Genres

By
Lea M. Tessitore

Senior Thesis Submitted to the Political Science Department
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation

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Acknowledgements

I would like to extend a heartfelt Thank You

To my Mom
Your complete support made everything possible

To all of my Professors at Union
For helping me to grow intellectually and as a person

To my Friends
For being wonderful colleagues and for being true friends
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“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”

- Simone de Beauvoir

“Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.”

- Victor Hugo
Preface

This study focuses on gender construction in contemporary music genres, including Rap/Hip-hop, Country, and Punk Rock. Although all these genres are vastly different, each genre creates unique masculinities and femininities which impact the way listeners view male/female relations in politics and their everyday lives. Rap/hip-hop creates a construct which results in the objectification of women through their “pornification” and “commodification” in the lyrics of popular songs. Country, on the other hand, has complex masculinities and femininities which create a complex network of gender characteristics which reinforce and complement each other. Lastly, this thesis looks ‘back’ to Punk Rock, whose prime was in the mid 1970’s, to find a more positive gender construct than what the previous two genres had to offer. Punk, through seeking to defy societal norms also defies gender norms both in its lyrics and its role models; however, female punk rockers, seem to struggle to fit into the masculine norm of “being punk.” Yet, in trying to find their niche, they end up combating gender norms not only in the punk movement itself, but in mainstream society as well. This study also attempts to discover songs that could exemplify creating positive gender constructs which are more in line with feminist thinking.
Introduction

“Oh, and damn right baby girls a diva
But every time she out with me she be blowin’ reefa
In the coup looking better than the Mona Lisa
Tunin’ into my songs thinkin’ bout features”
- “Sexy Lady” by Yung Berg (featuring Junior), 2007

“County road 233 under my feet
Nothin’ on this white rock but little old me
I got two miles till he makes bail
And if I’m right we’re headed straight for hell”
- “Gunpowder & Lead” by Miranda Lambert, 2007

“I am an antichrist
I am an anarchist
Don’t know what I want
But I know how to get it”
- “Anarchy In the U.K.” by the Sex Pistols, 1977

Consider these three songs and this question; “what do a diva, a country bombshell, and a punk rocker have in common?” The answer is that all three have a unique impact on gender construction in their respective musical genres. Indeed, this study aims to discover how gender is being constructed in contemporary music genres including rap/hip-hop, country, and punk rock.

The concept of gender is an important one. “Gender” refers to the “socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.” This is to be differentiated from the term “sex” which refers to the biological and physiological characteristics which make men and women distinct. In other words, “male” and “female” are sex categories, while “masculine” and “feminine” are gender categories. Hence
ideas about gender, masculinity and femininity influence the way society functions, as any given society is primarily made up of two main categories, men and women, and gender shapes the assumed or prescribed roles for each group. These gender roles and constructs, in turn, not only affect the way in which people behave, but can have immense political implications as well. Since the origins of the phrase during the Women’s Movement in the 1960’s and ‘70’s, it has often been stated in feminist circles that the “personal is political” and this is just as true today as at any other time. Personal issues pertaining to women’s health, lives, and freedom are vehemently contested in the arena of politics; debates over topics like abortion, birth control, and even women’s public versus private roles are common among politicians in the United States. On top of this, depending on the individual politician’s ideas about gender, his or her stance on these issues will differ. Yet, the concept of the personal being political has other more subtle meanings as well. If the gender construct of femininity pressures women to remain at home and take on a more private role, then they are not participating in public life as much as they should be. This, then, means that men are taking on the various roles in the workforce and politics, where women have little to no influence on decision making. Consequently, the result of this single part of the construct of femininity is that women’s issues are rarely in the spotlight or part of an active discussion and when they are, they are settled by men. This is not to assume that all men are incapable of making pro-women, feminist decisions, but rather to point out that women should make up a substantial part of public life and certainly have a voice concerning issues
pertaining to them. Gender constructs are important because they shape 
women's (and men's) self-perception, lives, and ultimately their political behavior.

In particular, this study aims to explore and analyze gender construction in 
contemporary music genres, rather than gender construction in society at large. 
Indeed, it is essential to pay attention to gender in an area such as music 
because music is pervasive. It is safe to state that music is an intrinsic part of 
early all social events including parties, concerts, and at restaurants. Listening 
to music is also a common way to relax or fall asleep. Even when making a 
quick drive to the grocery store, chances are that music is playing on the radio in 
the car and maybe even in the store itself. Music is everywhere. Subsequently, 
if music is omnipresent, then whatever messages music has, especially 
messages about gender, are omnipresent as well. It could well be the case that, 
similar to the sirens of ancient Greece, music is alluring and beautiful but 
dangerous; people’s defenses are already down when they begin to listen and 
they are susceptible to the lyrics that they hear. Thus, it is imperative to listen 
beyond the catchy tune and melodic chorus and decipher the roles that 
contemporary songs are constructing for both men and women and the self- 
perception that these songs want them to have; what it is that these songs are 
truly singing about gender to a mass audience.

This study encompasses three music genres. Chapter one will cover 
rap/hip-hop music; chapter two will discuss country music; and chapter three will 
alalyze punk rock music. Each genre is consecutively and individually analyzed 
with the aim of determining its unique construction of masculinity and femininity.
The analyses rely on utilizing the lyrics* of popular songs from these genres in order to understand gender; the lyrics are both the source and the evidence. The analysis concludes with suggestions as to what might constitute songs which portray a more positive view on gender constructs.

Endnotes


* All of the lyrics, while coming from various sources, have been edited and checked for accuracy by the author.
Chapter I: Rap/Hip-Hop Music

Rap/hip-hop music is easily identifiable by its fast-paced rhyming lyrics that are not sung, but rather spoken to a beat or tune. These songs also have a consistent chorus (singing) that is interjected between the lyrical stanzas. The reason why rap was chosen as a key area of interest in terms of gender identity in music is that rap is highly predominant in the music scene. Rap/hip-hop songs flood the iTunes music chart of top singles as well as popular local (Albany) radio stations, such as Fly 92.3, Jamz 96.3, and Kiss FM (102.3), which cater to an audience of approximately early middle school age to those in their early 30’s. In other words, rap is pervasive. Rap/hip-hop is also a male dominated field and female rap artists are rare in this genre. In exploring gender identity, it was determined that in general rap has a distinct masculinity that highlights certain characteristics as being acceptable for a male rapper: the ideas of “winning,” living the “rap lifestyle” and women. Rap masculinity depends upon the materialization of women themselves and thus the corresponding femininity of rap dictates that women become objectified. This objectification occurs on two levels, the “pornification” of women and the “commodification” of women in rap songs. Even when women do enter the rap scene and produce music of their own, they too often only replicate these existing ideas and stereotypes in the genre; they strive to fulfill the role of the male rapper themselves, or they fulfill the complementary objectified female role in rap. Despite some promising aspects of this genre, such as the idea of the “independent woman,” these ultimately become stereotyped or labeled as negative characteristics. “Independent”
women are narcissistic/emasculating, “divas,” or are considered “gold-diggers.”

Even the most positive stereotype, the “mirror reflection,” is merely a female version of the male rapper himself; she lacks a truly independent identity, even if possessing an independent bank account. In essence, then, the genre of rap/hip-hop constructs a highly objectified and stereotyped gender identity for women by both male and female rap artists.

I. Masculinity of the Male Rap Artist

There are many components to the gender constructs that are created by rap/hip-hop. The first aspect that needs to be analyzed is the concept of the masculinity of the male rapper. There are three basic components to this identity which include “winning,” living the “rap lifestyle,” and the continuous access to sexually available women. The latter component will later assist in identifying the complementary femininity of women in rap songs.

Winning

What is it to “win” in rap? The answer is actually quite simple and less convoluted than it may sound; it means making money, lots of money and consequently flaunting it. It can also be said that “winning” may be synonymous with the term “hustling.” The definition of a “hustler,” as accurately recorded by the Urban Dictionary, is “Someone who knows how to get money from others. Selling drugs, rolling dice, pimpin’ – You’re hustling for that money.” Indeed, this concept is not foreign in popular rap songs. In 2010 artist DJ Khaled released a single called “All I Do Is Win” featuring other artists T-Pain, Ludacris, Snoop

Dogg, and Rick Ross. The song explicitly sums up what it is to win. Lyrics from the song are as follows:

All I do is win, win, win no matter what
Got money on mind, I can never get enough
And every time I step up in the building
Everybody’s hands go up
...
Can't never count me out, y'all better count me in
Got twenty bank accounts, accountants count me in
Make millions every year, the South's champion
...
Tell Khaled back it up, my niggas call me Loco
That's for armed trafficking, don't make me pull that 4-4
Ask you what you laughing at, represent that mud life
Dirty money, bitch, you better get your mud right

We come together holding hands and holla “thug life”
We are strapped in all black, it's like thug life
(All we do is win)
You riding the what? 'Cause we riding tonight
You riding with me 'cause you wasn't riding right
...
Heat in the kitchen, pot on the stove
Water getting boiled, dope being sold
Snoopy in the hoopty, system overload
I've been running this rap game since I was 20 years old
...
Time and time again while I'm sipping on this gin
Al Davis said it best, "just win baby win"²

Thus, winning to a rapper is to make serious cash (to the point of holding at least 20 separate bank accounts) in a variety of [preferably] illegal or dangerous ways such as selling drugs or being a gang banger. In addition to this, the winner is
someone who is dominant, experienced, and in charge of the game, as well as other lesser players in it, so to speak. In essence, then, to be truly masculine in rap, one has to be winning.

*Rap Lifestyle*

Another component of rap masculinity is living the “rap lifestyle,” which is actually different than the “thug lifestyle” briefly mentioned in the lyrics above. Indeed, this rap lifestyle is highly focused on material wealth and luxury excess, presumably begotten by winning in the thug lifestyle. Artist Wiz Khalifa’s hit song “Black and Yellow,” released in March 2011, discusses such a lifestyle as follows:

Black stripe, yellow paint  
Them niggas scared of it, but them ho’s ain’t  
Soon as I hit the club look at them ho’s face  
Hit the pedal once, make the floor shake

Suede insides, my engine roarin’  
It’s the big boy, you know what I paid for it  
And I got the petal to the metal  
Got you niggas checkin’ game, I’m ballin’ out on every level  
...

Got a call from my jeweler, this just in  
Bitches love me ‘cause I’m fuckin’ with their best friends  
Not a lesbian, but she a freak though  
This ain’t for one night, I’m shinin’ all week, ho

I’m sippin’ Cliquot and rockin’ yellow diamonds  
So many rocks up in my watch I can’t tell what the time is  
Got a pocketful of big faces
Throw it up 'cause every nigga that I'm with tailored
...
She wanna fuck with them cats, smoke weed, count stacks
Get fly, take trips and that's that, real rap

The rap lifestyle is thus strongly and intrinsically connected to not only possessing vast monetary wealth, but utilizing these assets to gain status and purchase luxury goods including expensive sports cars and diamond encrusted watches. Hence, it can be clearly seen how the first aspect of rap masculinity, winning, is closely tied to, yet separate from, the second aspect, the rap lifestyle.

**Women**

In terms of the tripartite identity of the masculinity of the male rapper, the most significant piece to this puzzle is perhaps the role played by women. Women are a fundamental aspect to this masculinity because they are an accessory to it; they function as a living affirmation of the male rapper. In the 2010 song “Right Above It” by Lil Wayne and Drake, the rapper highlights the fact that women are accessories, like cars, and that he prefers having two of them with him rather than one. This is similar to how one might have a preference for carrying a wallet as opposed to a large purse or wearing sunglasses as preferable to a baseball cap:

I got a couple cars I never get to use
Don’t like my women single, I like my chicks in twos
And these days all the girls is down to roll
I hit the strip club and all them bitches find a pole
Plus I just sipped and so this shit is movin’ kinda slow
Just tell my girl to tell her friend that it’s time to go
In addition to this, he describes how having women ("bees") with him is synonymous with having some type of perk or icing on top of the cake; they are clearly a [material] benefit. Lil Wayne also describes how he keeps his firearm in his girlfriend’s pocketbook; making a direct link between women and their accessory role. It is as if the woman functions as the rappers posh “purse” where he can store other accessories like guns:

Now somebody show some money in this bitch
And I got my bees with me like some honey in this bitch, ya dig
I got my gun in my boo purse
And I don’t bust back, because I shoot first

Women are not only accessorized; however, women are also a necessary part of the rap scene and come with the territory. This is well conceptualized by artist Flo Rida in his 2010 single “Club Can’t Handle Me.” In the song, he describes his entrance into and “life in the club” where women are just part of the atmosphere:

I own the night and I don’t need no help
Gotta be the feeling that Scarface felt
Stuntin’ go wild can’t handle this plan
Life of the club arrogant like yeah
Top like money all the girls just melt
Want to many all on me like twelve
Look like cash and they all just stare
Bottles, models, standin’ on chairs
Fall out coz that’s the business
All out it’s so ridiculous
Zone out so much attention
Scream out I’m in the building
Thus, the masculinity of the male rap artist consists of winning, which ultimately leads to the rap-lifestyle, which in turn comes with static women who function as status symbols, demarcating the rap scene, or as accessories confirming masculinity. These three parts constitute the whole of rap masculinity.

II. Femininity of Women in Rap

When speaking of masculinity, however, femininity must be part of the conversation as the latter affirms and complements the former. So what exactly is rap femininity? The answer can be devised through the concept of masculinity itself. As was previously determined, the female aspect of rap masculinity depends on the objectification of women as scenery and as accessories for the rapper; hence the corresponding femininity requires women to be objectified. This objectification happens on two levels, the first of which is through the “pornification” of women and the second is the “commodification” of women in rap.

**Pornification**

Scholar William T. Schultz wrote an article on the blog for Psychology Today entitled “The ‘Pornification’ of Human Consciousness” in which he states that “one could compare elements of porn to facets of the postmodern psyche. And boy, is there a lot to compare. Are we, or are we not, becoming more anonymous, more compulsive? Is a preference for story and narrative losing its strength in comparison with hungry needs for visual imagery? Are intimate relationships rarer, replaced by mechanical, formulaic interactions…” Indeed,
rap music is undergoing much the same transformation, the same pornification, with women depicted in this genre as primarily as sex objects. Schultz also identifies common elements of porn which echo common elements in contemporary rap music. He finds that some of these characteristics include; “a lack of real intimacy, an absence of genuine relationship, a certain formulaic-ness, anonymousness, both men and women reductively stereotyped, and intermittent violence and degradation.”

It should not come as a surprise, however, that all of these pornography characteristics can be flawlessly transposed onto numerous rap songs. For instance, the single “Sexy Lady” by Yung Berg (featuring Junior) released in 2007 displays all of these identifying features:

Hey sexy lady
It was nice to know you
but I got to move on
Hey sexy lady

Oh, and damn right baby girls a diva
But every time she out with me she be blowin’ reefa
In the coupe looking better than the Mona Lisa
Tunin’ into my songs thinkin’ bout features
She know her little nigga spit ether
And them grown dudes really don’t know how to treat her
So she rock with me and I roll with her
Cuz I’m a d-boy and she’s a go-getta

Uh, this new girl that I’m poofin’ on
Got a young boy thinkin’ bout movin’ on
She got her Louis Vuitton bag and the shoes on
Wanna take her to the telly, bust a move dogg
See a nigga need more than one
I parked the Rolls outside like Rev and Run
And rolled up the blunt, yeah, full of bubble gum
Yung Bosses, it's our year, we got another one

Hey sexy lady
It was nice to know you
but I got to move on
Hey sexy lady
Yeah, and damn right baby girl the shit
She love it when I throw it deep like Michael Vick
I love it cause she know youngin’s don’t write a lick
She know the kid hit the lab dogg and write a hit
Uh, and ain’t no denyin' it
She want it, she can have it, why, cause I'm buyin’ it
The boss boy gotta roll with the flyest bitch
And she the truth, if I'm lyin' then I'm dyin' man
This other chick that I'm divin' in
She a good look that's why we always dinin' in
Yeah, in LA we at Katana, or in Chi-Town, we straight to Benihana’s
And how she do it man, she get it proper
Three hours and we both kept on our Pradas
I had my loafers, she was in them heels
Berg and the Y.B.’s makin’ big deals

Hey sexy lady
It was nice to know you
but I got to move on
Hey sexy lady

In the song, the rapper describes his “relationship” with (and to) women, a relationship with details the characteristics of porn. The lines “hey sexy lady, it was nice to know you, but I got to move one” suggests that there was never any level of real intimacy in the partnership, which is why the rapper can move on so easily to the next woman. Dovetailing off of this point, the lack of a genuine
relationship can be seen in the first large stanza; the two are together merely because they “go well together” (he is a d-boy and she is a go-getter), they complement each other, or rather, she complements him. The rapper acknowledges that his girl looks good in his car and that she changes her habits with him in order to sell his image. The formulaic-ness and anonymity comes from the pattern of moving effortlessly from woman to woman, none of whom are named, and all of whom conform to the rapper in a predictable manner. Not to mention the title of the song, “Sexy Lady,” which is anonymous by nature. With reference to men and women being reductively stereotyped, the male rapper takes on the persona of the hyper-sexualized [black] male while under the context of living the generic rap lifestyle. The women on the other hand, are referred to as “diva” or “baby girl,” which are stereotypes in and of themselves, in addition to the objectification and congruity implicit in the idea of the sexy lady(ies). The last of Schultz’s hallmarks of porn, intermittent violence and degradation, also appears in this single, although it appears to a much greater degree in other rap songs as well. It is quite obvious that to be objectified is degrading, but it is equally harmful to portray women as disposable objects with expiration dates or refer to her as a bitch, regardless of how “fly” she is. Of course, the concern for the women’s feelings or thoughts, let alone their names, is not necessary here; sexual objects should not express such things. This is the outcome when rap becomes pornified. Thus, pornification is one of the ways through which objectification of women occurs in rap music.
In the contemporary rap genre, women are not only represented as pornified sexual objects, but as objects to be readily consumed. In a sense, then, rap women are commodified as well. Scholar Margaret Hunter encapsulates this theory precisely in her article on consumption and gender relations in Hip-Hop. “Increasingly in commercial rap, sexual relations are described as transactional in nature, that is, men pay for access to women’s sexual services. This form of consumption, where men pay to consume women, is found most often in hip-hop’s favorite scene, the strip club…The logic of consumption structures the gender relation in strip clubs, largely because women dance and take off their clothes for money from male customers.”

Hunter describes this phenomenon further by stating, “in many rap videos, male characters express approval to women for their bodies or their dancing by ‘making it rain’…In this way, the sexual relation is reduced to an object relation or a consumer transaction…The motion requires one hand out, palm up, as if holding a large stack of bills. The other hand mimics sliding bills off of the imaginary stack into the air in rapid fire as if one could ‘make it rain’ by sending all these bills fluttering into the air. Male characters in today’s rap ‘make it rain’ to express pleasure at seeing a beautiful woman working in the strip club, and to communicate the power to structure the transaction through their role as consumer.”

This commodification and consumption of women is best exemplified by the 2010 single “No Hands” by Waka Flocka Flame (featuring Roscoe Dash and Wale):
R-o-s-c-o-e Mr., shawty put it on me
I be going ham shawty upgrade from bologna
Them niggas tippin’ good girl but I can make it flood
Cause I walk around with pockets that are bigger than my bus
Rain rain go away that’s what all my haters say
My pockets stuck on overload my rain never evaporates
No need to elaborate most of these ducks exaggerate
But Ima get money nigga every day stuntin’ nigga, ducks might get a chance after me
Bitch I’m ballin’ like I’m comin’ off a free throw, stay ahead of the game no cheat codes
Lambo Roscoe no street code cause yo’ booty go me lost like Nemo
Go go go g-g’on and do yo’ dance
And imma throw this money while you do it with no hands

Girl the way you movin’ got me in a trance
DJ turn me up ladies this yo’ jam
Imma sip Moscato and you gon’ loose them pants
And Imma throw this money while you do it with no hands
Girl drop it to the floor I love the way yo’ booty go
All I wanna do is sit back and watch you move and I’ll proceed to throw this cash

Thus, in this song, the transactional relationship between rap women and men is clear; she pleases him sexually and in return he pays for the services; in essence he pays for her as if she is a commodity of sorts. Women are objectified in rap through such commodification; they are turned into products or services that may be purchased by men. Hence, rap femininity requires women to be objectified for men and this objectification occurs through the pornification and commodification of women in the genre of rap/hip-hop.

III. Voices of Female Rappers

While women rappers are rare in the genre, they do exist and produce hit music from time to time. Yet, what is intriguing about them is that instead of
contributing their own unique voices to rap, or speaking out against the objectification rampant in their genre, they too often replicate the harmful stereotypes and gender identities of both the male’s masculinity and the female’s femininity. Two well known female rap artists, Lil Kim and Nicki Minaj, and their songs will be analyzed to demonstrate that the latter duplicates rap masculinity while the former embodies the corresponding objectified femininity.

_Lil Kim_

In order for rap femininity to be personified, the artist embracing it must seek to be an object, for men, through self imposed pornification and commodification of their body. Certainly, Lil Kim built her rap reputation on the foundation of such qualities. Her popular 2003 title “Magic Stick” with rapper 50 Cent is a testament to this. Lyrics from the song are as follows:

[Lil Kim]
Lil Kim not a whore
But I sex a nigga so good, he gotta tell his boys
When it come to sex don't test my skills
Cause my head game have you head over heels
Give a nigga the chills, have him pay my bills
Buy matchin' Lambos with the same color wheels...
An I ain't out shoppin' spendin' dudes C-notes
I'm in the crib givin' niggas deep throat
Tonight Lil' Kim gon' have you in the zone
Girls, call ya crib, I'm answerin' the phone
Guys wanna wife me n' give me the ring
I'll do it anywhere, anyhow, down for anything
Couple of humps, give a nigga goose bumps
This junk in my trunk ain't made for chumps
When Lil' Kim's around you don't need to lie
It's the “drugs” baby, I'm makin' ya high

[50 Cent and (Lil Kim)]
I got the magic stick
I know if I can hit once, I can hit twice
(I am the baddest chick)
(Shorty you don't believe me, then call me tonight)
(And I'll show you magic)
Magic
(I got the magic clit)

[Lil Kim and (50 Cent)]
I put your face in it
I know you sprung off in your tongue, I know you tastin' it
(Sex ain't a race) But I have a thug nigga breakin' records
And the time is (one minute, six seconds)
(Magic stick) I got the magic box
[Have that ass trickin' after one back shot]
(The gifts, the ice, I like that a lot)
The minks, the leathers, the CL drop\(^\text{13}\)

Here, Lil Kim embodies both the identity of a porn object and a commodity. Her pornification of herself is evident in the lack of true intimacy and of a genuine relationship described in the lyrics; she denies a private relationship with a man through her statement that her sex with one man is so good, that it must be a topic of conversation among other men. It is not uncommon knowledge that real intimacy and relationships generally involve a certain level of respect and privacy between and for lovers. In addition, a formulaic-ness behind her various sexual acts and anonymousness as to the names of her partners contributes to the porn similarities. She also reduces all [black] men in her song to hyper-sexualized males while she herself is compared to a stereotypical whore, despite her
insignificant opening verse which sounds more like lip-service than a serious statement, especially with the “but” following immediately after. Lastly, she performs sexual acts for the pleasure of men rather than for her own enjoyment, which lends a level of degradation to the song which is also characteristic of pornography. Lil Kim, however, portrays herself directly as the sexual object rather than talking about another woman; through using the first person and referencing herself, she embodies rap femininity and the objectification inherent in pornifying herself. She is likewise objectified through commodification as well. The line “Give a nigga the chills, have him pay my bills,” in tandem with other references to expensive luxury gifts in return for sex, mirrors the same consumer transactions previously described by male rap artists in which women’s bodies are commodities to be purchased. Thus, Lil Kim substantiates the corresponding femininity to rap masculinity.

Nicki Minaj

Approaching what could be the height of her career with her album *Pink Friday*, Nicki Minaj is not afraid to express her newfound power, and to do so in a particularly masculine way by rap standards. With Lil Kim having manifested the femininity of rap in her songs, Nicki Minaj is all about the masculinity of the male rap artist. Indeed, she stresses in her lyrics the same ideas of winning, living the rap-lifestyle, and even the objectification of women that her male counterparts are promoting. Take for instance Minaj’s song, featuring Kanye West, entitled “Blazin’” released in 2010:
How could it be, little me
Had the power to be the best B in the league
Yeah, inevitably, but could it be little me
You was heckling me, now it's monotony when I regularly, yo
I catch wreck on recreation, so I exceed all your expectations
Bitches ain't got it in 'em, I kill 'em and then I skin 'em
The contract was signed but I am the addendum
So where my dawgs at, Randy
Matter of fact, get off my dick bitch, Andy
Cause everything is fine and dandy
Go against me now, I dare you, Bambi
Half a million dollars just to upgrade the car show
I ain't even detonate the bombs in the arsenal
Before the storm comes the calm
Hope you can take the heat like LeBron
Ah, ha, ha-ha-ha-ha, ha
I'm the best now, anybody with some money should invest now
Soccer moms need to organize a pep ral'
Your game over bitch, Gatorade, wet towel
Motherfuckers ain't ready, they never been
As long as I am in the game, you'll never win
I'm on that different type of high, heroin
Put on my cape and hit the sky, heroine

In the song, Nicki Minaj proclaims herself to be winning “As long as I am in the
game, you'll never win” and references her possession of serious wealth (“Half a
million dollars just to upgrade the car show”) along with the certainty that she will
accumulate even more money in the near future (“I'm the best now, anybody with
some money should invest now”). Another aspect of winning that she makes
explicit is her command of the rap game and the lesser players involved (“the
best B in the league” and “Bitches ain't got it in 'em, I kill 'em and then I skin
'em”). What is interesting is that instead of competing against other males, other
“niggas,” Minaj is firing her assaults against other women, “bitches,” while
masculinizing herself (“Matter of fact, get off my dick bitch, Andy”). Thus, Minaj is incorporating the male idea of winning into her lyrics, while separating herself from other women through identifying herself with men. In her song “Muny” from the same album, she highlights her partaking in the rap lifestyle as well, using her vast finances to purchase luxury goods and increase her status:

Oh no, we don’t play with silly girls
All I know is the material girls
Give me the muny, the cars, the case loads
The mun-mun-muny, the yen and the pesos
...
Talkin’ bout money, we could have a conversation
Top five tax bracket in the population
Hatin’ and I know they got a reason why
I ain’t got to wonder if I want to lease or buy
...
Okay, Versace Pythons, Louis aviators
Balenciagas and they gotta be the gladiators
Chanel lambskin, vintage Vanson
I’m on the bike doin’ wheelies in the mansion

A lot of bad bitches on the pole dancin’
Gucci bag just to put the coke cans in

In terms of the third part of the male rapper’s masculinity, women, Minaj regularly refers to them as “bitches” or “silly girls” and in none to pleasant a context. She, like her male colleagues, also utilizes women as status symbols demarcating the rap scene; in this case, they are an accessory in her mansion, or at least a clear part of the rap lifestyle, with the phrase “A lot of bad bitches on the pole dancin’” interjected between her description of her accommodations and opulence. Nicki
also sexually objectifies women and uses them as accessories confirming masculinity, even participating in the objectification herself as well as promoting it.

[Usher]
Ay girl, I see you like that
You gettin' excited
And you rockin' like a pro wit it girl
By the way, you got right on it
With the chick you wanted
And now you in the corner kissin' on a girl
I'm 'bout to have a ménage with these here ladies
Look at them freaks at the bar
Lookin' for a star

If you fuckin' with me
Really fuckin' with me
You go get some girls and
Bring em to me
If you fuckin' with me
Really fuckin' with me
You'll let her put her hands in your pants
Be my little freak

[Nicki Minaj]
Excuse me little mama
But you could say I'm on duty
I'm lookin' for a cutie
A real big o' ghetto booty
I really like your kitty cat
And if you let me touch her
I know you're not a bluffer
I'll take you to go see Usher
I keep a couple hoes
Like Santa I keep a vixen
Got that dasher, dancer, prancer
Dixen, comet, cupid, donner, blitzen
I'm hotter than 100 degrees
A lotta bread, no sesame seeds
If I'm in yo city
I'm signin’ them tig-ol-bitties
I'm plottin' on how I can take Cassie away from Diddy
The girls want a Minaj
Yeah they wetta than a Rainman
Usher buzz me in,
Everbody Loves Raymond

In this 2010 title by Usher (featuring Nicki Minaj) called “Lil Freak” the star (Usher) proposes that if the woman (Minaj) wants to have any sort of relationship with him, she will have to meet certain objectives, mainly, conform to his dual fantasy of having a ménage with multiple women who are also willing to engage in sexual acts with each other. In other words, she needs to become his sexual accessory, his “lil freak.” Usher also references his fame many times in the song implying that real stars are the ones who have women like this around them, women who function as status symbols. Minaj, in response, goes out and propositions other women, even stating that she keeps “hoes” as accessories herself, comparable to how Santa Clause keeps his prized flying reindeer. She is using women as a means to an end, the end being the satisfying of a male fantasy. Thus, Nicki Minaj is accessorizing, and subsequently objectifying women, including herself, through her compliance in the male ideal. Hence, female rapper Nicki Minaj is the female male rapper who wins, lives the rap lifestyle, and uses women as objects. Consequently, the two well known female rap artists discussed, Lil Kim and Nicki Minaj, and their songs serve to illustrate a comprehensive picture of the duality occurring in rap/hip-hop. Far too frequently,
female rap artists either choose to fulfill the gender construct of masculinity or that of femininity in the rap genre, neither of which are conducive to a healthy or uplifted portrayal of women.

IV. The Independent Woman

Perhaps the most positive female identity in rap, the independent woman, will give some credibility to a genre that, thus far, does not offer much in terms of gender constructs and identities that affirm women’s subjectivity. However, “in a recent study by scholar Mia Moody, to be presented in Boston in May at the International Communication Association conference, she found that independent women in rap and rhythm and blues music are depicted as not being successful unless they are sexy, wealthy over-achievers. Even then, they don’t get much respect from male rappers, who often portray them as narcissistic or emasculating.”

Dr. Moody analyzed three popular rap songs including Webbie’s 2008 hit “Independent” and Drake’s 2010 song “Fancy,” the lyrics of which are reproduced below:

{“Independent” Webbie}
The stilettos the J's depend on how the weather look
Flip flop slippers just to show off the pedicure
Flip flop niggas just depend on how the cheddar look
She'll buy her own I don't think she'll never look
In a man face standing waiting for him to take care of her
She'll rather go to work and pay the bills on schedule
...
She got her own house
Drive her own whip
Range rover all white... like her toe tips
She got a pretty smile smell real good
Only time she need a man for that good jugg

{"Fancy" Drake}

Hit the gym, step on the scale, stare at the number
You say you droppin' ten pounds preparin' for summer
And you don't do it for the man, men never notice
You just do it for yourself you the fuckin' coldest

Both of the independent women in the songs are beautiful and focused on their personal appearance, which, as correctly recognized by Moody, is cast in a self-obsessed narcissistic light. In Webbie's version, the woman is emasculating to the man in that she is depriving him of his traditional role as caretaker and breadwinner, while in Drake's song she is criticized for being a tease and rejecting men's affections; she is self absorbed. In addition to this characterization three alternate, and negative, portrayals of the independent woman in rap exist as well; the “diva,” the “gold digger,” and the “mirror reflection.”

**The Diva**

The second representation of the independent woman is the “diva” which is similar to the stereotype of the black matriarch. The diva is in charge, yet, in a bossy, stubborn, “bitchy” way. The song “Bossy” (featuring Too $hort) by Kelis, released in 2008, features her as the classic diva:

Hey yo
You don't have to love me
You don't even have to like me
But you will respect me
You know why
Cuz I'm a boss

I'm bossy
I'm the first girl to scream on a track
I switched up the beat of the drum
That's right I brought all the boys to the yard
And that's right I'm the one that's tattooed on his arm
I'm bossy
I'm the bitch ya'll love to hate
I'm the chick that's raised the stakes
I told Young Stunna he should switch to Bape
I'm back with an 808 cause I'm bossy

Ooh lemme slow it down so you can catch the flow
Screw it up make it go extra slow
Real girls get down on the floor
Ooh I gave you a taste you want some more
I'm do it up like a pro
I ride the beat like a bicycle I'm icy cold
Ooh from the 6-4 hoppers up in Crenshaw
The money making playas up in Harlem
Don't want no problems
We gon' keep it bumpin' while the 808 is jumpin'
...

[Too $hort]
It's bout time that she get with me
Can't stop starin' she's fine and she's pretty
Damn girl don't hurt 'em
If niggas don't back back you gon' work 'em
Put your mack down I know your background
Whatchu want girl you gettin' that now
That's how you do it huh
Well I'm the coolest one
The bad bitches in the back bring 'em to the front
Tell that man you's a boss bitch
Indeed, the independent woman who is the diva is controlling [of men], she is a “boss bitch” and her attitude earns her a reputation that is none too flattering. Men are turned off by the woman who is a diva as she is obstinate, orders them around, and ensnares them with her manipulative power (“I don't think he understand you's a boss bitch / Get some help if you can cause he lost it”). Hence, the diva is the bitch that men complain about.

**The Gold Digger**

A third characterization of the independent woman is the “gold digger,” which is in many ways a synthesis of the first two types. She is portrayed in Kanye West's 2005 song “Gold Digger” (featuring Jamie Foxx). Lyrics below:

She take my money when I'm in need
Yeah she's a triflin' friend indeed
Oh she's a gold digger way over town
That dig's on me

Now I ain't sayin' she a gold digger
But she ain't messin' with no broke niggas
Now I ain't sayin' she a gold digger
But she ain't messin' with no broke niggas
Get down girl go' head get down
Get down girl go' head get down
Get down girl go' head get down
Get down girl go’ head

Cutie the bomb
Met her at a beauty salon
With a baby Louis Vuitton
Under her underarm
She said I can tell you rock
I can tell by your charm
Far as girls you got a flock
I can tell by your charm and your arm
But I’m lookin’ for the one have you seen her
My psychic told me she a’ have a ass like Serena
Trina, Jennifer Lopez, four kids
An I gotta take all that ass to show-biz
OK get your kids but then they got they friends
I pulled up in the Benz they all got up in
We all went to din and then I had to pay
If you fuckin’ with this girl then you better be payed
You know why
Take too much to touch her
From what I heard she got a baby by Busta
My best friend said she used to fuck with Usher
I don’t care what none of ya’ll say I still love her
...
18 years 18 years
She got one of your kids got you for 18 years
I know somebody payin’ child support for one of his kids
His baby mamma car crib is bigger than his
You will see him on TV any given Sunday
Win the Super bowl and drive off in a Hyundai
She was supposed to buy your shorty Tyco with your money
She went to the doctor got lipo with your money
She walkin’ round lookin’ like Michael with your money
Shoulda’ got that insured GEICO for your money
If you ain’t no punk holla we want prenup
We want prenup yeah
It’s somethin’ that you need to have
Clearly, the gold digger is narcissistic and emasculating (she gets liposuction and has a superior car and home compared to her man) and her manipulation is reminiscent of the diva as well. Yet the gold digger is also a femme fatal; she preys upon moneyed men, exploiting them for their wealth and consequently victimizes them. She is also deceitful, feigning love. Once the gold digger has drained a man of his financial assets, she moves on, but not without a substantial pension in child support. Thus, the gold digger is out to strike it rich for herself, she cares only about money and how to obtain it, not even her children, who are also pawns, take precedence. In truth, the gold digger is not even really independent, as she relies upon men falling for her and sharing their wealth with her. This is definitely not a positive portrayal of any woman, let alone an “independent woman.”

*The Mirror Reflection*

The last type of independent woman, the “mirror reflection,” is one who is just as wealthy as her male rap counterparts and fully partakes in the rap lifestyle as well. Take Kanye West’s title “Flashing Lights” released in 2007 for instance:
She don't believe in shootin' stars
But she believe in shoes an’ cars
Wood floors in the new apartment
Couture from the store’s department
You more like L’eau de Stardee shit
I’m more of the trips to Florida
Order the hors d’oeuvres, views of the water
Straight from the page of your favorite author
And the weather so breezy
Man why can't life always be this easy22

This song, also critiqued by Margaret Hunter, depicts the woman and the man enjoying a relationship together predicated solely on their love of consumerism and the rap lifestyle. While the woman described here may possess a massive independent bank account, she lacks a truly independent identity from him; this portrayal of the independent woman is merely a mirror image of the male rapper and his lifestyle, a female version of the same masculine values, much like Nicki Minaj was shown to be. Despite this, however, it can still be said of all these independent women that, on some level, they are advertising a situation of financial independence from men, which is positive in its own way. Yet still it remains unfortunate that even this meager independence is either condemned by the primary voices in the genre (men), only feasible under certain circumstances (such as physical attractiveness), or utilized to mimic “what the guys are doing.” Therefore, while the idea of the independent woman in rap is promising, it continues to be constrained in ways that render it ineffective in constructing laudable gender identities for women in the rap/hip-hop genre.
Endnotes


Chapter II: Country Music

The second genre of music that will be analyzed is that of contemporary country music. Country music, highly different from rap/hip-hop, is generally identifiable by its strong focus on the vocal aspect of the song. In addition, the lyrics of country music tend to convey a story to the listener or relate a detailed explanation. The list of instruments, while still expanding, in country music include the banjo, bass, drums, guitar, steel guitar, and piano, to name a few. The reason that country music was chosen as the second genre in which to explore the construction of gender identity was that country, like rap, is also highly predominant in the music scene. Many artists, such as Carrie Underwood and Taylor Swift, regularly release songs which are commercially versatile. Many contemporary country songs have a pop edge to them, allowing their airing on both country stations as well as local (Albany) mainstream stations like Fly 92.3 or 102.3 Kiss FM. In addition, the Country Music Awards (CMAs) have been elevated in status in recent years to popular and much hyped television events, attracting many more viewers than those who are primarily country fans. Thus country music is also pervasive. In terms of its relationship to the former genre, country music acts as a foil in comparison to its rap counterpart. While rap presents a pornified and commodified construction of the female gender, country constructs a “feminine,” loyal, emotional, and vulnerable gender identity. The male gender identity, then, is aggressive, rational, protective, and strong. A lot of this originates from country’s strong ties to religion, particularly Christianity, and patriotism. Indeed, the devout religious woman, the woman who stands by
her man, the emotional woman, and the “good girl” are all common themes or stereotypes in country. Thus, while women are not necessarily being objectified, they are being forced to conform to a conservative gender identity that subjugates itself to the male identity through complementation. Hence the same complementing of the female gender to the male gender that was seen in rap/hip-hop is present in country as well, yet the gender identities that create this complementation are vastly different. Not only country music tells this story; however, but the country music industry functions under these same patriarchal norms; the actual female artists are expected to fulfill these gender constructs, just as the fictional characters in lyrics that they sing. In exploring gender identity in mainstream country (outliers aside), it was determined that country has its own distinct masculinity that denotes certain characteristics as being acceptable for a male country singer, for a “real man:” the ideas of patriotism, alcohol/drinking, protectiveness, and ruggedness. Country masculinity simultaneously depends upon the characterization of women as being patriotic, vulnerable, emotional/irrational, and loyal and thus the corresponding femininity of country dictates that women become the buttresses of a masculinity that constrains them. While female country singers are common, when they produce music of their own, they too often replicate these existing ideas and stereotypes in the genre; they literally and figuratively stand by their man, or they fulfill the complementary female role in country. Although promising aspects of this genre exist such as the tough/rugged country woman who speaks out against her “good-for-nothing man” or interstate wars, her voice never appears to truly
question, let alone criticize, the basic assumptions of country or, when it does, 
the female artist further entrenches herself in the gender norm to legitimate her 
contrary opinion. In essence, then, the genre of country music constructs 
distinct, yet highly complementary, gender identities which are reinforced in both 
songs and the industry itself.

I. Masculinity of the Male Country Singer

There exist a multitude of facets to the gender constructs that are created 
by country music. The first that requires analysis is the concept of the 
masculinity of the male country singer. There are four basic components to this 
identity which include patriotism, alcohol(ism), protectiveness, and ruggedness. 
All of the previous characteristics will later assist in indentifying the 
complementary femininity of women in country songs.

Patriotism

Although presumably counter intuitive to history, country stars continue to 
be patriotic, specifically, pro-American and pro-military. While militarism in 
America is rampant and its effects on gender identity is certainly an important 
point of discussion, such an exploration cannot happen here; however, in this 
case, country’s pro-military stance seems to stem from the all-American, tough, 
rebel image rather than a [complete] militarization of the country genre. This 
being noted, country’s patriotism is well sung in popular country songs both on 
the radio (107.1 and 107.7) and the Country Billboard top 30. In 2011 artist Toby 
Keith released a song entitled “Made in America” from his album Clancy’s
The song demonstrates country’s all-American edge. Lyrics are as follows:

My old man's that old man
Spent his life livin' off the land
Dirty hand and a clean soul
It breaks his heart seein' foreign cars
Filled with fuel that isn't ours
And wearin' cotton we didn't grow

He’s got the red, white, blue flyin' high on the farm
Semper Fi tattooed on his left arm
Spend a little more at the store for a tag in the back that says U.S.A.
He won't buy nothin' that he can't fix
With WD-40 and a Craftsman wrench
He ain't prejudice he's just made in America

He loves his wife, she’s that wife that decorates on the 4th of July
But says "Every day's Independence Day"
She’s golden rule, teaches school
Some folks say it isn't cool but she says the Pledge of Allegiance anyway
...
Born in the heartland, raised up a family
Of King James and Uncle Sam

He's got the red, white, blue flyin' high on the farm
Semper Fi tattooed on his left arm
Spend a little more at the store for a tag in the back that says U.S.A.
He won't buy nothin' that he can't fix
With WD-40 and a Craftsman wrench
He ain't prejudice he's just made in America

Thus, country patriotism consists of support for the military; the subject of this song being a former marine (Semper Fidelis tattooed on his left arm). Yet a patriotic country man encapsulates much more than this; military service is
sufficient to be a man, but not necessary. Indeed, the country man is all around, all-American from past to present to future (“Born in the heartland, raised up a family [on the foundations] / Of King James [Bible] and Uncle Sam) as well as lending economic support and immaterial devotion to the U.S. The real country man is emotionally attached to his homeland (as opposed to being emotional) while embodying a sense of toughness, pride, and independence in both himself and his state.

**Alcohol(ism)**

Another component of country masculinity is being highly familiar with alcohol and the drinking scene. In the majority of country songs, alcohol is a key component; whether being used to get over a past lover, as a party starter, or to build courage, alcohol and its use is pervasive. Artist Eric Church’s top 3 Country Billboard hit “Drink In My Hand” released in 2011, emphasizes this aspect of the country man:

```
Early Monday morning til’ Friday five
Man I work work work but I don't climb climb climb
Boss man can shove that overtime up his can
All I wanna do is put a drink in my hand

To fill it up or throw it down
I got a 40 hour week worth of trouble to drown
No need to complicate it I'm a simple man
All you gotta do is put a drink in my hand

Yeah the parking lot is muddy, can't get to the door
I'll take my jacked up drop ‘er down in 4x4
Chill down a long neck, warm up the band
```
All you gotta do is put a drink in my hand

To fill it up or throw it down
I'm about to tear a new one in this old town
5 4 3 2 1 I'm a Rocketman
All you gotta do is put a drink in my hand

Make me wanna go ooh ooh ooh when you dance like that
You got that little tattoo playin’ peek-a-boo on your back
Yeah if you want to impress me baby here’s my plan
All you got to do is put a drink in my hand
...
My head Monday morning when that alarm clock sings
It goes bang bang bang while it ring ring rings
Yeah I'm ready to roll if you want to rock again
All you got to do is put a drink in my hand

Likewise, in the song “Bait A Hook” by Justin Moore, the male character compares himself to his ex-girlfriend’s new boyfriend (who he considers to be an effeminate sissy), and uses alcohol as one of the many hallmarks to prove he’s the real man:

I heard you had to drive him home after two umbrella drinks
I heard he's got a Prius cause he's into bein' green
My buddy said he saw y'all eatin’ that sushi stuff
Baby that don't sound like you that don't sound like love
Sounds like it sucks

He can't even bait a hook
He can't even skin a buck
He don't know who Jack Daniels is
Ain't ever drove a truck
Knows how to throw out a line
But not the kind in a field and stream brook
No darlin' I ain't even worried you'll come runnin' back
He can't even bait a hook

The use of alcohol as an indicator of being masculine is thus fairly common in the country scene. What is interesting to note is that the reasons behind the utilization of alcohol are vast and varied, yet what is ultimately important is that a real man drinks his Jack Daniels for any and all of them…and can stomach it. Better to drink away the memory of your ex-girlfriend rather than cry over her, while having a cold beer is the best way to celebrate almost anything. Drinking (beer or liquor) is what makes a man a real man.

**Ruggedness**

The third aspect of country masculinity is a certain rough around the edges mentality which denotes ruggedness and toughness, further traits of real men. Jason Aldean's 2010 song "Dirt Road Anthem" captures this identifying feature well. The lyrics are as follows:

Yeah I'm chillin' on a dirt road
Laid back swervin' like I'm George Jones
Smoke rollin' out the window
An ice cold beer sittin' in the console
Memory lane up in the headlights
It's got me reminiscing on them good times
I'm turning off of real life, drivin' that's right
I'm hittin' easy street on mud tires

Back in the day Pott's farm was the place to go
Load the truck up hit the dirt road
Jump the barbwire spread the word
Light the bonfire then call the girls
The king in the can and the Marlboro man
Jack n’ Jim were a few good men
Where ya learned how to kiss and cuss and fight too
Better watch out for the boys in blue

And all this small town he said she said
Ain't it funny how rumors spread
Like I know something ya'll don't know
Man that talk is gettin’ old
Ya better mind your business man watch your mouth
Before I have to knock that loud mouth out
Im tired of talkin man ya'll ain't listenin'
Them old dirt roads is what ya'll missin'
...
I sit back and think about them good ole days
The way we were raised and our southern ways
And we like cornbread and biscuits
And if it's broke round here we fix it
I can take ya'll where ya need to go
Down to my hood back in them woods

We do it different round here that's right
But we sure do it good and we do it all night
See if you really wanna know how it feels
To get off the road with trucks and four wheels
Jump on in and man tell your friends
We'll raise some hell where the blacktop ends

Indeed, this song summarizes nicely the aspect of ruggedness. The focus of the song around being on the dirt road or in the woods (which Aldean refers to as his hood, which on its own conjures up a picture of toughness) gives the idea of breaking away from civilization and certain comforts. This in turn lends itself to a picture of a country man having a rugged, rough quality that comes from residing “where the blacktop ends.” In addition, references to trucks, alcohol, and fighting
contribute to this rugged component of country masculinity. What should also be noted is a certain connotation that country men are mentally tough as well as physically tough. The country man doesn’t care for the small talk or gossip that seems to preoccupy the minds of lesser men; rather, he is focused on what is important to him and what he wants: getting back to the old dirt roads.

**Protectiveness**

The fourth and last feature of country masculinity is protectiveness, particularly, protectiveness of women. Unlike the other three aspects of being a real man, this one reveals a softer side of country masculinity that requires tenderness and understanding, rather than rugged toughness. In 2011, Keith Urban released a song entitled “You Gonna Fly” which currently sits at number eleven in the Country Billboard and focuses on the protective aspect of country. Lyrics below:

One two three baby don't think twice
Just like that you got a brand new life
Hop in this truck and run through the red lights

Yeah where you wanna go baby name the town
We can go up north, we can head down south
Roll down the windows with the radio loud

Come on turn it up, yeah
Start living your life
On the double leave your troubles behind
You and me we gonna be alright

But you could be a black bird
On the country street
Hiding from the world with a broken wing
But you better believe you gonna fly with me
And you could be a songbird from the New Orleans
Scared of the rain just as scared to sing
But you better believe you gonna fly with me

Other songs which feature protectiveness include Billboard hit number 17 "Love's Gonna Make It Alright" by George Strait:

Girl you had one of those days
Seems like they been going around
You are a long way from being where you wanna be

When the world isn't goin' your way
Whatever bad luck is gettin' you down
Honey I'll be right here for you with open arms
you can run to me

Baby loves gonna make it, loves gonna make it alright
Alright alright
Baby loves gonna make it, loves gonna make it alright
Tonight tonight tonight

As well as “I'm Gonna Love You Through It” by Martina McBride (number 12)

She dropped the phone and burst into tears
The doctor just confirmed her fears
Her husband held it in and held her tight
Cancer don’t discriminate or care if you’re just 38
With three kids who need you in their lives
He said "I know that you’re afraid and I am too
But you'll never be alone I promise you"

When you're weak, I'll be strong
When you let go, I'll hold on
When you need to cry I swear that I'll be there to dry your eyes
When you feel lost and scared to death  
Like you can't take one more step  
Just take my hand together we can do it  
I'm gonna love you through it  
...
And when this road gets too long  
I'll be the rock you lean on  
Just take my hand, together we can do it  
I'm gonna love you through it.

And Billboard number 1 “Keep Me In Mind” by the Zac Brown Band:

Keep me in mind  
Somewhere down the road you might get lonely  
Keep me in mind  
And I pray someday that you will love me only

Well the world can be real tough  
Find shelter in me  
If there’s no one else to love  
Keep me in mind

All four songs highlight protectiveness as part of the gender construct for country masculinity; men are portrayed as being shelters that women will [inevitably] run to for comfort and support. Particularly in the first song, not only is the man the guardian but also the active and direct inspiration for future transformation. The imagery of a broken winged, frightened bird that finds its courage and is able to fly demonstrates this effectively. Hence, protectiveness encapsulates the notions of both providing shelter and guardianship while also stimulating recovery and courage. However, it may also be that the man’s role as gentle protector, who is able to be the coat of armor for the woman, actually reaffirms his toughness and strength. Thus, the masculinity of the male country singer consists of patriotism,
alcohol(ism), ruggedness, and protectiveness (of women). These four components indeed constitute the whole of what it is to be a true country man, yet, they also effect what it means to be a true country woman, as will be shown.

II. Femininity of Women in Country

When discussing masculinity, femininity must be included in this context as in order for the male gender construct to exist, a complementary female construct must simultaneously exist to legitimate and maintain its counterpart. What, then, is country femininity? The answer to this familiar question can be devised (as with rap) through the concept of masculinity itself. If the dominant construct of a country man requires him to be patriotic, rugged, consume alcohol, and protective, then a country woman must be patriotic, emotional/irrational, stand by her man, and vulnerable/docile.

Patriotism

It is also important to note that women are meant to be patriotic Americans as well and that patriotism is not an exclusively male trait in country. In the song “Made in America” by Toby Keith, mentioned previously, specific mention is made of the wife of the country man, the kind of woman who believes every day is Independence Day and says the Pledge of Allegiance.

He loves his wife, she's that wife that decorates on the 4th of July
But says "Every day's Independence Day"
She's golden rule, teaches school
Some folks say it isn't cool but she says the Pledge of Allegiance anyway⁹
While patriotism is constant in each gender construct (as it logically should be; half the country cannot only be patriotic), the way that patriotism is supposed to be expressed is much different, beyond the obvious, for country women and men. While male patriotism is tough and military oriented in the form of active duty, female patriotism manifests itself as loyalty to the state, military, and her man. Take the song “Just a Dream” by Carrie Underwood, released in 2007. The lyrics are as follows:

It was two weeks after the day she turned eighteen
All dressed in white
Goin’ to the church that night
She had his box of letters in the passenger seat
Sixpence in a shoe, something borrowed, something blue
And when the church doors opened up wide
She put her veil down
Tryin’ to hide the tears
Oh she just couldn’t believe it
She heard trumpets from the military band
And the flowers fell out of her hands

Baby why’d you leave me
Why’d you have to go?
I was countin’ on forever now I’ll never know
I can’t even breathe
It’s like I’m lookin’ from a distance
Standin’ in the background
Everybody’s sayin’, he’s not comin’ home now
This can’t be happenin’ to me
This is just a dream

The preacher man said let us bow our heads and pray
Lord please lift his soul and heal this hurt
Then the congregation all stood up and sang the saddest song that she ever heard
Then they handed her a folded up flag
And she held on to all she had left of him
Oh and what could have been
And then the guns rang one last shot
And it felt like a bullet in her heart

Baby why’d you leave me
Why’d you have to go?
I was countin’ on forever now I’ll never know
I can’t even breathe
It’s like I’m lookin’ from a distance
Standin’ in the background
Everybody’s sayin’, he’s not comin’ home now
This can’t be happenin’ to me
This is just a dream

Hence, patriotic country women are the ones who are left behind to give their support from the home front. Even in the worst cases, such as described above, women remain loyal to the memory of their man and stand by him, even after death. This aspect of feminine patriotism shows that despite the crushing heartache of knowing that a loved one has passed in war, the true country woman never questions the choices of her man or the state, but rather seeks to cope with her loss. In essence, then, patriotism from the country woman’s perspective is being an “army wife,” taking risks and accepting death, but never turning her back (or anger) on the idea of masculine patriotism or the state which promotes it. Therefore, not only does feminine patriotism complement masculine patriotism perfectly in terms of roles and mentality, but it also is reinforced by another component of country femininity, “standing by your man,” which will be discussed later on in this chapter.
Emotionalism and Irrationality

Another element of country femininity is emotionalism and irrationality; this aspect is the perfect complement, or foil, to the country man’s ruggedness and tough mindedness. It is also similar to the term “hysteria” which is commonly applied to women/teenage girls suffering from unexpected mental breakdowns. While men are supposed to fight and be rational, women are supposed to cry and distract them. The Eli Young Band’s 2011 song “Crazy Girl” emphasizes the irrational aspect of country femininity:

Baby why you wanna cry
You really oughta know that I
Just have to walk away sometimes
We’re gonna do what lovers do
We’re gonna have a fight or two
But I ain’t ever changin’ my mind

Crazy girl don’t you know that I love you
And I wouldn’t dream of goin’ nowhere
Silly woman come here let me hold you
Have I told you lately
I love you like crazy girl

Here, the link to femininity and irrationality is quite clear, she is a “silly woman” and he loves that about her. Other songs such as the single “You and Tequila” by Kenny Chesney, released in 2011, also appeal to irrationality in women, but in a more subtle manner. In this song, the woman is compared to tequila and its effects. In other words, the same physical and mental detriment that a strong drink has on a man, a woman is capable of producing those same effects in him. Conversely, it is inconceivable that a man would be accused of this; hence, not
only are women irrational, but that trait can negatively affect men, who are normally rational and rugged. Lyrics below:

Baby here I am again
Kickin’ dust in the Canyon wind
Waitin’ for that sun to go down
Made it up Mulholland Drive
Hell bent on gettin’ high
High above the lights of town

Cause you and tequila make me crazy
Run like poison in my blood
One more night could kill me baby
One is one too many, one more is never enough

Thirty days and thirty nights
Been puttin’ up a real good fight
There were times I thought you’d win
It’s so easy to forget
The bitter taste the morning left
Swore I wouldn’t go back there again

You and tequila make me crazy
Run like poison in my blood
One more night could kill me baby
One is one too many, one more is never enough

When it comes to you
All the damage I could do
It’s always your favorite sins
That do you in\(^1\)\(^2\)

Along with irrationality, emotionalism is also part of the gender identity and the two seem to go together nicely. This was seen in the first song referenced in this section, in the opening line of the song “Crazy Girl” (Baby why you wanna cry?)
and also through a more nuanced reading of “You and Tequila.” It is not only the woman, but her love, that is irrational and responsible for the effects of irrationality. Emotionalism is also apparent in the popular song “Storm Warning” by artist Hunter Hayes, at number 16 on the Billboard list. The lyrics are as follows:

She rolled in from the west in a summer sun dress
Hotter than the heat in July
With her wind blown hair it just wasn't fair
The way she was blowin' my mind
Have you ever noticed every hurricane
Gets its name from a girl like this
She's a cat 5 kind keeps you up at night
Hangin' on to the edge of a kiss

She's a beautiful mess
Yeah the kind you love to love
But what happens next
I got a feelin' when the sun comes up

I'm gonna wish I had a storm warnin'
I'm gonna wish I had a sign
I'm gonna wish I had a little heads up
A little leeway a little more time
Some kind of radar system
Locked in on love
I got a feelin' by the time the night finds the mornin'
I'm gonna wish I had a storm warnin'
I'm gonna wish I had a storm warnin'

Ain't it funny how it feels when you're burnin' your wheels
Somewhere between goin' and gone
You get so lost that you can't turn it off
You give in and you just turn it on
She's a heart full of rain red lips like a flame
She's a girl from your favorite song

What a beautiful mess
One part angel one part perfect one part brick
The kind of flood you'll never forget

In this song, the woman and her love is likened to a category five hurricane; she is a whirlwind of emotion, a “beautiful mess,” that he gets caught up and lost in. Thus, the emotionality of a woman is as turbulent, unpredictable, and intense as a natural disaster, which says a lot about this aspect of country femininity. Consequently, emotionalism and irrationality work in tandem with each other to create the second facet of the gender identity of the country woman.

**Vulnerability**

The third component of this gender construct is vulnerability; this could be construed from the section pertaining to masculine protectiveness as the former complements the latter. In order to be able to protect, something or someone must be in need of such protection. Certainly, any of the songs from the “Protectiveness” section would suffice to show this. Whether being portrayed as a helpless bird, a victim of the world, a cancer patient, or even simply lonely, vulnerability is a theme among country women. Having stated this, vulnerability not only complements male protectiveness, but it is also reinforced by the previous two sections, “Patriotism” and “Emotionalism and Irrationality,” of the country female gender construct itself. Indeed, it is far from inconceivable that an army wife might be highly susceptible to crippling grief and loneliness yet lacking an outlet for her pain, while someone who [believes she] is irrational would
require constant guidance. Both of these scenarios result in vulnerable women. However, there is another way in which vulnerability is expressed in country music. The following 2005 song, “Tequila Makes Her Clothes Fall Off” by Joe Nichols, captures this:

She said I’m goin’ out with my girlfriends
Margaritas at the Holiday Inn
Lord have mercy my only thought
Was tequila makes her clothes fall off

I told her put an extra layer on
I know what happens when she drinks Patron
Her closets missin’ half the things she bought
Yeah tequila makes her clothes fall off

She’ll start by kickin’ out of her shoes
Loose an earring in her drink
Leave her jacket in the bathroom stall
Drop a contact down the sink

Them pantyhose ain’t gonna last too long
If the DJ puts Bon Jovi on
She might come home in a table cloth
Yeah tequila makes her clothes fall off

She can handle any champagne brunch
A bridal shower with Bacardi punch
Jello shooters full of Smirnoff
But Tequila makes her clothes fall off

She’ll start by kickin’ out of her shoes
Loose an earring in her drink
Leave her jacket in the bathroom stall
Drop a contact down the sink
She don’t mean nothin’ she’s just havin’ fun
Tomorrow she’ll say oh what have I done
Her friends will joke about the stuff she lost
Yeah tequila makes her clothes fall off

Thus, along with the usual description of being vulnerable, the topic of alcohol again surfaces to add another dimension to country femininity’s vulnerability, this time in connection to country masculinity’s alcohol(ism). Here, drinking alcohol makes women vulnerable in the sense that they can’t handle it, at least not as well as the guys. In country, when men drink it empowers them through acting as a status symbol denoting real men, yet when women follow suit, it leads to them losing clothes and control of themselves. Even in the previously quoted song “You and Tequila” the man recognizes his own problem and chooses to continue, therefore, there is the sense that he is still in control (even of his own demise). Hence, the difference is that men use alcohol and women are used by it; alcohol is a unique source of vulnerability for women, in addition to the observation that they are naturally prone to being vulnerable in the first place. Subsequently, another instance in a pattern of complementation is revealed; not only does women’s vulnerability complement men’s protectiveness, but it complements their alcohol(ism) as well. Men should drink because they are good at it and it sets them apart from the ladies, both literally and figuratively.

Stand By Your Man

The last facet of country women’s gender identity, stand by your man, is hardly new to the genre. In 1968, artist Tammy Wynette established herself as a
big name in country with her platinum album *Stand By Your Man*, with the song “Stand By Your Man.” The lyrics are as follows:

Sometimes it's hard to be a woman
Givin' all your love to just one man
You'll have bad times
And he'll have good times
Doin' things that you don't understand
But if you love him
You'll forgive him
Even though he's hard to understand
And if you love him
Oh be proud of him
Cause after all he's just a man

Stand by your man
Give him two arms to cling to
And somethin' warm to come to
when nights are cold and lonely

Stand by your man
And show the world you love him
Keep givin' all the love you can
Stand by your man

Although released decades ago, Wynette’s classic country tune can still be heard today, not only in exact covers of the song by new artists such as Carrie Underwood and the Dixie Chicks, but echoes of her original message persist as well. At number 8 on the country Billboard “All Your Life” by The Band Perry exemplifies this:

Would you walk to the edge of the ocean
Just to fill my jar with sand
Just in case I get the notion
To let it run through my hand
Let it run through my hand

Well I don't want the whole world
The sun the moon and all their light
I just want to be the only girl
You love all your life
You love all your life

Would you catch a couple thousand fireflies
Put 'em in a lamp to light my world
All dressed up in a tux and bowtie
Hand deliver to a lonely girl
To a lonely lonely girl
...
Lately I've been writing desperate love songs
I mostly sing them to the wall
You could be the center piece of my obsession
If you would notice me I
Oh yeah

Well I don't want the whole world no
The sun the moon and all their light
I just want to be the only girl
You love all your life
You love all your life

Also following closely to the “stand by him” motto is the 2011 single “Ours” by Taylor Swift:

Seems like there's always someone who disapproves
They'll judge it like they know about me and you
And the verdict comes from those with nothing else to do
The jury's out but my choice is you

So don't you worry your pretty little mind
People throw rocks at things that shine
And life makes love look hard
The stakes are high the water's rough
But this love is ours

You never know what people have up their sleeves
Ghosts from your past gonna jump out at me
Lurking in the shadows with their lip gloss smiles
But I don't care cause right now you're mine
...
And it's not theirs to speculate
If it's wrong and
Your hands are tough
But they are where mine belong and
I'll fight their doubt and give you faith
With this song for you

Cause I love the gap between your teeth
And I love the riddles that you speak
And any snide remarks from my father about your tattoos will be ignored
Cause my heart is yours\(^\text{17}\)

The meaning of this hardly requires explanation; stand by your man is just as it sounds. Although this concept is capable of complementing all of the parts of country masculinity, the one where it would be presumably most damning would be that of alcohol(ism), in cases of actual alcoholism. While all cases of a loyalty complex may not be as extreme as this, the notion of staying by his side, no strings attached, is a troublesome one for women to abide by. “Stand by your man” is also dually reinforced by the other feminine aspects of “patriotism” and “vulnerability.” As was discussed earlier, stand by your man both reinforces and is reinforced by the component of patriotism; because women are loyal to their men, they are able to be patriotic army wives. Conversely, the pressure to be
always patriotic encourages them to stand by their soldier before and after his departure, and when he returns home as well. On a different note, if women are vulnerable, then they have good reason to stand by a protective man [as they cannot take care of themselves]. Thus, the femininity of the female country singer consists of patriotism, emotionalism and irrationality, vulnerability, and standing by her man. These four components constitute the whole of what it is to be a true country woman; yet, they also support and legitimate what it means to be a true country man through both complementation and reinforcing each other. Country gender identity is consequently a web of interaction between the two constructs and their components. Diagram 1 at the end of this chapter helps to illustrate the complexity of this genre:

III. Constraints on Country Women’s Voices

While the gender identities of country women and men do much to dictate the role that women have, they also determine the level of freedom with which country women can speak, or sing. As a result, constraints are placed on country women’s voices, both musical and actual.

*Constraints on Musical Voices*

Female country singers are very limited as to what they can produce lyrically and as a result, their songs tend to reproduce the existing gender constructs. However, despite the deterrence that country femininity and masculinity employ, some artists do choose to speak out in their songs. Yet, when they do seek to divert from the traditional discourse, they often do so in a
manner that still legitimates the very identities they are defying. It was already shown that the country woman never appears to truly question, let alone criticize, the basic assumptions of country, but when she does, she further entrenches herself in her gender norm to legitimate her contrary opinion. While this sounds hypocritical and nonsensical, it is perfectly plausible in country. The 2007 song below, “Gunpowder & Lead” by Miranda Lambert, illuminates this:

County road 233 under my feet
Nothin’ on this white rock but little old me
I got two miles till he makes bail
And if I’m right we’re headed straight for hell

I’m goin’ home gonna load my shotgun
Wait by the door and light a cigarette
He wants a fight well now he’s got one
And he ain’t seen me crazy yet
He slapped my face and he shook me like a rag doll
Don’t that sound like a real man
I’m gonna show him what little girls made of
Gunpowder and lead

Well it’s half past ten another six pack in
I can feel the rumble like a cold black wind
He pulls in the drive gravel flies
He don’t know what’s waitin’ here this time

Hey I’m goin’ home gonna load my shotgun
Wait by the door and light a cigarette
He wants a fight well now he’s got one
And he ain’t seen me crazy yet
He slapped my face and he shook me like a rag doll
Don’t that sound like a real man
I’m gonna show him what little girls made of
Gunpowder and lead
His fist is big but my gun's bigger
He'll find out when I pull the trigger

I'm goin' home gonna load my shotgun
Wait by the door and light a cigarette
He wants a fight well now he's got one
And he ain't seen me crazy yet
He slapped my face and he shook me like a rag doll
Don't that sound like a real man
I'm gonna show him what little girls made of
Gunpowder and
Gunpowder and lead

On the surface, this song seems to be about a woman who refuses to be vulnerable and stand by her man, and instead she chooses to act as her own protector. In this way, she is completely defying the norms of her gender construct and even adopting traits of the male gender. However, this song is far from undermining country constructs. If the woman in this song is going to defy certain aspects of her gender identity, she makes the extra effort to reinforce and justify what she is doing by ensconcing herself in the other facets. First, she acknowledges that what she is doing is wrong (we're headed straight for hell). It can be said that anyone with murderous intentions is wrong, but within the circumstances, this statement takes on the additional meaning. Secondly, she appeals repeatedly to the feminine characteristics of emotionalism and irrationality, referring to herself as mentally unstable (he ain’t seen me crazy yet) and emotionally disturbed to the point of angered homicide. She also adopts the component of irrationality by calling herself a “little girl,” as children are not fully developed intellectually (or emotionally). Third, while a cursory glance may have
given the impression that she is an empowered woman, she is in fact still appealing to the gendered aspect of vulnerability. Specifically, the unique part of it involving vulnerability induced by alcohol; she states, “Well it's half past ten another six pack in // I can feel the rumble like a cold black wind.” This shows that both her and her judgment is under the influence, she has lost control of herself due to drinking. Hence, the country woman must still legitimate gender identities, even when defying them. It is already troubling to find that a country woman has to take such extensive measures to justify defending herself (even against an abusive boyfriend), yet, she goes even further in doing so by removing him from his gender role. If he were a “real man,” she wouldn’t be acting this way. She says “He slapped my face and he shook me like a rag doll” while sarcastically adding “Don't that sound like a real man?” Thus, he has defied his gender law of protectiveness, giving her the excuse to break free of her own, to some extent. A more nuanced reading is that the song is warning against what happens when both men and women refuse to conform; when men don’t do what they are supposed to do for women, the ladies go out of control and country society falls into turmoil and violence. In other words the gender constructs are not only binding, they are necessary.

*Constraints on Actual Voices*

Just as country women’s voices are limited musically, their actual voices are limited as well; the gender identities manifest themselves in more than just the lyrics. In a study by Peace and Conflict Studies scholar Lesley Pruitt, entitled “Real Men Kill And A Lady Never Talks Back: Gender Goes to War In Country
Music,” she discusses the role in peace that country music stars have. What she finds is that “the anti-war statements by men in the genre do not suffer the same kind of backlash women receive…This comparison demonstrates how the statements of country music artists who protest war are received differently based on their gender, and reveals how country music reflects public discourse and reinforces limited ideas of peace through promoting traditional views of gender.”

Here, an extensive portion of Pruitt’s study will be incorporated as her language and analysis is best represented in her own voice:

The Dixie Chicks is an all-female country music trio hailing from Texas. Band members include Natalie Maines, lead vocalist; Martie Maguire, fiddle and mandolin player; and Emily Robison, banjo and guitar player. Within a year of their first major label release, Wide Open Spaces, the album went quadruple platinum and the Dixie Chicks were chosen as the American Music Awards’ Favorite New Country Artist. This incredible popularity continued, and in 2002 their album Home “made the No. 1 spot on Billboard’s Top 200 with one-week sales of 780,000” and their December NBC television special “became the highest rated network TV concert of the season… attracting an audience of more than eleven million.”

Soon afterward, in March 2003, the United States, under the new administration of President George W. Bush, was preparing for an invasion of Iraq. The Dixie Chicks, still at the height of their popularity, were touring overseas. During a break in the music at a London concert, Maines made some anti-war/anti-Bush remarks to the audience. Media sources diverge on Maines’ actual quote, but the general idea was that the group was “ashamed” President Bush was from Texas.

Reactions to this comment included a flurry of media reports as some country radio stations instituted a boycott, banning the Dixie Chicks’ music from the airwaves and suspending disc jockeys who disobeyed this directive. Some even organized more extreme actions, such as burning compact discs (CDs); in one event a tractor was driven over piles of the group’s CDs. Despite an apology from Maines, the group was publicly branded as unpatriotic and disloyal to their fan base, resulting in a steep drop in record sales. Indeed, the retribution was so
widespread and well known that a new verb was coined; when an interviewer from *Rolling Stone* asked comedian Chris Rock a question about the Bush administration, "he balked, saying, 'I don't want to be Dixie Chicked.'"

Thus, this is the background information surrounding the Dixie Chicks incident and Pruitt rightly attributes this extreme reaction to the country gender constructs that implicitly and actively limit country women’s real voices:

This section’s analytical focus is on how political figures, industry insiders, fellow artists, and the media have used “descriptive categories and rhetorical oppositions” to undermine the Dixie Chicks’ credibility. My analysis suggests that two themes have been particularly important in this process: (1) the use of feminizing language generally, and (2) the casting of the Chicks as ‘problematic’ women who are immoral, disloyal, and/or untrue.

Traits typically deemed “feminine” have been used in several ways to construct a negative portrayal of the Dixie Chicks. Following the notion that women are immature and unable to think rationally, the Dixie Chicks were represented as irrational and childlike. For example, two industry insiders suggested that the Dixie Chicks were irrational, ill-informed, and suffered from bad judgment. Clear Channel Radio programming manager, Alan Sledge, said “The people who like the Dixie Chicks are also people who most likely voted for President Bush in the last election.” Likewise, Chet Flippo, editorial director of CMT, argued that “Maines... could not have made a stupider mistake...Country music fans are largely conservative and patriotic – as is well known...What do you expect country fans to say when a country star dumps on the president?” However, it is noteworthy that these claims hinge on the assumption that country fans are near homogenous, although scholars report that fans actually cross “gender, class, geographical, age, ethnic, and occupational lines.”

Jerry Falwell represented the Dixie Chicks as immature by saying, “I know they are just young girls and I know they weren't thinking that clearly, but they said unacceptable things about their president.” It is also noteworthy that he is invoked as the “Reverend” Jerry Falwell, and therefore apportioned authority for knowing about and speaking on moral issues, such as what is acceptable speech. Falwell’s choice of words suggests that anyone thinking clearly would not criticize the president. Furthermore, his calling them “young girls,” despite
their age and status as wives and mothers, compels thoughts of juvenile statements that were not well-considered.

Similar issues arise in comments made by President Bush who said the Dixie Chicks “can say what they want to say,” but, “they shouldn’t have their feelings hurt just because some people don’t want to buy their records when they speak out. I mean...you know, freedom is a two-way street.” By using the phrase “have their feelings hurt,” Bush manages to diminish the death threats the group has received, seemingly equating their treatment with a child’s scraped knee. The insinuation, as Maguire said, is that they got what they deserved, and “This is what's going to happen if you keep speaking out.” Flippo also challenges Maines’ artistic integrity, saying, “You're an artist? And you have a message? Hey, put it in a song. We'll listen to that. But, otherwise – shut up and sing.” These are all clear attempts by critics to “put the girls back in their place.”

While traits traditionally considered feminine are used to undermine the Dixie Chicks, additional attacks are made based on their rejecting certain standards of the idealized country woman. This is done by casting them as “problematic” women who are immoral or untrue. Some of these criticisms revolve around the Dixie Chicks posing nude for the cover of Entertainment Weekly. For example, one syndicated columnist argued: “The Chicks have also borrowed from the m.o. of female rock stars: When in doubt, take off your clothes..."It's not about the nakedness," says Maines. "Uh-huh...It might be that the Dixie Chicks leave the country format altogether, or -- more likely - that they perversely benefit from their heightened notoriety." By implying that posing nude is used by the female musicians as an easy solution to problems, Rich Lowry paints the Dixie Chicks as “easy” or ‘immoral’ women. He further reinforces this idea by speaking of their “notoriety,” which is to say a “bad reputation,” exactly what the ideal country woman should hope to avoid. Furthermore, he charges that should they benefit from their increased publicity it would be “perverse,” which again reinforces the idea that their disrobing was sexually deviant, and certainly not in line with the “stand by your man” attitude expected from female country stars. Chris Willman, who interviewed the Dixie Chicks for the story that accompanied the nude photos, reacted similarly, saying “the Chicks got themselves thoroughly plucked. It was their idea: Though Maguire admits that their publicist doubted the wisdom of being branded with epithets.” By saying so he implies that perhaps they were using the nudity as a tactic by pointing out that it was their idea, thereby assuming no responsibility for the publication.
Moreover, he too calls the cover shoot into question by pointing out that their publicist was unsure on some issues, which implies they ignored "expert" advice.

Rhetorical oppositions are also used to place them squarely on the side of the foreign, unpatriotic, and disloyal. Falwell, for example, used descriptions to clearly distinguish the Dixie Chicks from himself and other supposedly patriotic, true Americans. To do so, he referred to the group as three “French hens” and said, “Politics should end at the shore when you leave the country…You don’t talk about your own country, especially during war.”

In calling them “French,” Falwell questions their allegiance by aligning them with the French, who opposed the war. Furthermore, he characterizes them as French “hens,” another derogatory term typically used to describe females making “useless and unpleasant noise.” By using rhetorical oppositions, Falwell makes a claim on “the way things ought to be” and implores the reader to take his side. Notably, such arguments have apparently proved effective with some media writers, as shown by some news reports using language that also compels the reader to conclude that the Dixie Chicks are troublemakers.21

Thus, through an analysis of musical lyrics and deferring to the study by Lesley Pruitt it has been shown how country women’s musical and actual voices are constrained by the dominant gender constructs of masculinity and femininity in the country genre.
Diagram 1

Masculinity

- Patriotism
- Alcohol(ism)
- Ruggedness
- Protectiveness

Femininity

- Emotionalism & Irrationality
- Vulnerability
- Stand By Your Man

Femininity

- Patriotism
- Emotionalism & Irrationality
- Vulnerability
- Stand By Your Man

complemented by:

reinforced by:
66


Chapter III: Punk Rock Music

The last genre of music that will be analyzed is punk rock. Punk rock, an exquisitely unique genre, can be easily identified by its harsh unmelodic sounds and vocals in conjunction (or not) with a broken and non-traditional melody. What is interesting about analyzing punk rock in this study is that the prime of this music genre has already passed in the mid 70’s. Yet, the reason for looking back to punk rock despite the previous focus on contemporary genres is that, of the main genres remaining, there is not another that promises to yield meaningful results in terms of gender constructs. Take pop for instance; indeed pop is a thriving, modern, multi-faceted genre that encompasses a vast array of artists and titles. However, it is precisely because of this fact that exploring pop would require a copious amount of time, which would ultimately be wasted, as the more variety that is encountered the harder it is to analyze the exact message about gender that the genre is promoting. The distinction between an outlier and a ‘norm’ become increasingly unclear in pop. Searching for gender in pop would simply be overwhelming and unfruitful. Conversely, the other possible alternative genre, rock n’ roll, has a very clear and degrading message about the female gender, yet with this being the case, the scenario "is what it is" and a discussion of it would only invoke the obvious. Thus, punk rock, due to its unique style and origins is worth exploring. This is not to imply that punk rock is being analyzed because it was merely the last option left; however, this genre, due to its distinctive nature, also experiments with and presents gender in a way that is arguably lost in translation in today’s music scene. Indeed, punk rock was born
out of a reaction to mainstream society and its values; hence punk rockers reject traditional music norms like a commercial, melodic sound or perfectly in-tune singing. The genre of punk rock even rejects the music industry and the idea of being a “successful” artist, explaining the burnout of many of these groups after only one or two albums. With the general idea of punk rockers being against society, it would appear that there was not really a gender divide so much as an “us versus them” mentality, with women representing a large part of the “us” while society was “them.” Yet some scholars, such as former punk rocker Lauraine Leblanc, believe that punk was a double edged sword; it was an outlet to escape the pressures of mainstream, yet the subculture of punk was still dominated by its own masculine gender dynamics. She argues that the punk subculture highly valorizes the norms of adolescent masculinity such as toughness, coolness, and rebelliousness and that this makes it difficult for female punk rockers to incorporate the female gender into something that normalizes masculinity. What is left, then, is a strange sort of “limbo.” Female punks are fighting against mainstream by being punk, yet they also have to navigate against the masculinity of punk itself by infusing some type of feminine gender identity into it. While punk certainly seems to construct a much more positive female gender identity than either rap/hip-hop or country, it remains to be concluded whether this identity is a reaction to masculinity, a semi-conformation to it, a perpetual ambiguity on the subject, or something more promising.

I. History of Punk Rock and the Punk Movement
“Like any musical genre, it’s hard to pinpoint that time and place where it actually began. But unlike any other musical genre, Punk rock was started as a deliberate reaction to the mass commercialism of music. In the year 2000, it’s common to see someone ‘being A punk,’ rather than seeing someone ‘be punk.’ In the late 60’s and early 70’s, the music industry rang eerily familiar in its method of promoting trends over music. The public was being spoon-fed music that corporations simply intended to make a profit from. The backlash to this came to be known internationally as Punk rock.”²

Looking back in time to New York in the early 1970’s reveals the beginnings of this movement; green, inexperienced and virtually unknown artists including the Dolls of New York (New York Dolls), the Velvet Underground, and Patti Smith sparked a novelty, “a new style of ‘alternative-bohemian’ entertainment, rooted in a ‘do-it-yourself’ attitude.” They sang short and frenzied songs marked by their hostile and antagonistic stage presence. Their lyrics carried anti-consumerism and anti-capitalist messages. Thus, on New York stages and venues, the movement that would be known as punk rock was ignited.³

In general, punk rock is considered to have truly come ablaze in 1975; however, the exact benchmark in terms of the first punk act is indeterminable. Indeed, a variety of bands can be considered as the original punk rockers including those mentioned previously, as well as MC5, Iggy and the Stooges, and Richard Hell and the Voidoids, all of which seemed to display some aspects of
punk. Yet, the one group that stands out for combining all of the so far scattered elements of punk is the Ramones, who surfaced in 1975.4

“The Ramones self-titled debut album, released in 1976, was the first example of punk rock, and they are generally accepted as the creators of the genre. Being tired of music that they considered boring, the Ramones gathered and began to piece their own sound together.” The Ramones created their unique sounds by taking inspiration from the lack of such uniqueness, the lack of originality, in the music of their time. Hence, from the very start, the Ramones rebelled. Another defining feature of their band was their deficiency in technical skill. “Their music would usually only utilize a few chords per song, and lyrics were often repetitions of short phrases. Many popular punk bands were often referred to as 'Three chord wonders.' Because of this, Ramones' songs are characterized by their amateur and aggressive sound.” Examples of their gritty and famous songs include "Blitzkrieg Bop," "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker," "Do You Remember Rock 'N Roll Radio?," and “I Wanna Be Sedated.”5

Hence, the Ramones are credited with reviving the “two-minute song” and creating a sound that was nostalgically reminiscent of early rock 'n' roll. However, not everyone was a fan of this unconventional and harsh sound coupled with eccentric lyrics, to say the least. “Legend has it that a touring representative from the A&M label saw the Ramones and got up and left in disgust after only hearing half of a song.” In addition, record companies were wary of the genre for reasons besides its unmelodic sound; punk rock was highly unstable. As 60-80’s music industry executive Danny Fields once said of the genre he had such a
great influence on: “American radio, then as now, doesn't like to participate in anything that is dangerous, or revolutionary, or radical. So [eventually] the whole thing [punk] became a great pile of shit that no one wanted to go near.” In truth, however, this rejection of punk by mainstream media probably strengthened and shaped the essence of the genre even more.⁶

The Ramones not only made waves in the United States, they also directly influenced British punk acts, thus kindling the British punk rock scene as well. For instance, the Ramones' Fourth of July concert in London was attended by the members of future British punk bands including the Clash, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and the Sex Pistols. Consequently, the stage for the 1977 London punk scene was set.⁷

Arguably the most famous of all punk rockers, the Sex Pistols borrowed the amateurish style of the Ramones and combined it with a touch of anarchy to produce the quintessential image and sound that defines punk.⁸ Not only their lyrics, but the very essence of their band reflected instability; even from the time of the formation of their group, the Pistols “were an unstable compound, destined to explode.”⁹ “Their shock value not only brought them fame, but made them the single most recognizable punk band. Therefore, many believe that punk rock began with the Pistols, while others believed it made punk into a novelty and signified the beginning of the end.”¹⁰ “The music of the Sex Pistols was even more raw and unrefined than the Ramones. A fast paced rhythm guitar, sometimes out of tune, was the main musical feature of the Sex Pistols’ music. Bass lines were slaughtered by the Sex Pistols' most renowned member, Sid
Vicious, who oftentimes played drunk or on heroin. Johnny Rotten, singer for the Pistols, and Vicious are often seen as two of the ‘all time greatest punks’” with Sid contributing so much to the fashion style of punk while Rotten contributed musically to the genre”11

Anarchy was the slogan of the Pistols and their lyrics mirrored it while their singer, Rotten, screamed it out, usually out of tune. The Sex Pistols' songs including “Anarchy In the U.K.,” “God Save the Queen,” and “No Feelings” brutally attacked the status quo and this led to demonizing of the group. The controversies that arose from their lyrics led to heavy criticisms against the punk rock genre as well as against the Pistols themselves. “They set themselves up as national bogeymen. In England, the word 'anarchist' had the same connotation as 'communist' did in the US, raising the specter of an unseen but omnipresent enemy.” Despite their personal troubles, however, the Sex Pistols undoubtedly had an enormous influence on punk music, as well as punk fashion. Indeed, the Pistols and Rotten embodied the look that eventually characterized most punks; ripped blue jeans and obscene tee-shirts.12

Inspired by the Sex Pistols, “new bands sprang up, warrior-like, from the dragon’s teeth sown by the Pistols in 1976 – the Damned, the Buzzcocks, the Adverts – while some existing ones were reborn.” Joe Strummer, then the lead singer of the fast-rising 101ers, a band supported by the Pistols in 1976, would later quit and form the famous group the Clash. “‘The Pistols had to come in and blow everything away,’ he said later. ‘They were the stun grenade into the room before the door could go.’ Meanwhile, a clique of extravagantly dressed
suburban teenagers known as the Bromley contingent, some of whom would later form Siouxsie and the Banshees, gravitated towards the Sex Pistols via Vivienne Westwood, their style an amalgam of Weimar Germany, S&M, gay fashion, and A Clockwork Orange.”

Ultimately, the Sex Pistols in the United Kingdom and the Ramones in the United States made an impact that was none to small on the commercial music industry, providing a fresh alternative to what they perceived as a lackluster and stagnating music scene. “But most of all, punk’s legacy lies in its introduction of self-employment and activism. It illustrated that anyone can do it themselves, without reliance on the commercial media or the luxury of having financial abundance. Against the backdrop of mass consumer conformity, the punk rock movement made a statement of individuality that was heard worldwide.”

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“If promoters and record company executives thought that they could capture the quintessential punk and drag him into board rooms, they were sadly mistaken. It was as futile as trying to capture youth. It was not only impossible, it was stupid to even attempt. The first punk caught in the corporate snare was Johnny Rotten and he quickly died in captivity. Lamenting his capture in a statement at the end of the last Sex Pistols’ tour, he said ‘Have you ever felt you’ve been cheated?’ Here he was pondering his own fate rather than those in the audience. Later he would form a band sarcastically called Public Image and wrote the title song which describes a bitter embrace of success seen through the eyes of the quintessential punk:
You never listen to the words I say
You only see me by the clothes I wear...
Or did the interest go so much deeper
It must have been the color of my hair

Two sides to every story, somebody had to stop me
I'm not the same as when I began
It's not a game of monopoly

The Public Image, you got what you wanted
The Public Image belongs to me
My entrance, my own creation
My grand finale, my goodbye”15

II. How Punk Defies Societal Norms

True to its historical roots, the genre of punk rock aims to rebel, to defy, challenging anything that society deems “acceptable” or “normal.” Indeed, punk lashed out against what can be identified as the three hallmarks of mainstream society: commercialism, [and] consumerism [which create capitalism], and society itself. In this way, punk was the antithesis to “the norm” and truly gave a unique facet and voice to music.

Commercialism

The first true punk rockers, the Ramones, sang out against the trend of mass production in the music industry that resulted in commercially viable, but boring music, and the stagnation of real artistry. Their 1978 hit “I Wanna Be Sedated” speaks to this sentiment. Lyrics are as follows:
Twenty twenty twenty four hours to go I wanna be sedated
Nothin’ to do nowhere to go-o-oh I wanna be sedated
Just get me to the airport put me on a plane
Hurry hurry hurry before I go insane
I can’t control my fingers I can’t control my brain
Oh no no no oh oh

Twenty twenty twenty four hours to go I wanna be sedated
Nothin’ to do nowhere to go-o-oh I wanna be sedated
Just put me in a wheelchair get me on a plane
Hurry hurry hurry before I go insane
I can’t control my fingers I can’t control my brain
Oh no no no oh oh

Twenty twenty twenty four hours to go I wanna be sedated
Nothin’ to do nowhere to go-o-oh I wanna be sedated
Just put me in a wheelchair get me to the show
Hurry hurry hurry before I go loco
I can’t control my fingers I can’t control my toes
Oh no no no oh oh

Twenty twenty twenty four hours to go I wanna be sedated
Nothin’ to do nowhere to go-o-oh I wanna be sedated
Just put me in a wheelchair get me to the show
Hurry hurry hurry before I go loco
I can’t control my fingers I can’t control my toes
Oh no no no oh oh

Ba-ba-bamp-ba ba-ba-ba-bamp-ba I wanna be sedated
Ba-ba-bamp-ba ba-ba-ba-bamp-ba I wanna be sedated

This song really does reveal the punk rockers’ dissatisfaction with the music industry and commercialism. The continuous repetition of the 3 word sequences reflects the repetition in the commercial product while the line “Nothin’ to do nowhere to go” represents the constraints on artistry in music by commercialism;
there is no room for expansion in the industry beyond the cookie cutter formula for profitable music, thus, there is nothing for the Ramones to do and certainly nowhere for them to go with their vision. The only option left then, is to leave the state (literally or symbolically) and escape the confines of “pop music.” However, the Ramones want the problem of commercialism to be inescapable and injurious. Looking at the lyrics, it should be noted that only a couple lines change in each stanza. The line “Just get me to the airport put me on a plane” in the first stanza changes to “Just put me in a wheelchair get me on a plane” in the second, and ends as “Just put me in a wheelchair get me to the show” (which repeats twice). The changes in these lines describe a battle against, yet inevitably a slow regression into the lull of commercial music and away from musical progress. The artist is determined to escape from it on a plane the first time, is determined the second time, but is weakening from the effort/less able to do so, and finally, gives in and decides instead to go to the “show,” which could be interpreted as the spectacle of commercial production. In addition, commercialism is shown to be pervasive and controlling, as well as detrimental, as seen by the gradual takeover of the artist’s body; the struggle to control his brain turns into the struggle to control his fingers and toes, as if the parasite of commercialism attacks the vital organ first and then spreads to the rest of the host, and the artist ends up in a wheelchair, artistically paralyzed, wanting to be sedated. Thus, through their songs the Ramones and punks defied society’s first norm, commercialism.

*Consumerism*
The perfect complement to commercialism is consumerism and punks were not oblivious to this pairing. As with commercialism, punk rockers protested the material obsessions of society, the ever expanding consumption and spending on goods that constitutes consumerism (and completes the idea of capitalism, along with commercialism). Indeed, this attitude manifests in the 1979 song “Natural’s Not In It” by Gang of Four. Lyrics below:

The problem of leisure
What to do for pleasure
The body is good business
Sell out maintain the interest
Dream of the perfect life
Economic circumstances
Ideal love a new purchase
A market of the senses
Remember Lot's wife
Renounce all sin and vice
Dream of the bourgeois life
This heaven gives me migraine
Coercion of the senses
We are not so gullible
We all have good intentions
But all with strings attached

Fornication makes you happy
No escape from society
Natural is not in it
Your relations are of power
We all have good intentions
But all with strings attached
The problem of leisure
What to do for pleasure

Repackage sex your interest
Here, the band Gang of Four takes the concept of consumerism to the [logical] extreme, where society is so saturated with consumerism that even the human body and its tangible and intangible aspects, like pleasure and love, can be purchased and consumed. Lines such as “The body is good business/Sell out maintain the interest” and “Economic circumstances/Ideal love a new purchase/A market of the senses” really serve to drive this point home. The line “Repackage sex your interest,” which is repeated eight times, strongly depicts the body as a product to be bought as well. However, this concept is not so far-fetched. After all, prostitution and strip clubs exist in communities worldwide, where the idea of
purchasing the body is already being practiced. Hence, Gang of Four criticizes the current practices of society as well as where the slippery slope of consumerism will lead to; a market of the senses, consumerist heaven where everything is commodified. Going further, the lines “Coercion of the senses/We are not so gullible/We all have good intentions/But all with strings attached” and “No escape from society/Natural is not in it/Your relations are of power” rebel against the capitalist and free market system itself. Although this economic model may have “good intentions,” in the end, it is coercive and insistent that ‘everything comes with a price,’ both literally and figuratively. This, then, results in the entrapment of society within the mandate of consumerist and capitalist politics, which in turn creates power based relations between societal actors. These actors must then struggle against this status quo of consumerism. Indeed the reference to the “bourgeois life” solidifies this idea of resistance. Ultimately, the concept of a society in which consumerism is so rampant and untamed leaves the artist with a migraine and, in terms of the norm of mass consumerism, well, natural’s just not in it.

**Society**

The last societal norm that punk rockers defied was society as an entity. Indeed, the specific way in which society functions and that it exists in a certain state to begin with is in fact a norm in and of itself. The society that British punk bands such as the Sex Pistols sought to rebel against was one that offered bleak hope in terms of stability and advancement. Thus, in order to understand the
anti-societal chords of the Pistols, a brief history of Britain in the early 1970’s is necessary.

From 1970 to around 1974 Britain was overwhelmed with both political and economic problems. The Prime Minister at the time, Edward Heath, had abandoned his free market principles and had instead embraced an antiquated form of British corporatism, in response to the challenges of the current climate. Although Heath had entered office on the pretense of neoliberalism, his subsequent actions conveyed his strong will to modernize Britain and end its period of economic recession. Hence, Heath enacted policies aimed at efficiency and pragmatism and most importantly, introduced Britain into the European Community. In October 1970, when Heath took office, council workers went on strike, foreshadowing what came to be known as the “winter of discontent” later in the decade. Additionally, industries heading towards bankruptcy were bailed out or nationalized and the attempt to stem rising unemployment came in the form of a continuous stream of complex incomes policies. In conjunction with these woes, unpredictable mishaps plagued Prime Minister Edward Heath, manifesting themselves in the form of the Northern Ireland conflict, the collapse of financial powerhouse Bretton Woods, and the ‘73 oil shock. Hurled out of one crisis and into another, the Prime Minister was compelled to declare a state of emergency an unprecedented five times within a peacetime period. This turmoil was punctuated by a miner’s strike which forced a three-day week and triggered an early election resulting in the victory of Britain’s demoralized Labour Party.18
Thus, it was against this gloomy backdrop that the British punk scene developed and the Sex Pistols rose to prominence. Indeed, their music reflects the discontent of the people with their government and the general mayhem of the times. The song “Anarchy In the U.K.” by the Pistols, released in 1977, encapsulates their assault on the status quo of society and politics through the promotion of violent anarchy. Lyrics are as follows:

I am an antichrist
I am an anarchist
Don't know what I want
But I know how to get it
I wanna destroy passerby
Cause I wanna be
Anarchy
No dogsbody

Anarchy for the UK
It’s coming sometime and maybe
I give a wrong time stop at traffic line
Your future dream is a sharpie’s scheme
Cause I wanna be
Anarchy
In the city

How many ways to get what you want
I use the best
I use the rest
I use the N.M.E.
I use Anarchy
Cause I wanna be
Anarchy
It’s the only way to be

Is this the M.P.L.A.
Or is this the U.D.A.
Or is this the I.R.A.
I thought it was the U.K.
Or just another country
Another council tenancy
I wanna be
Anarchy

And I wanna be
Anarchy
And I wanna be
Anarchist
I get pissed, destroy

In this song, the anti-societal sentiment is clear; in response to the failure of policy and unrest in the state, the Pistols propose a state of anarchy to counteract the current condition of society and government. In other words, no government is preferable to the one in place. In addition, the Sex Pistols released another controversial song from their 1977 album, Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols, entitled “God Save the Queen,” which is a satirical plea to preserve everything that, in their opinion, is responsible for the death of British society and state. Lyrics below:

God save the queen
The fascist regime
They made you a moron
Potential H-bomb

God save the queen
She ain’t no human being
And there’s no future
In England's dreaming
Don't be told what you want
Don't be told what you need
There's no future no future
No future for you

God save the queen
We mean it man
We love our queen
God saves

God save the queen
Cause tourists are money
And our figurehead
Is not what she seems

Oh God save history
God save your mad parade
Oh Lord God have mercy
All crimes are paid

When there's no future
How can there be sin
We're the flowers in the dustbin
We're the poison in your human machine
We're the future your future

God save the queen
We mean it man
We love our queen
God saves

God save the queen
We mean it man
And there is no future
In England's dreaming

No future
No future
No future for you

No future
No future
No future for me

No future
No future
No future for you²⁰

The first four lines do much to set the tone of the rest of the song; the queen, the image and symbol of Britain, is described as a fascist regime and as an atomic bomb, which certainly elucidates the Pistol’s view of the then current state affairs. Following this opening finds the group painting a morbid picture of Britain; society has ceased to dream, to progress, while those that try to fight this stagnation of prescribed roles and lifestyles, of dictated wants and needs, have no future in England. Again, the capitalist model is also targeted with the lines “God save the queen/Cause tourists are money” as well as the false notion that enduring history, customs, and tradition are sufficient to rectify present ills. They further reinforce this thought with the lines “When there’s no future/How can there be sin;” the dated past can inform and absolve the present because there is no future anyway in such a society as this. In other words, when society has nothing to progress towards and dreams will never be fulfilled, then stagnation, tradition, and norms cannot be blamed for degrading the present circumstances. If there is nothing to look forward to, why not wallow in the present and even the past, why shouldn’t ‘god save the queen,’ as god will never be able to judge errs and mistakes in the future anyway. Finally, the lines “We’re the flowers in the
dustbin/We’re the poison in your human machine/We’re the future your future”
draw focus to the instrumentalism of punk as the mold breaker, the splash of
fresh living color amidst grey dust, the antidote that will cure the ‘machination’ of
society and its brainwashed populous from the rhythmic, calculated, emotionless,
coldness, and rigidity of human society. Thus, punk defied and rebelled against
what can be identified as the three hallmarks of mainstream society;
commercialism, consumerism [forming capitalism], and society itself.

III. How Punk Defies Gender Norms

Through its agenda to defy societal norms, punk rock assumes the ability
to broach and incorporate many gender issues that mainstream society wouldn’t
dare address in its music, let alone conversation. Hence, through its bold voice,
punk rock was able to defy gender norms, both musically and in reality.

Musically

Even if merely for the sake of shock value, the punk genre had the license
to be outrageous and this afforded punk rockers the opportunity to explore
gendered concepts in their songs and break the rule of silence on these issues.
The 1977 song “Bodies” by the Sex Pistols does just that, revolving explicitly and
graphically around the controversial abortion debate and the role of a mother:

She was a girl from Birmingham
She just had an abortion
She was a case of insanity
Her name was Pauline she lived in a tree
She was a no one who killed her baby
She sent her letters from the country
She was an animal
She was a bloody disgrace
Body I'm not an animal
Body I'm not an animal

Dragged on a table in factory
Illegitimate place to be
In a packet in a lavatory
Die little baby screaming
Body screaming fucking bloody mess
Not an animal
It's an abortion
Body I'm not an animal
Mummy I'm not an abortion

Throbbing squirm
Gurgling bloody mess
I'm not a discharge
I'm not a loss in protein
I'm not a throbbing squirm

Fuck this and fuck that
Fuck it all and fuck a fucking brat
She don't wanta baby that looks like that
I don't wanta baby that looks like that
Body I'm not an animal
Body an abortion
Body I'm not an animal
Body I'm not an animal
An animal I'm not an animal
I'm not an animal an animal
I'm not an animal I ain't no animal
I'm not a body
I'm not an animal an animal
I ain't no animal I'm not an animal
I'm not an animal Mummy
This song, then, seeks to engage in an active discourse with the subject of abortion in terms of the woman’s responsibilities in pregnancy and her assumed role as a loving and protective mother *upon conception*. First it must be noted that even utilizing abortion as the inspiration for the song was daring in and of itself; the song already defies gender norms for simply existing. Secondly, the terminology of the lyrics adds ambiguity to the overall abortion debate. It is fascinating that the fetus, which is conservatively viewed as a living being, a human being, a ‘person,’ is called simply “body,” which implies a lack of the assumed soul or spiritual aspect that predominant religious views assert. On the other hand, the woman, Pauline, is referred to as “animal” which challenges the feminist view that a woman has full rights over her own body and the mental faculties to exercise them. Yet, the song defies the female gender norm of being a “good mother” for slightly more nuanced reasons as well. The lyrics begin by seemingly condemning Pauline, “She was a case of insanity,” “She was a no one who killed her baby,” “She was a bloody disgrace.” However, if the terminology of the song remains constant, which it does, then the term “body” refers to the fetus (“Die little baby screaming/Body screaming fucking bloody mess”) and the term “animal” refers to Pauline the woman (“She was an animal”). This is crucial as it makes it possible to identify the active dialogue spurred by the song between fetus and mother, with both sides presenting their arguments. The fetus asserts that it’s not an abortion (Mummy, I’m not an abortion”), a throbbing squirm, a gurgling bloody mess, a discharge, or a loss in protein, while Pauline responds by contending that she is not an animal (“Body I’m not an animal”) and
that she does not want a baby “that looks like that” (the lead singer agrees with her singing, “I don't [even] wanta baby that looks like that’). Yet, as the song nears its end, the dialogue and the terminology become increasingly pro-choice. This is in stark contrast to the clear condemnation of Pauline in the beginning of the song (which also implies that all is not as appears at first glance). This eventual shift is achieved through inversion of roles. To better explain this inversion, the lyrics pertaining to this technique are reproduced and numbered below:

1) Body I'm not an animal
2) Body an abortion
3) Body I'm not an animal
4) Body I'm not an animal
5) An animal I'm not an animal
6) I'm not an animal an animal
7) I'm not an animal I ain't no animal
8) I'm not a body
9) I'm not an animal an animal
10) I ain't no animal I'm not an animal
11) I'm not an animal Mummy

Attention should first be drawn to lines 5 and 6, which are actually inverted, directly manifesting the intent of the song. Next, a closer reading of lines 2 and 5 is necessary. In line 2, instead of merely defending herself against the charge of being an animal, this is the first instance where Pauline’s voice goes on the offensive, directly accusing the fetus as being an abortion. Hence there is a role inversion from defending to attacking. This change signifies a new strength to Pauline’s argument and in line 5 she calls the fetus an animal as well, while also deflecting that same charge from herself. It can be assumed that lines 6 through
11 are manic and aggravated denials on the part of the fetus of it being an animal or a body. Hence, the fetus is always on the defensive, either arguing that it’s not a body, an abortion, an animal or all three. It would appear, then, that Pauline is asserting herself successfully, shifting the status quo of the song in her favor and in favor of pro-choice. Additionally, despite Pauline’s intentions, the fetus never ceases to think of her as “mummy” even until the last line of the song.

The end result produces a precarious optimism for the cause of women and the right to [their] own bodies through allowing Pauline the right to assert herself over an entity that recognizes her [parental] authority. Consequently, punks make a point that the gender norms of motherhood and the idea of a mother as subservient to her unborn child may not be as rigid as society would make believe.

Another way in which punks defied gender norms was by challenging a different aspect of gender, sexuality. Hence, a strongly entrenched gender norm that punks defied was the norm of the heterosexual relationship. Patti Smith, known as the “godmother of punk” not only dressed in a traditionally masculine style, but her music also featured lesbian relationships. One such song entitled “Gloria” comes from her 1975 album Horses. Lyrics are as follows:

Jesus died for somebody’s sins but not mine
Meltin’ in a pot of thieves
Wild card up my sleeve
Thick heart of stone
My sins my own
They belong to me me
People say beware!
But I don’t care
The words are just
Rules and regulations to me me

I-I walk in a room you know I look so proud
Im movin in this here atmosphere, well anythings allowed
And I go to this here party and I just get bored
Until I look out the window see a sweet young thing
Humpin’ on the parking meter leanin’ on the parking meter
Oh she looks so good oh she looks so fine
And I got this crazy feeling and then I’m gonna ah-ah make her mine
Ooh Ill put my spell on her

Here she comes
Walkin’ down the street
Here she comes
Comin’ through my door
Here she comes
Crawlin’ up my stair
Here she comes
Waltzin’ through the hall in a pretty red dress
And oh she looks so good oh she looks so fine
And I got this crazy feeling that I’m gonna ah-ah make her mine

And then I hear this knockin’ on my door
Hear this knockin’ on my door
And I look up into the big tower clock
And say oh my God here’s midnight
And my baby is walkin’ through the door
Leanin’ on my couch she whispers to me and I take the big plunge
And oh she was so good and oh she was so fine
And I’m gonna tell the world that I just ah-ah made her mine

And I said darling tell me your name she told me her name
She whispered to me she told me her name
And her name is and her name is and her name is and her name is g-l-o-r-i-a
G-l-o-r-i-a G-l-o-r-i-a G-l-o-r-i-a G-l-o-r-i-a Gloria
g-l-o-r-i-a Gloria g-l-o-r-i-a Gloria
I was at the stadium
There were twenty thousand girls called their names out to me
Marie and Ruth but to tell you the truth
I didn’t hear them I didn’t see
I let my eyes rise to the big tower clock
And I heard those bells chimin’ in my heart
Going ding dong ding dong ding dong ding dong
ding dong ding dong ding dong ding dong
countin’ the time then you came to my room
And you whispered to me and we took the big plunge
And oh you were so good oh you were so fine
And I gotta tell the world that I make her mine make her mine
Make her mine make her mine make her mine make her mine

Thus, Patti Smith rebelled against the heterosexual norm through her songs about homosexuality. Indeed, motherhood and abortion and sexuality were only a few of the ways in which punks sought to defy and counteract gender norms.

*Reality*

Not only did punk music subvert gender, but punk rockers themselves challenged the norms of femininity and masculinity through their wardrobes; men dressed in drag and crossed the gender lines in a physical, tangible sense. The group New York Dolls was known for exactly this, even the name of their band is indicative of gender bending. Pictures follow:
Punk rock is known for its rough and tough rebelliousness, traditionally masculine traits, coupled with harsh lyrics and tunes and the New York Dolls were no exception. So, what does it mean when these punk guys wear women’s clothing and make-up? It could try to affirm that women can be just as aggressive and
opinionated as their male counterparts, or, they could be challenging the dominant discourse of what is considered masculine and feminine. In other words, who is a “man” and who is a “woman,” what do these concepts mean? – They are clearly more than just biological ones. It could also be that they are attempting to synthesize the divide between genders or are declaring gender neutrality; they act like men, but dress like women. Regardless of the exact answer, the Dolls are undoubtedly making a strong statement against society and its gender norms beyond their lyrics.

IV. Female Punk Rockers in the [Male] Punk Scene

Punk rock was more than simply a musical genre, it was also a movement expressed in song, and the followers were the punks. While punk rock music and punk artists seemed to be pro-women, even feminist in a sense, the everyday punks and their voices have so far been excluded from analysis. Does the defiance of gender norms by icons of the genre translate into the day to day movement, the people? According to former punk rocker and scholar Lauraine Leblanc, there is not this trickledown effect. In her book “Pretty in Punk Girls’ Gender Resistance in a Boys’ Subculture,” she collects the accounts of punk girls around the country and she finds that being a punk is a double edged sword for women. While punk is an outlet to protest mainstream constraints, this same culture imposes the very pressures that punk women sought to avoid in mainstream. Punk highly valorizes the gender norms of adolescent masculinity
(toughness, rebelliousness, aggressiveness), thus punk girls struggle to create a female gender in this highly ‘masculinized’ context. She writes:

“It’s hard to be a punk and be a girl.” Lavender-haired Rosie said this explicitly, and other girls I interviewed made this point over and over in their accounts of reconciling the norms of punk and with those of femininity. What struck me about Rosie’s statement was the way she phrased it: she didn’t say “it’s hard to be a punk girl” or “it’s hard to be a girl punk,” but that it’s hard to do one, and hard to do the other, and supremely difficult to do both at once. To do both at once, girls have to reconcile the ways in which these terms contradict each other, and they have to negotiate between the expectations of both... I examined what makes it hard for girls to be punks – the rejection of parents, peers, and school authorities; the gender expectations of male punks – and how punk girls accommodate or resist these difficulties. [Hence] I turn to punk girls’ inventive resolutions of the paradox of femininity and punk masculinity by examining how they behaviorally, stylistically, and discursively reject, accept, and reconceptualize the norms of punk and those of femininity – how “punk” and “girl” become punk girls.\(^\text{23}\)

Despite this apparent difficulty, Leblanc recognizes that this struggle engaged in by female punks not only impacts the subculture for the better, but this effect bleeds into mainstream society as well. It may be fair to characterize her point about punk in this way; it may be a double edged sword, but you can still fight with it. She states:

Many of the punk girls I interviewed reported that joining the subculture indeed had a profoundly liberating effect, allowing them not only the means to express themselves aesthetically, but the freedom and strength to do so in the face of cultural proscriptions against creating rebellions to gender norms. As Lola put it:

People think, if you’re a female punk rocker that you’re worthless and you’re stupid and you’re nasty, but we have more if not, equal if not more power to, to do things, to go places and to be, and to make kick-ass music, to open our own stores, to do our own thing, to like, to raise hell. We have, just because we are girls. Because we’re women and we can, and we’re strong women and I think, I think that’s why we get looked down [on] a lot...We’re not afraid to say, “Fuck you, that’s not right,” and so they kind of
laugh at us and stuff, but deep down inside, they want to be us. They do!...They do! They want to be us! Look at Donna Reed. Can you see Donna Reed in combat boots? In green liberty spikes, mopping a floor? “Get your own damn dinner!”

Such forms of subcultural resistance also have an important impact on mainstream gender norms. The concordance between cultural and subcultural gender norms implies that change brought about within one system impacts the norms of the other...In constructing symbolic challenges to the discourse of femininity, which is, after all, a semiotic system, punk girls change the accepted parameters of the discourse. As the fashion industry repeatedly plunders street styles in the quest for new fashion, it brings aspects of punk style into the mainstream. Importing punk-girl style expands what is permissible in mainstream femininity...When creating such challenges, punk girls contribute significantly to the deconstruction of oppressive gender norms. Imagine more girls saying, as Lola does, “I actually enjoy being, I like being a girl. It’s cool. It’s a fun thing to be. And getting away with shit...I’ll slap on my lipstick and then kick their ass.” True, housewives may not soon sport combat boots and liberty spikes and refuse to serve dinners, and punk girls in mohawks and crinolines and mainstream girls sporting combat boots with their prom dresses may not topple the government, but they certainly do expand the parameters of what is permissible. They are changing the faces of femininity.²⁴

Thus, although the music industry did not create a top-down approach for gender defiance which reached the ground level, the punks themselves, particularly the female punks, engaged in their own bottom-up approach to combating gender norms in the punk movement and even mainstream society.
Endnotes


Conclusion

If anything is to be drawn from this analysis, it is that music and gender are inextricably linked, especially in the genres of rap/hip-hop, country, and punk rock. Indeed, two of these types of music, rap/hip-hop and country, tend to construct and reinforce the gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, which results in the overall devaluation of women in these genres. However, gender in punk rock sings to a different tune (both literally and figuratively) and instead of perpetuating gender constructs, it by nature seeks to challenge and defy them. In this way, the role of gender in each of these genres is different, but present nonetheless.

In the genre of rap/hip-hop, the overarching norm was the objectification of women. Rap masculinity entails the ideas of “winning,” living the “rap lifestyle,” and “women” as accessories or scenery. Because rap masculinity depends upon the materialization of women in this way, the corresponding, complementary rap femininity requires women to be objectified. This objectification occurs on two levels, the first being the “pornification” of women in rap and the second as the “commodification” of women in the genre. Even when female rappers enter this male dominated scene, which is a rare occurrence, they too often replicate these constructs; they strive to fulfill the role of the male rapper or they embody the role of the objectified woman. Even the seemingly positive stereotype of the “independent woman” is portrayed in this genre as narcissistic/emasculating, a diva, a “gold digger,” or merely a mirror reflection of the male rapper himself.
An equally demoralizing gender construct appears in mainstream country music as well, albeit in a much different manner. In the genre of contemporary country music a distinct masculinity, which entails patriotism, alcohol(ism), ruggedness, and protectiveness, requires a subjugated complementary femininity built upon patriotism, vulnerability, emotionalism/irrationality, and loyalty. As was demonstrated with rap/hip-hop, female country singers frequently replicate the ideas and stereotypes in this genre, fulfilling the complementary country femininity. In turn, the gender constructs in country create constraints on women’s musical and actual voices, hindering them from challenging the norm. The genre of country music, then, is a complex web of gender constructs where the aspects of femininity serve to reinforce each other and complement those of masculinity.

Lastly, the third genre that was analyzed was punk rock. Indeed, this genre presents a vastly different view on gender than the previous genres. From its very conception, the punk movement sought to defy societal norms including those of commercialism, consumerism (constituting capitalism), and society in general. In seeking to undermine these ‘laws’ of mainstream, punk rock also assumed the ability to address and defy many issues concerning gender, both lyrically and in reality. Punk rockers not only broached these subjects, but challenged the prevailing notions of abortion and motherhood and hetero- and homosexuality. Groups such as the New York Dolls commonly dressed in drag, which physically and conceptually challenged and blurred society’s definitions of men and women, masculinity and femininity. Additionally, as punk rock was a
musical genre as well as political movement, it was important to include the actors involved in 'punk,' particularly, female punk rockers. Initially, while women in punk may have found it difficult to create a female gender in this highly masculinized context, their struggle ultimately pushes the boundaries of what is acceptable, not only in punk, but mainstream society as well.

Excluding this last genre, punk rock, the genres analyzed in this study certainly do not present an optimistic view of gender constructs and thus women in general. The pervasive popularity of the genres of rap/hip-hop and contemporary country has resulted in aiding the perpetuation of gender constructs which tend to undermine the qualities of femininity and women. This leads to the question; are there any songs which can be considered as positive influences on gender, on femininity? Despite the temptation to give a negative answer to this question; however, songs have been recorded which candidly attempt to describe the condition of women with raw and explicitly 'true' lyrics. The 1972 song “Woman Is the Nigger of the World" by John Lennon exemplifies this. Lyrics are as follows:

Woman is the nigger of the world
Yes she is, think about it
Woman is the nigger of the world
Think about it do something about it

We make her paint her face and dance
If she won't be a slave we say that she don't love us
If she's real we say she's trying to be a man
While putting her down we pretend that she's above us

Woman is the nigger of the world
Yes she is, if you don't believe me take a look at the one you're with
Woman is the slave of the slaves
Ah yeah you better scream about it

We make her bear and raise our children
And then we leave her flat for being a fat old mother hen
We tell her home is the only place she should be
Then we complain that she's too unworldly to be our friend

Woman is the nigger of the world
Yeah she is, if you don't believe me take a look at the one you're with
Woman is the slave to the slave
Yeah alright

We insult her every day on TV
And wonder why she has no guts or confidence
When she’s young we kill her will to be free
While telling her not to be so smart we put her down for being so dumb

Well woman is the nigger of the world
Yeah she is, if you don't believe me take a look at the one you're with
Woman is the slave to the slaves
Yes she is, if you believe me better scream about

We make her paint her face and dance
We make her paint her face and dance’

Clearly, Lennon’s aim is to point out in striking detail and accuracy what he views as the hypocrisies of the gender construct of femininity. Although released in the early 70’s, many of his searing observations are still valid today; “While telling her not to be so smart we put her down for being so dumb” and “While putting her down we pretend that she's above us.” What happens, then, is a cycle of repression of women, and when women attempt to break free of this construct, when they try to be “real,” “we say she's trying to be a man.” Hence, Lennon’s
[feminist] song counteracts gender norms simply, yet powerfully, by revealing their existence and their double standards.

There also exist current Billboard Top 40 hits that offset the damaging constructs of femininity infecting the airwaves today. What is fascinating about these songs is that they are not only commercially successful, but are successful as outliers, as songs that sing against the mainstream gender grain and challenge societal constructs of masculinity and femininity. One of these includes the song “Born This Way” by Lady GaGa, which held the number 1 spot on the Top 40 for weeks. She sings:

My mama told me when I was young  
We are all born superstars  
She rolled my hair and put my lipstick on  
In the glass of her boudoir

There's nothin' wrong with lovin' who you are  
She said cause he made you perfect babe  
So hold your head up girl and you you'll go far  
Listen to me when I say

I'm beautiful in my way  
Cause god makes no mistakes  
I'm on the right track baby  
I was born this way  
...

A different lover is not a sin  
Believe capital H-I-M  
I love my life I love this record and  
Mi amore vole fe  
...

Don't be drag just be a queen  
Whether you're broke or evergreen
You’re black, white, beige, chola descent
You’re Lebanese you’re orient

Whether life’s disabilities
Left you outcast, bullied, or teased
Rejoice and love yourself today
Cause baby you were born this way

No matter gay, straight, or bi
Lesbian, transgendered life
I’m on the right track baby
I was born to survive

No matter black, white, or beige
Chola or orient made
I’m on the right track baby
I was born to be brave

I’m beautiful in my way
Cause god makes no mistakes
I’m on the right track baby
I was born this way

Don’t hide yourself in regret
Just love yourself and you’re set
I’m on the right track baby
I was born this way

In this song, Lady GaGa emphasizes self-respect and confidence for all women. She also challenges the stereotype that woman who has more than one lover or many partners throughout her life is slut or a whore (“A different lover is not a sin”). She also legitimates the queer community and people of different races, while ironically (and cleverly) using religion to justify this tolerance and acceptance. However, pop star Lady GaGa isn’t the only modern artist resisting
gender constructs. Indeed, R&B artist Miguel’s Top 40 song “Sure Thing” endorses a much different type of relationship than what many of his counterparts in R&B and cousins in rap/hip-hop are describing. Miguel’s idea of love is one of interdependence and support. A relationship based upon both partners’ equal, yet distinct, contributions to create a meaningful whole; a partnership with mutual subjectivity. Lyrics below:

Love you like a brother
Treat you like a friend
Respect you like a lover

If you be the cash I'll be the rubber band
You be the match I will be your fuse, boom
Painter baby you could be the muse
I'm the reporter baby you could be the news
Cause you're the cigarette and I'm the smoker
We raise the bet cause you're the joker, truth though
You are the chalk and I could be the blackboard
You can be the talk and I can be the walk

Even when the sky comes falling
Even when the sun don't shine
I got faith in you and I
So put your pretty little hand in mine
Even when we're down to the wire babe
Even when it's do or die
We can do it baby simple and plain
Cause this love is a sure thing

You could be the lover I'll be the fighter babe
If I'm the blunt you could be the lighter babe, fire it up
Writer baby you could be the quote
If I'm the lyric baby you could be the note, record that
Saint, I'm a sinner
Prize, I'm a winner and it's you
What can I do to deserve that
Paper, baby I'll be the pen
Say that I'm the one cause you are ten
Real and not pretend

Even when the sky comes falling
Even when the sun don't shine
I got faith in you and I
So put your pretty little hand in mine
Even when we're down to the wire baby
Even when it's do or die
We can do it baby simple and plain
Cause this love is a sure thing³

In essence, then, Miguel seems to be responding to the age old question of
“what makes a romantic, happy, sexy relationship?”  Surprisingly, the answer
seems to be equality. In a radically different light, rap artist Eminem explores the
taboo subject of domestic violence and abusive relationships in his number 1 Top
40 hit “Love the Way You Lie” featuring Rihanna. This song certainly pushes
boundaries in that its lyrics can, at times, seem to glorify domestic abuse; yet,
this controversial song deserves to be considered in alternate ways as well.
Lyrics are as follows:

Just gonna stand there and watch me burn
Well that's alright because I like the way it hurts
Just gonna stand there and hear me cry
Well that's alright because I love the way you lie
I love the way you lie

I can't tell you what it really is
I can only tell you what it feels like
And right now there's a steel knife in my windpipe
I can't breathe but I still fight while I can fight
As long as the wrong feels right it's like I'm in flight
High off of love drunk from my hate
It's like I'm huffin' paint and I love her the more I suffer
I suffocate and right before I'm about to drown she resuscitates
Me, she fuckin' hates me and I love it
Wait, where you goin' I'm leavin' you
No you ain't come back
We're running right back
Here we go again it's so insane
Cuz when it's going good it's going great
I'm Superman with the wind at his back she's Lois Lane
But when it's bad it's awful
I feel so ashamed I snap who's that dude
I don't even know his name
I laid hands on her I'll never stoop so low again
I guess I don't know my own strength

Just gonna stand there and watch me burn
Well that's alright because I like the way it hurts
Just gonna stand there and hear me cry
Well that's alright because I love the way you lie
I love the way you lie
I love the way you lie

You ever love somebody so much you can barely breathe when you’re with 'em
You meet and neither one of you even know what hit 'em
Got that warm fuzzy feelin' yeah them chills used to get 'em
Now you're gettin' fuckin' sick of lookin' at 'em
You swore you'd never hit 'em never do nothin' to hurt 'em
Now you're in each other's face spewin' venom in your words when you spit 'em
You push pull each other's hair scratch claw bit 'em
Throw 'em down pin 'em so lost in the moments when you're in 'em
It's the rage that took over it controls you both
So they say it best to go your separate ways
Guess that they don't know you cuz today
That was yesterday, yesterday is over it's a different day
Sound like broken records playin’ over
But you promised her next time you’d show restraint
You don’t get another chance life is no Nintendo game but you lied again
Now you get to watch her leave out the window
Guess that’s why they call it window pane

Just gonna stand there and watch me burn
Well that’s alright because I like the way it hurts
Just gonna stand there and hear me cry
Well that’s alright because I love the way you lie
I love the way you lie
I love the way you lie

Now I know we said things did things that we didn’t mean
And we fall back into the same patterns same routine
But your temper’s just as bad as mine is
You’re the same as me when it comes to love you’re just as blinded
Baby please come back it wasn’t you baby it was me
Maybe our relationship isn’t as crazy as it seems
Maybe that’s what happens when a tornado meets a volcano
All I know is I love you too much to walk away though
Come inside pick up your bags off the sidewalk
Don’t you hear sincerity in my voice when I talk
Told you this is my fault look me in the eyeball
Next time I’m pissed I’ll aim my fist at the drywall
Next time there will be no next time
I apologize even though I know it’s lies
I’m tired of the games I just want her back
I know I’m a liar if she ever tries to fuckin’ leave again
Ima’ tie her to the bed and set this house on fire just gonna

Just gonna stand there and watch me burn
Well that’s alright because I like the way it hurts
Just gonna stand there and hear me cry
Well that’s alright because I love the way you lie
I love the way you lie
I love the way you lie
While obviously contentious due to its subject matter, this song, for one, dares to engage with a topic that is usually viewed as a dark secret not to be mentioned, bringing the issue of domestic violence to the forefront of the discussion in a flurry of catchy beats and a smooth chorus. Along this line, the song succeeds in unfurling a story about how “he will never change,” which is nearly always the situation in cases of abuse. Thus, the song is anonymously speaking the truth to battered women in many ways in a voice that is not admonishing. Interestingly, though, the song does not give the listener the feeling that the female character is a victim. Rather, this song describes a different type of equality in a relationship; both actors are equally passionate in their love, yet they are also equally destructive forces (a tornado and a volcano). In this way, the woman in the song is not just another victim, she is afforded some level of autonomy, recognition of her own decisional capacity, and even power; she knows he is a liar but “loves the way he lies’ and cannot live without him, just as he is lost without her, despite the fact that her temper is just as bad as his is. This, then, adds another facet to the dilemma that the song portrays and perhaps, the lyrics attempt to redefine the application and understanding of “battered women’s syndrome.” First, it disputes the gendered assumption that only women are susceptible to this “disease” as women are mentally fragile, with the line “when it comes to love you’re just as blinded.” Second, the song tries to promote the idea of a discriminate application of “battered women’s syndrome,” the notion not to view all women in an abusive relationship as pitiful or helpless or confused. Some women are just as violent, obsessed, and passionate as some men and
the reason that they cannot leave is not because they are suffering from some psychological illness, but because they are stubborn and in love. Perhaps, this song gives a level of dignity back to some of these women. Admittedly, while this song may not be the cover title for feminism in music, it certainly adds more to the dialectic of gender constructs in contemporary music and pushes the envelope as to the traditional theory of ‘love.’

Ultimately, what could the success of songs such as “Sure Thing,” “Born This Way,” and “Love the Way You Lie” mean? Is it merely that people are hungry for something different, something that goes beyond the cookie-cutter mold for hit music, or, could it signal that feminist ideas about constructing a positive empowered femininity are making their way slowly but surely into mainstream music. As songs like these are still fairly rare, as compared to their counterparts, it is difficult to make any broad conclusions; however, these songs and their messages are certainly a step, or a note, in the right direction.
I am woman hear me roar
In numbers too big to ignore
And I know too much to go back and pretend
Cause I've heard it all before
And I've been down there on the floor
No one's ever gonna keep me down again

Oh yes I am wise
But it's wisdom born of pain
Yes I've paid the price
But look how much I gained
If I have to
I can do anything
I am strong
I am invincible
I am woman

You can bend but never break me
Cause it only serves to make me
More determined to achieve my final goal
And I come back even stronger
Not a novice any longer
Cause you've deepened the conviction in my soul

...
Endnotes


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