Misogyny, Toxic Masculinity, and Heteronormativity in Post-2000 Popular Music

Edited by Glenn Fosbraey · Nicola Puckey

palgrave
macmillan

Palgrave Studies in (Re)Presenting Gender

The focus of Palgrave Studies in (Re)Presenting Gender is on gender and representation. The 'arts' in their broadest sense – TV, music, film, dance, and performance – and media re-present (where 'to represent' is taken in its literal sense of 'to present again', or 'to give back') gender globally. How this re-presentation might be understood is core to the series.

In re-presenting gendered bodies, the contributing authors can shift the spotlight to focus on marginalised individuals' negotiations of gender and identity. In this way, minority genders, subcultural genders, and gender inscribed on, in, and by queer bodies, take centre stage. When the 'self' must participate in and interact with the world through the body, how that body's gender is talked about – and side-lined or embraced by hegemonic forces – becomes paramount. These processes of representation – how cultures 'give back' gender to the individual – are at the heart of this series.

More information about this series at
http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/16541

Glenn Fosbraey • Nicola Puckey
Editors

Misogyny, Toxic Masculinity, and Heteronormativity in Post-2000 Popular Music

Editors
Glenn Fosbraey
Faculty of Arts
University of Winchester
Winchester, Hampshire, UK

Nicola Puckey
Faculty of Arts
University of Winchester
Winchester, Hampshire, UK

Contents

Notes on Contributors

Apryl Alexander is an associate professor in the Graduate School of Professional Psychology at the University of Denver. She received her doctorate in clinical psychology from the Florida Institute of Technology with concentrations in forensic psychology and child and family therapy. Alexander's research and clinical work focus on violence and victimization, human sexuality, and trauma-informed and culturally informed practice. She is an award-winning researcher and her work has been published in leading journals. Recently, she received the 2019 APA Early Career Award for Outstanding Contributions to Benefit Children, Youth, and Families and the 2020 Michele Alexander Early Career Award for Scholarship and Service from the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. Alexander enjoys bringing psychology to the public through popular culture. She is a frequent presenter at Denver Pop Culture Con and has previously contributed to *The Joker Psychology: Evil Clowns and the Women Who Love Them* and *Black Panther Psychology: Hidden Kingdoms.*

Margherita Angelucci is an award-winning journalist, her areas of interest are multilingualism, slang, transculturality and Hip-Hop music.

Alec Charles books include *Interactivity: New Media Politics and Society* (2012; 2nd edition 2014), *Out of Time: The Deaths and Resurrections of Doctor Who* (2015), *Political Animals: News of the Natural World* (2016) and *Underwords: Re-Reading the Subtexts of Modernity* (2018).

Coco d'Hont is currently working on her monograph *Extreme States: The Evolution of American Transgressive Fiction 1960–2000*, to be published by Routledge/Taylor & Francis in 2018.

Ryann Donnelly research includes work on radical bodies in music videos, incorporating feminism, queerness and subversive performances of gender.

Glenn Fosbraey has published chapters and journal articles on the critical study of song lyrics and has co-written the book *Song Lyrics: Creative and Critical Approaches*, to be published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2019.

Racheal Harris has contributed chapters for several edited collections on pop-culture and is currently writing a monograph on the relationship between animal tattoos and memento mori.

Wissal Houbabi is an illustrator, spoken word artist, activist and she writes about rap music for the online publication moodmagazine.org.

Ryan J. Mack doctoral research explores the performance and reception of "gender dissonance" in rock music.

Suman Mishra is an Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director in the Department of Mass Communications, Southern Illinois University. Her research focuses on global media, strategic communication, visual communication consumer culture, and race, class and gender identities in the media.

Chris Mounsey worked for several years in theatre before an accident and four months of immobility, in which reading was the only possible occupation, led to an academic career. Degrees in Philosophy, Comparative Literature and English from the University of Warwick followed, and a doctorate on William Blake founded an interest in the literature of the eighteenth century. He now teaches at the University of Winchester and is the author of the monographs *Christopher Smart: Clown of God* (2001), *Being the Body of Christ* (2012) and *Sight correction* (2019). He has also edited *Presenting Gender* (2001), *Queer People* (2007), *The Idea of Disability in the Eighteenth Century* (2014), *Developments in the Histories of Sexualities* (2015), *The Variable Body in History* (2016) and *Bodies of Information* (2020). Forthcoming collections of essays include, *Reconsidering Extinction*, and *Medical Education* in the Routledge Advances in the History of Bioethics series, which he also edits.

Natasha Mulvihill work has focused on prostitution and sex work policy as well as sexual violence and abuse, domestic and 'honour'-based abuse.

Kenneth Wesley Norwood primary academic concern is the role of Black Queer Art and its disruption of historical narratives through film. He has written extensive work in the area of the African Queer Diaspora.

Nicola Puckey research covers gender and sexuality, including representations of these in alternative music. She also works on transgender identity constructions.

Gareth Schott current research interests are focused on personal experience transmedia storytelling, encompassing different forms and articulation of loss.

Heather Stewart is currently involved in a research project that aims to improve clinical experiences for Trans and gender non-conforming patients in medical settings.

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

Introduction

Nicola Puckey

Popular music is by no means an understudied phenomenon. Indeed, there is a significant back catalogue of work in this area covering gender, sexuality, race, culture, musicology, psychology and philosophy, just to name a few. In particular, the area of popular music and gender and sexuality includes many significant and influential works. This focus on popular music is not unwarranted; it percolates into all aspects of our lives, from soundtracks in shows and films, to celebratory events such as parties, weddings and bonding ceremonies, funerals, christenings and naming ceremonies, even as a backing track while writing the introduction to a book on popular music. As an area of academic investigation, it has not reached saturation point, and in our view this point is unlikely to come as popular music is ever-changing and being updated and adapted to fit with the time it is produced within. It is both a mirror to our times and cultures, and a semiotic tool shaping our times and cultures; consequently, it continues to be relevant to all of us—whether we like it or not. The study of popular music must keep up with this ever-evolving and shifting phenomenon.

N. Puckey (✉)
University of Winchester, Winchester, UK
e-mail: nicola.puckey@winchester.ac.uk

This introduction can't offer an extensive consideration and literature review of all significant works in the field of popular music studies—that in itself could be a several volume encyclopaedia. However, it is still important to consider how academic research into popular music is often a reaction to important moments in time, whether these are moments within the music and its associated subculture or wider cultural movements such as feminism. These moments and movements offer a different lens through which we view popular music, but all the while building on the work of previous scholars. Each shift in culture and time allows popular music researchers to reinforce, reconsider or disrupt earlier works on the topic; an important and necessary process to avoid a stagnated approach to the study of something so fluid and dynamic.

The 1970s saw the start of what we would still recognise today as popular music research. Rooted very much in sociology and social sciences, it began considering the interactions between popular music and class, race, culture, gender and sexuality. All of this coming to be rooted in the nexus of subcultures with the seminal work of Stanley Cohen and his 1972 book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* and the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (often referred to as either the Birmingham School or the CCCS). In particular, Hall and Jefferson's (1976) iconic work *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* housed chapters by the likes of Angela McRobbie, a leading voice in gender, sexuality and popular music (McRobbie and Garber 1975; Frith and McRobbie 1978); and Dick Hebdige, whose work on mods, punks, Rastas and Rudies (1976a, b) led to a wider understanding of music subcultures and the subsequent adoption of the concept of 'bricolage' in subcultural identity and performance as presented in 1979's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. The influence of these works continued through the following decades, and saw the expansion of the term 'popular music' to incorporate wider and more varied genres within it.

The 1980s represents a decade in which the study of popular music continued and drew from the highly influential works in the 1970s with research on genres popular within western Europe and North America (i.e. heavy metal, rock, punk, ska) but also beginning to include global perspectives on genres from outside of the affluent West, for example Peter Manuel's 1985 article on Cuban popular music and his 1988 book *Popular Musics of the non-Western World: An Introductory Survey.* This decade also saw Philip Tagg produce influential works on the connection

of musicology to the semiotics of popular music (1982, 1987), complementing the previously largely sociological focus of music research in this area.

The 1990s saw an explosion in academic work on popular music, reactions to social, cultural and national developments in relation to race, gender and sexuality politics and fights for equality, through to global events such as the 'HIV/AIDs crisis' through the 1980s, the release from prison and subsequent election of Nelson Mandela, and not ignoring the technological advances in music production that led to various dance genres of popular music. However, we note that the ethnographic turn in research in the 1990s also paved the way for researchers to consider how they are part of the research field, as consumers of popular music. As a result, and particularly relevant to this edition, is the significant increase in works focusing on women and popular music which started to present a more holistic view of women and popular music. Sheila Whiteley's 1997 edited book *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender* is still considered part of the canon of research into gender and popular music. Research into popular music and gender in the 1990s considered women performing various forms of popular music (e.g. Mavis Bayton's 1997 and 1998 works on rock music; Lucy O'Brien's 1995 book on wider genres of female popular music performance), women's place alongside performers (see Sara Cohen's work, 1991 and 1997), and their role as the 'adoring audience' in Lisa Lewis' edited collection (1992). Susan McClary also took musicology and gave it a feminist edge with her work (1992).

The late 1990s and into the 2000s also saw more overt critique of the 1970s work of the CCCS and their representations of subculture; in particular, Andy Bennett (1999, 2002, 2004) and his edited book with Keith Kahn-Harris (2004) pushed back against the notions of subculture as set out by the CCCS. They considered the concept of neo-tribes (Bennett 1999; Sweetman 2004), the influence of the internet (Bennett 2004), and Sian Lincoln (2004, 2005) updated the idea of the female bedroom as a fan space. They considered liminal spaces and problematised the notion of a single subcultural space. A considerable body of work throughout the first and second decade of the 2000s has continued developing this consideration of liminality and incorporates and embeds a focus on intersectionality and popular music, with more work exploring the multiple ways of engaging with popular music. This work is represented in the edited collection by Susan Fast and Craig Jennex (2019) *Popular Music and the Politics of Hope: Queer Feminist Interventions.*

This brief consideration of some aspects of popular music studies is not intended as a potted history of the field, it would be deeply inadequate if that were the case. Rather, it is intended to demonstrate how academic research into popular music is continuously responding to both what is in the music and its subculture, but also to what is happening beyond the music. It explores the myriad ways that popular music intersects with wider culture and politics. This edition seeks to speak to a moment in time, a time of the rise of the millennials and more recently generation Z, feminism and post-feminism, and the rise of social justice. We are interested in the reaction to the increasing media attention focused on gender and sexuality in music and accusations of virtue-signalling with regard to sexual and gender identity. Controversies such as the song *Blurred Lines* containing lyrics that suggest sexually predatory behaviour have brought these ideas to the fore as never before and have triggered discussions about music and songs reinforcing and reifying gender stereotypes in subversive and hidden ways.

The chapters in this edition have been brought together to consider the multitude of ways that post-2000 popular music impacts on our cultures and experiences. The focus is on misogyny, toxic masculinity, and heteronormativity; we consider how these are maintained and reified, challenged and pushed back. We also seek to expand the idea of popular music as understood by many in the West to include popular music genres from outside western Europe and North America that are often ignored (e.g. Bollywood and Italian hip-hop), and to bring in music genres that are inarguably popular, but also sit under other labels (e.g. rap, metal, punk). We will explore what all of this means below and throughout the book.

Unpacking the Title

If we were to take a person off the street and ask them if they know what pop music is, they would undoubtedly reply with an affirmative, likewise if we asked them the same question with popular music. However, if we were to ask them to give us a definition, we may start to see some internal conflict. What exactly is pop/popular music? These tensions in defining the terms pop music and popular music are problematic. Chart companies such as Billboard have several classifications of music genre presented distinctly from pop music, but these are certainly popular music genres (i.e. rock, R&B/hip-hop, Latin, dance/electronic are all featured in separate charts on the Billboard website (Billboard 2020)). Popular music in academic literature often includes all of these genres, alongside a few others

(i.e. rock, [heavy] metal, punk). In this edition, we take popular music to include all genres of music that are considered popular within their global and local settings, and have allowed the individual authors to use their own definitions of what makes a genre of music popular.

The remaining three key concepts are not so easily separated from each other; there are elements of all of them in each other. Without misogyny there would not be toxic masculinity, and vice versa. Heteronormativity is not necessarily misogynistic, but it often is and is also used by those supporting traditional/toxic masculinity. However, it is still important to unpack these terms and explore the concepts.

Misogyny

Misogyny in popular culture and popular music is a worthy area for investigation; popular culture and popular music are complicit in reinforcing and normalising misogynistic actions and attitudes. It is often conflated with sexism, but the term's etymology offers us some insight; it is taken from the Greek *misein* (to hate) and *gynē* (woman). Sexism and sexist behaviour doesn't necessarily come from a place of hate and can be applied to any gender or sex. Sexism also relates to more practical and institutional practices. Misogyny results in physical, emotional, and symbolic violence—all of them traumatising and damaging at an individual level, but also at a macro level. Therefore, these two terms do intersect, but are not the same. Misogyny is oriented towards women. By 'women' we include all who identify as female, as all women can experience misogyny and sexism, we also want to make it clear that some men are also victims of misogyny; notably, transgender men and non-binary individuals are also often at the receiving end of misogyny when their gender identity is dictated and misrepresented as female by someone else who may then behave in a misogynistic manner. That doesn't mean that the term misogyny needs to be altered, but we can expand a definition to include a consideration that misogyny is damaging and negative feelings towards women, or those that the misogynistic individual/organisation believes to be female.

We also don't reduce misogynistic individuals to only being men. Importantly, as Levy (2005) makes clear, women can be complicit in reinforcing and normalising misogynistic tropes. Contemporary culture, as dealt with in Levy's 'raunch culture', has adopted misogyny to the extent that "[p]opular misogyny […] uses the concept of women as sexually desiring subjects, as sexual agents, as a way to justify practices that end up solidifying misogyny" (Banet-Weiser 2018: 63). This idea is picked up by

Natasha Mulvihill in this book, whose chapter considers how popular music, featuring highly influential female artists, normalises coercive control and presents it as both female empowerment and willing masochism. While Glenn Fosbraey's chapter focuses on the work of Nicki Minaj, exploring how her lyrical content changes when she collaborates with male artists. These changes suggest that Minaj is complicit in normalising misogynistic language and behaviour. Fosbraey finds that she targets other women, and uses misogynistic language traditionally adopted by men.

We mustn't ignore the impact of intersectional identities when considering misogyny, as evidence shows that women with other marginalised aspects to their identity suffer misogyny more detrimentally (Collins and Bilge 2016). BAME women/women of colour, women with disabilities (visible and hidden), transgender women and non-binary individuals, queer, lesbian and bi-sexual women—each layer exacerbates her experiences of misogyny adding up to considerably more than the sum of their parts. Misogyny is not experienced equally. As Manne (2018) argues, a consideration of misogyny must understand that "the targets of this [misogynistic] hostility should […] encompass *particular* women and particular *kinds* of women" (p. 33). Suman Mishra's chapter takes Bollywood's 'item numbers' and considers their nature as erotic spectacles, spectacles which reduce the female characters to sexual objects. Mishra shows that while the female characters may have professional roles (such as doctor), their real purpose in these films is to be a love interest of a male character.

The dominance of men, and misogyny is well-documented in some popular music genres. Rap and hip-hop music have been explored as avenues for misogyny (see: Adams and Fuller 2006; Quinn 2000; Weitzer and Kubrin 2009). However, Margherita Angelucci and Wissal Houbabi's chapter relocates the focus of misogyny in rap and hip-hop music to consider the impact of US rap/hip-hop on the Italian rap/hip-hop scene. They demonstrate the influence so-called pimp language features have as they have been integrated into a culture with its own distinct sexist and fascist history. The metal music industry has also not come out unscathed of research into misogyny and sexism (see: Arnett 1991; Kahn-Harris 2007; Rafalovich 2006; Walser 1993). Coco d'Hont's chapter looks to movements in the overtly male-dominated metal music industry. Here, there is some hope for the future; there has been positive action from above in breaking down misogyny—but d'Hont acknowledges that there is still a long road to run here.

Toxic Masculinity

Toxic masculinity is probably the most contentious of the concepts explored here. It polarises people in extraordinary ways—even amongst those who agree it exists and is damaging to men (du Bois 2019). However, pinning down exactly what toxic masculinity *is* is challenging, especially when we also have terms like 'traditional masculinity' (American Psychological Association 2018) and 'hegemonic masculinity' (Baker 2008) which are sometimes used interchangeably. The APA has begun to pathologise 'traditional masculinity' but avoid using the more hyperbolic term 'toxic'. Hegemonic is also more neutral than toxic and places the blame front and centre on society, and the hegemonic, rather than individual, ideals of masculinity are blamed. It suggests that problematic masculinity is not the fault of the individual but rather the society they exist within. However, toxic masculinity, as a concept, does what neither of these other terms achieves. In its very name it problematises this type of masculinity, there is no hiding from it. It also achieves this without laying the blame, certainly in the name of the concept, at the feet of individuals or even one gender. As du Bois (2019) highlights, "toxic masculinity seems to suggest that it is certain gendered constructs which are a problem rather than men in general. Indeed, this was the initial promise of separating 'masculinity', conceptually, from 'men'" (p. 147). It takes from both concepts of traditional and hegemonic masculinity, but explicitly and unapologetically presents it as negative. All of this still doesn't tell us what toxic masculinity is though, and this is the rub—there is no real hard and fast definition that everyone agrees with. However, *The Good Men Project* provides a solid definition that covers the generally accepted ideas of what toxic masculinity is:

> Toxic masculinity is a narrow and repressive description of manhood, designating manhood as defined by violence, sex, status and aggression. It's the cultural ideal of manliness, where strength is everything while emotions are a weakness; where sex and brutality are yardsticks by which men are measured, while supposedly "feminine" traits—which can range from emotional vulnerability to simply not being hypersexual—are the means by which your status as 'man' can be taken away. (2020)

The connections to misogyny and heteronormativity here are clear to see, with toxic masculinity behaviours reinforcing and being reinforced by both of those other concepts. Importantly, toxic masculinity has also been

shown to cause men psychological and physical harm (Kirby and Kirby 2019; Kupers 2005) and increases the risk of violence against women and others (Banet-Weiser 2018; Haider 2016; Kilmartin and Allison 2007). What does this mean then when we see toxic masculine behaviours in popular culture? Popular culture, including popular music, can be used to both normalise and challenge these notions of masculinity, and by extension normalise or challenge misogyny and heteronormativity. Racheal Harris' chapter considers how an artist as influential as Justine Timberlake, whose (predominantly) young, female fans who have grown up with him, represents not only heteronormative practices in his music and videos but also presents subtle, embedded toxic masculinity. His audience is groomed to expect, accept, and even desire that men will commodify them, and that they should perform their gender and sexuality in a way that is considered attractive and enticing from a toxic masculine perspective.

We stated earlier that new academic research in this field should disrupt earlier works, to question to what extent their findings are still relevant today. Heather Stewart and Ryann Donnelly, in their respective chapters, do this. Stewart takes Immortal Technique as a case study and explores how she challenges 'normative forms of urban masculinity'; through her research Stewart offers a counter point to the majority of academic research which labels rap and hip-hop as misogynistic and emblematic of toxic masculinity. Complementing this, Donnelly's chapter explores the increasing presence of queer, cis-gendered male and gender fluid performers who are challenging traditional/hegemonic/toxic masculinities. Artists such as Frank Ocean, Le1f and Mykki Blanco adopt and reject various aspects of traditional/hegemonic masculinity and therefore subvert the notion of toxic masculinity, and heteronormativity, by demonstrating that masculinity can be fluid and intersectional. This fluidity of what it means to be masculine is also picked up in Ryan J. Mack's chapter, where the link between toxic masculinity and heteronormativity is made clear. This chapter takes the visceral screaming and crying of post-2000 emo music to demonstrate that the perceived loss of emotional control suggested through screaming and crying is not automatically feminine behaviour, and therefore can offer a challenge to traditional/hegemonic masculinity. Mack shows that within rock genres of popular music, these screams and cries are still viewed as masculine, even when performed at times of emotional intensity within the songs. This demonstrates that controlling and suppressing emotions does not have to be a fundamental element of traditional/hegemonic masculinity.

Heteronormativity

As Baker (2008) expresses, heteronormativity

> covers a range of beliefs—that human beings fall into two (different but complementary) categories: male and female, and that sexual relations are normal *only* when they occur between two people of the opposite sex. One of the main heteronormative arguments in society is that because a woman and a man are (normally) required for procreation, heterosexuality is normal. (p. 109)

Heteronormative practices are around us all the time, from the assumption that a cis-gender man referring to another (unnamed and ungendered) person as a 'cute biologist' must be referring to a female (real example). Heteronormativity is inherently connected to misogyny, toxic masculinity, sexism, homophobia and transphobia; there is no getting away from just what an impact this hegemonic view of gender and sexuality has on all of us, whether we are straight, gay, bisexual, asexual, queer, cis-gendered, non-binary, transgender, female, or male. However, popular culture including popular music, is really a hot bed of heteronormativity—to the extent that non-heteronormative practices make headline news, even in an industry that has traditionally been associated with pushing and challenging the boundaries of gender and sexuality performance.

Motschenbacher (2011, forthcoming) calls for more critical heteronormativity research, an argument supported by King (2015) and Milani (2015). Research in this area needs to move away from identifying and researching phenomena that present a binary. In this book, Kenneth Norwood's chapter explores how the heterosexual male gaze is challenged through the use of the term 'boy pussy' alongside male dancers performing and enacting hegemonically and heteronormatively female, sexualised dance performances. Norwood compares how this relates to earlier female rappers entering this hegemonically masculine space in order to carve out their own space within it. Gareth Schott also considers how spaces can be adapted to allow for more consideration of gender. Schott explores how Laura Jane Grace, singer of punk band Against Me!, and her coming out as transgender has offered an opportunity for punk to once again be a space for marginalised voices, for those voices exposing and challenging hegemonic and heteronormative identity practices. Finally, Alec Charles' chapter uses David Bowie's famous play with androgyny, both in his own performance of gender and other characters he incorporates, to anchor a

chapter which considers the multiple ways musicians adopt and express androgyny in their gender and professional performances, and considers where we go after Bowie.

Concluding Thoughts

This edition concludes with an insightful chapter by Chris Mounsey, who grounds the work in this book through his own lived experiences and demonstrates that there is still a need to continuously reinvestigate, reanalyse and reconsider popular music, and with regard to misogyny, toxic masculinity and heteronormativity. This book has taken an interdisciplinary approach to the topic, covering the breadth of popular music and the multitude of ways that gender and sexuality are at play, how they are being reinforced but also challenged. As we expounded at the start of this introduction, academic literature on popular music must speak to the time in which it is conducted, and the researchers in this book have done this. They also look to the future, suggesting where popular music genres may be going in terms of misogyny, toxic masculinity, and heteronormativity.

References

Adams, T.M. and Fuller, D.B. (2006) 'The Words have Changed but the Ideology Remains the Same: Misogynistic Lyrics in Rap Music' *Journal of Black Studies* 36 (6): 938–957.

American Psychological Association (2018) *APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men*. Retrieved from: https://www.apa.org/about/policy/boys-men-practice-guidelines.pdf

Arnett, J. (1991) 'Heavy Metal Music and Reckless Behaviour Among Adolescents' *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 20 (6): 573–592.

Baker, P. (2008) *Sexed Texts: Language, Gender and Sexuality*. London: Equinox.

Banet-Weiser, S. (2018) *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Bayton, M. (1997) 'Women and the Electric Guitar', in Whiteley, S. (ed) *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*. London: Routledge. Pp. 37–49.

Bayton, M. (1998) Frock Rock: Women Performing Popular Music. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bennett, A. (1999) 'Subculture or Neo-Tribes? Rethinking the Relationship between Youth, Style and Musical Taste' *Sociology* 33 (3): 599–617.

———. (2002) 'Researching Youth Culture and Popular Music: A Methodological Critique' *British Journal of Sociology* 53 (3): 451–466.

———. (2004) 'Virtual Subculture? Youth, Identity and the Internet', in Bennett, A. and Kahn-Harris, K. (eds) *After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 162–172.

Bennett, A. and Kahn-Harris, K. (eds) (2004) After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Billboard (2020) *Charts.* Retrieved from: https://www.billboard.com/charts

Cohen, S. (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers.* London: MacGibbon and Kee.

Cohen, S. (1991) *Rock Culture in Liverpool.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

———. (1997) 'Men Making a Scene: Rock Music and the Production of Gender' in Whiteley, S. (ed) *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender.* London: Routledge. Pp. 17–36.

Collins, P.H. and Bilge, S. (2016) *Intersectionality.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

du Bois, S. (2019) 'Editorial: Is Masculinity Toxic?' *NORMA International Journal for Masculinity Studies* 14 (3): 147–151.

Fast, S. and Jennex, C. (eds) (2019) *Popular Music and the Politics of Hope: Queer Feminist Interventions.* London: Routledge.

Frith, S. and McRobbie, A. (1978) 'Rock and Sexuality'. Reprinted in Frith, S. and Goodwin, A. (eds) *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word.* London: Routledge. Pp. 371–389.

Haider, S. (2016) 'The Shooting in Orlando, Terrorism or Toxic Masculinity (or both?)' *Men and Masculinities* 19 (5): 555–565.

Hall, S. and Jefferson, T. (eds) (1976) *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain.* London: Harper Collins.

Hebdige, D. (1976a) 'The Meaning of Mod', in Hall and Jefferson (eds) *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain.* London: Harper Collins. Pp. 87–98.

———. (1976b) 'Reggae, Rastas and Rudies', in Hall and Jefferson (eds) *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain.* London: Harper Collins. Pp. 135–153.

———. (1979) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style.* London: Routledge.

Kahn-Harris, K. (2007) *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge.* Oxford: Berg.

Kilmartin, C. and Allison, J. (2007) *Men's Violence Against Women: Theory, Research, and Activism.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

King, B.W. (2015) 'Reclaiming Masculinity in an Account of Lived Intersex Experience: Language, Desire, and Embodied Knowledge'. In: Milani, T. (ed) *Language and Masculinities: Performances, Intersections, Dislocations.* Abingdon: Routledge. Pp. 220–242.

Kirby, R. and Kirby, M. (2019) 'The Perils of Toxic Masculinity: Four Case Studies' *Trends in Urology & Men's Health*: 18–20.

Kupers, T.A. (2005) 'Toxic Masculinity as a Barrier to Mental Health Treatment in Prison' *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 61 (6): 713–724.

Levy, A. (2005) *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture.* New York: Free Press.

Lewis, L.A. (ed) (1992) *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media.* London: Routledge.

Lincoln, S. (2004) 'Teenage Girls' Bedroom Culture' in Bennett A. and Kahn-Harris, K. (eds) *After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 94–106.

———. (2005) 'Feeling the Noise: Teenagers, Bedrooms and Music' *Leisure Studies* 24 (4): 399–414.

Manne, K. (2018) *Down Girl: The Logic of Masculinity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Manuel, P. (1985) 'The Anticipated Bass in Cuban Popular Music' *Latin American Music Review/Revista de Música* 6 (2): 249–261

———. (1988) *Popular Musics of the non-Western World: An Introductory Survey.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McClary, S. (1992) *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

McRobbie, A. and Garber, J. (1975) 'Girls and Subcultures: An Exploration', in Hall and Jefferson (eds) *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain.* London: Harper Collins. Pp. 209–222.

Milani, T. (2015) 'Theorizing Language and Masculinities'. In: Milani, T. (ed) *Language and Masculinities: Performances, Intersections, Dislocations.* Abingdon: Routledge. Pp. 8–33.

Motschenbacher, H. (2011) 'Taking Queer Linguistics Further: Sociolinguistics and Critical Heteronormativity Research' *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 212: 149–179.

———. (forthcoming) 'Language and Sexual Normativity'. In: Barrett, R. and Hall, K. (eds) *Oxford Handbook of Language and Sexuality.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, in press.

O'Brien, L. (1995) *She-Bop.* New York: Penguin.

Quinn, E. (2000) '"Who's the Mack?" The Performativity and Politics of the Pimp Figure in Gangsta Rap' *Journal of American Studies* 34 (1): 115–136.

Rafalovich, A. (2006) 'Broken and Becoming God-Sized: Contemporary Metal Music and Masculine Individualism' *Symbolic Interaction* 29 (1): 19–32.

Sweetman, P. (2004) 'Tourists and Travellers? 'Subcultures', Reflexive Identities and Neo-Tribal Sociality' in Bennett A. and Kahn-Harris, K. (eds) *After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 79–93.

Tagg, P. (1982) 'Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice' *Popular Music* 2: 37–69.

———. (1987) 'Musicology and the Semiotics of Popular Music' *Semiotica* 66 (1–3): 279–298.

The Good Men Project (2020) *The Difference between Toxic Masculinity and Being a Man*. Retrieved from: https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/the-difference-between-toxic-masculinity-and-being-a-man-dg/

Walser, R. (1993) *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*. Hanover, New England: Wesleyan University Press.

Weitzer, R. and Kubrin, C.E. (2009) 'Misogyny in Rap Music: A Content Analysis of Prevalence and Meanings' *Men and Masculinities* 12 (1): 3–29.

Whiteley, S. (ed) (1997) *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*. London: Routledge.

Chapter 1: Should Real Love Hurt? The Eroticisation of Dominance, Submission and Coercive Control in Contemporary Pop Music

Natasha Mulvihill

INTRODUCTION

A recurrent cultural trope in Western culture is that 'real' love hurts. Great love affairs are tempestuous: they can involve suffocating intensity, emotional and perhaps physical pain. The giddying see-saw of highs and lows can hollow out one or both partners, yet, it is believed, also makes them whole.

In 2015, the UK enacted legislation to criminalise 'coercive control'. Drawing on the foundational work of Stark (2009), the term refers to the use of coercion, isolation, threats or similar behaviours to control an

N. Mulvihill (✉)
University of Bristol, Bristol, UK
e-mail: natasha.mulvihill@bristol.ac.uk

15

intimate partner or family member. There are wider societal shifts too in challenging both sexual harassment and abuse (#MeToo, Everyday Sexism Project) and constraining gender norms such as toxic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Kupers 2005) or indeed toxic femininity.

It is interesting then that dominance, submission and coercive control continue to be eroticised in the lyrics of contemporary pop music. This may on the one hand reflect the steadfastness of patriarchal thinking and practice (MacKinnon 1989; Millett 1970), or it may signal a social and cultural resonance in dominance and in submission, which does not equate simply with abuse or coercion. These varying accounts in part mirror the fault lines between current feminist narratives on the nature of empowerment and agency.

This chapter presents an analysis of five recent Top 20 UK tracks and draws on Ryle's (1949) concept of a 'category mistake' to argue that coercive control and abuse are mis-labelled as 'willing masochism' or 'female empowerment'. I argue that castigating the writers and performers of such music neglects how we are all subject to, and potentially co-creators of, the patriarchal practices which eroticise dominance and submission.

Autobiographical Note

As any parent of pre-teen children will know, there comes a point where you seem to lose control of the car radio. While I had a few good years listening to stations and CDs of my choice, now I have to listen to 'banging tunes' compered by inexhaustibly jocular DJs, pre and post school run. Being a criminologist and researcher in gender and violence (and an English teacher in an earlier life), I cannot help but listen with different ears to the lyrics that we sing along to en route. In particular, I am fascinated by how in this era of resurgent feminist activism and awareness of 'healthy relationships', a significant segment of pop world seems to be ploughing the same furrow about love being possessive, controlling and miserable. The proposal for this book gave me permission to put those thoughts to paper.

Literature Review

Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) is "an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence" (Women's Aid 2019). It is usually committed by a male partner or ex-partner against a female partner and occurs across the lifespan. Research in the United Kingdom and United States has identified high levels of abuse in young people's relationships, where the terms 'dating violence', 'intimate partner violence (IPV)' and inter-personal violence and abuse (IPVA) are sometimes used (Barter et al. 2017). DVA may also occur in same-sex relationships (see Donovan and Hester 2015) and women may perpetrate DVA against their male partners. Nevertheless, gender markedly structures the perpetration of DVA, the experience of victimhood and help-seeking behaviours.

Developed in the 1980s by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP) in Duluth, Minnesota, The Power and Control Wheel documents the most common abusive behaviours or tactics used by perpetrators. These include using emotional abuse ("making her think she's crazy", "calling her names"), isolation ("using jealousy to justify actions", "controlling whom someone talks to") or minimising, denying and blaming ("making light of the abuse", "shifting responsibility for abusive behaviour") (DAIP 2019). These non-violent elements of domestic abuse have received increased attention in recent years. Stark's (2007) theorisation of 'coercive control' has been particularly important in identifying:

> …the micro-regulation that occurs within everyday life to control women; the ways in which gendered roles underpin coercive techniques and act to make coercion appear normal; and the impact of coercive control on women's sense of self and personhood. (Williamson 2010, p. 1413)

Stark (2007) argues that when coercion and control occur together, the result is entrapment. This in part explains why abusive relationships can be difficult to recognise, and difficult to leave.

In 2015, Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 made it possible for the first time for victims of coercive control to seek prosecution. Victims are required to provide evidence of at least two occasions where the perpetrator's behaviour caused considerable distress or harm, or evidence of

a substantial adverse effect on the victim's usual day-to-day activities. While the form and implementation of the law continues to be scrutinised by academics (Robinson et al. 2018; Bishop and Bettinson 2018; Stark and Hester 2019), the political and media spotlight on coercive control has raised public awareness that intimate partner abuse is more complex than the traditional characterisation of a wife with a black eye.

There are a number of micro-level (such as psychological analysis or social learning theory) and macro-level accounts (such as feminist theory or subcultural theory) offered to explain why DVA occurs (Jasinski 2001). Feminist theorists identify DVA as an outcome of unequal gender and power relations (Dobash and Dobash 1979). Violence against women, it is argued, has been the means by which men have maintained social control over women within patriarchal social systems. My interest in this chapter is an idea taken from the work of feminist Catherine MacKinnon (1989), who claims that sexuality is the "dynamic of control" in society (p. 137). Specifically, she links masculinity to the eroticisation of dominance and femininity to the eroticisation of submission (1989, p. 130). As well as maintaining the political and social dominance of males, this 'dynamic' has profound implications for the performance of gender and sexuality:

> [M]ale and female sexualities are socially conditioned: men have been conditioned to find women's subordination sexy and women have been conditioned to find a particular male version of female sexuality as erotic—one in which it is erotic to be sexually submissive. (Mikkola 2017)

My observation while sitting in the car listening to contemporary pop is that there is an eroticisation of dominance and submission in the form of coercive control. Psychological abuse and threats of violence are represented as troubling, but also edgy and sexy. While Kate Millett (1970) critiqued the offensively sexualised imagery of women in novels written by male authors, today the writers and performers of contemporary pop are as likely to be women; some within the lyrics may be exercising the control.

Existing Research on Pop Music Lyrics, Gender and Sex

With advances in digital technology and the continuing expansion of the music industry (Bloomberg 2018), daily exposure to music is significant. Research in 2017 by Nielsen suggests that Americans on average listen to