

Sang Nguyen

**REFERENCES TO WOMEN IN
R&B AND HIP HOP**
Case Studies of *Girl*, *Baby*, *Bitch* and *Shorty*

TIIVISTELMÄ

Sang Nguyen: References to Women in R&B and Hip Hop:
Case Studies of *Girl*, *Baby*, *Bitch* and *Shorty*
Pro gradu- tutkielma
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Tässä pro gradu-tutkielmassa tutkitaan nimitysten *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* ja *shorty* naiseen liittyvää käyttöä ja merkityksiä R&B ja hip hop –musiikkigenreissä 15 vuoden ajalta (2000-2015, poislukien vuosi 2006). Keskeisinä tavoitteina tutkielmassa on selvittää edellä mainittujen nimitysten yleisyys R&B:ssä ja hip hopissa, tutkia nimitysten merkityksiä ja konnotaatioita eri sanakirjoissa ja laulujen konteksteissa ja pohtia näiden nimitysten ja musiikkilajien sosiaalista ulottuvuutta ja yhteisöjen ja laulujen sisältöjen vuorovaikutusta.

Tutkielma on sekä kvantitatiivinen että kvalitatiivinen. Kvantitatiivinen tieto pohjautuu vuosittaisiin Top 20- lauluihin Billboardin R&B and hip hop- listoilta (yhteensä 300 kappaletta). Tiedonkeruu tapahtui AntConc-ohjelman avulla, jossa kerätyistä laulunsanoista sai muodostettua oman korpuksen tarkempaa numeroanalyysia varten. Kvalitatiivinen tieto taas rakentuu monista sanakirjoista ja laulujen sisältöjen laadullisista analyyseista. Kvalitatiivista tietoa täydentävät moninaiset kuvaukset R&B:stä ja hip hopista, näiden musiikkilajien paikka ja vaikutus yhteisöissä, Sapir-Whorf- hypoteesi, sanastotutkimus naiseen liittyvistä sanoista, seksismin lajit ja lyhyt slangin ja afrikkalaisamerikkalaisen englannin luonnehdinta.

Tutkimuksen mukaan kaikki neljä sanaa olivat mukautettavissa sekä positiiviseen että negatiiviseen kontekstiin. Kontekstista riippuen nimitykset sisälsivät joko negatiivisia tai positiivisia konnotaatioita. Siinä missä tämä tulos saattoi olla spekuloitavissa *girl*, *baby* ja *shorty* sanojen yhteydessä, sama tulos sanan *bitch* kohdalla oli yllättävämpää sen yleisesti halventavaksi oletetun luonteen takia. Näiden nimitysten mahdollisista naisista väheksyvistä ja loukkaavista konnotaatioista on myös käyty keskustelua yleisemmällä tasolla. Vaikka esimerkiksi sanan *girl* kohdalla huomattiin, että yleiset keskustelut voivat todellakin tuoda esiin sellaisia piirteitä sanoissa ja niiden käytössä, joita olisi hyvä huomioida, yleisemmin huomattiin, että kyseisten musiikkilajien yhteydessä näitä nimityksiä käytettiin hyvin eri tavalla. Tämä johtunee laulunsanojen slangista, joka saattaa poiketa kielellisesti hyvinkin paljon yleiskielestä ja sen käytöstä. Myös laulujen sisällöllinen analyysi poiki monia uusia merkityksiä ja käyttötarkoituksia nimityksille, joita ei ollut listattuna sanakirjoissa. Slangi on ominaislaadultaan nopeasti muuttuva kielen variantti, joten tämä oli kuitenkin odotettavissa.

R&B:n ja hip hopin ja afrikkalaisamerikkalaisten yhteisöjen välillä on vahva yhteys, sillä nämä yhteisöt toimivat sekä musiikin lähdeyhteisöinä että suurkuluttajina. Kyseisestä seikasta johtuen musiikkilajien välittämä maailmankuva ja mentaliteetti vastaavat näissä yhteisöissä vallitsevia käsityksiä. Sekä musiikkilajeissa että yhteisöissä miehen rooli toimijana on korostetussa asemassa siinä missä naiset vaikuttavat enemmän taustalla. Tämä on havaittavissa laulujen sanoissa, missä miesten laulut saattavat kohdistua maskuliinisuuden suorittamiseen naisten kustannuksilla. Tästä samaisesta syystä varsinkin hip hopia on kritisoitu varsin misogyniseksi genreksi. Nimitysten *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* ja *shorty* tarkastelun perusteella tämä epäsuotuisa maine on kuitenkin liian ahdasmielinen ja yleistävä, sillä monissa tapauksissa sekä kontekstin syvempi tarkastelu että nimitysten käyttö viittasivat positiivisiin konnotaatioihin tai tarkoitukseen.

Musiikki ja sanoitukset voivat vaikuttaa ihmisiin melko huomaamattomasti luoden suurkuluttajille omanlaisen käsityksen normaaliudesta. Tämä voi ilmentyä mm. tietynä toiminnan skeemana (miten tietyissä tilanteissa tulee toimia), tietyn yhteisön hyväksymänä pyrkimyksinä (miesten tulee todistaa maskuliinisuutensa irtosuhteilla) tai eräänlaisena käsityksenä sopivasta minuudesta (naisten tulee olla seksikkäitä). Lievä muoto Sapir-Whorfin hypoteesista toteaa, että vaikka kieli voi vaikuttaa ihmisen ajatuksiin ja havainnointiin, ihmisen mieli ei ole täysin kielellisten rakenteiden kahlitsema ja rajoittama. Asioita voi havainnoida ja ymmärtää, vaikka niille ei olisi omassa kielessä varsinaisia käsitteitä. Näin ollen yksilön ajatuksiin ja maailmankuvaan on luultavasti haastavampaa vaikuttaa hänen ollessa tietoinen ja kriittinen ympäristöstään. Toisaalta ilman tätä harkitsevaa dispositiota, yksilö on todennäköisemmin alttiimpi ympäristön johdatuksille, joissa kieli on isossa roolissa.

Avainsanat: naiset, hip hop, R&B, Sapir-Whorf, *girl*, *baby*, *bitch*, *shorty*

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ABSTRACT

Sang Nguyen: References to Women in R&B and Hip Hop:
Case Studies of *Girl*, *Baby*, *Bitch* and *Shorty*
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In this Master's Thesis I will examine the use of the words *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* and *shorty* in reference to women in the context of R&B and hip hop within the timespan of 15 years (2000-2015, excluding the year 2006). The objective of this study is to calculate the frequencies of the aforementioned appellations in 300 R&B and hip hop songs, examine the usage, meanings and connotations of the words against the background of a variety of dictionaries, diverse literature on the subject and analyses of song lyrics, and lastly to reflect on the social dimensions of R&B and hip hop.

This study is both quantitative and qualitative by nature. For exact numerical data, the concordance program AntConc was employed to create a self-made lyrics corpus containing 300 R&B and hip hop songs from Billboard's Year-End charts (20 top hits from the 15 years included in this thesis). The precise numbers yielded by the corpus are used to calculate frequencies, popularity, distribution and possible trends (i.e. increase/decrease in use over the 15 years) of the appellations. The numerical analyses are complemented with entries from dictionaries and descriptive lyrics analyses to provide more specific information on the nature and use of each appellation scrutinized. The provided background information on the music genres in question, and their place and influence in society, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, how language and vocabulary treat women, the types of sexism, slang and African American Vernacular English complete the examination, providing a comprehensive picture of the context and the language used.

According to the results of this study, all four appellations are adjustable to both positive and negative contexts. The contextual clues affected the connotations of the words directly, which means that none of them can be labeled inherently good or bad. While this result was to be expected in the cases of *girl*, *baby* and *shorty*, the same cannot be said about *bitch* since it is commonly thought to be inherently derogatory and offensive. General discussions tend to focus on the disparaging potential of these appellations, as they are thought to be disrespectful towards women. While this concern was not unfounded with *girl*, the way the terms are used in the context of R&B and hip hop proves that the appellations are actually quite complex and adaptable. Most likely, this is due to the heavy influence of slang, by nature, tending to defy and reinvent itself to stand out from general language.

There is no discussing R&B and hip hop without delving into their connection with the African American communities. Not only are they the biggest consumers of this music, they also act as the source community for the music. For this reason, the worldview and the mentality in the music tend to correspond with those prevalent in the African American communities. One of the most striking shared traits in both R&B and hip hop and the communities is the idea of men with agency at the forefront and women as peripheral figures in the background. In the songs this surfaces as men performing their masculinity at the expense of women. No doubt, this trope has been one of the contributors to the stereotype of hip hop as a misogynistic genre. Yet, the analyses in this study prove that all four appellations were also used in a positive way with favorable connotations when one makes the attempt to see beyond the prejudice.

Music and its lyrics can affect people discreetly by influencing people's concept of normality. This can appear as altered schemas (a pattern of thought or behavior that helps people understand the surrounding world and act in a situationally appropriate way), generally accepted endeavors no matter how illogical they may be (e.g. men have to prove their masculinity by having affairs), or the preconceived notion of what an individual should be like (e.g. women have to be sexy). According to the watered-down Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, even though language influences people's thoughts and perception, the human mind is not solely restricted by linguistic structures. Different concepts and things exist even when our language might not have words for them. Thus, trained awareness and critical thinking should ultimately overwrite the effects of language on thoughts and perception. However, without such a disposition, an individual is most likely quite susceptible to being led in a particular direction.

Keywords: women, hip hop, R&B, Sapir-Whorf, *girl*, *baby*, *bitch*, *shorty*

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

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1. Introduction

For this study, I have chosen to examine references to women in R&B (Rhythm and Blues) and hip hop (and Rap when incorporated into the songs). These music genres are deeply interwoven due to their shared history and original function and role in their own community, despite some differences in their origins and style. Many artists are known to represent both music genres with their versatile and multifaceted talents and song repertoire that includes elements from the two genres. Not all artists are capable of R&B and hip hop alike, of course, but the extent of collaboration between the artists of the two genres is quite considerable. For this reason, a general study of hip hop will touch upon R&B and vice versa.

Commonly, hip hop has been criticized for its use of language that, at its worst, can be laden with expletive and name-calling as well as showcase a generally disrespectful attitude. On top of that, hip hop has been accused of misogyny as well – a claim that seems to keep resurfacing in scholarly studies, general news and magazine articles alike. This claim will be revisited later on in this study to affirm whether or not such an accusation holds true regarding hip hop’s way of referring to women. In any case, the references to women can certainly be very attention-rousing and therefore seem to have attracted a considerable amount of attention from the media, general audience and people with feminist values. My aim in this study is to approach some chosen references to women from a neutral ground with no assumption of misogyny unless the evidence (the songs studied) itself points to that. The words, namely *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* and *shorty* will be discussed in the context of the lyrics to examine their effects, use and connotations against the background provided by a number of dictionaries. The four appellations were chosen in recognition of the diverse ways the music genres in question are known to address women in particular (though in some cases, hip hop is more prolific in its appellations than R&B). Of many other appellations often appearing in hip hop and R&B, *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* and *shorty* were the most frequently used in the material studied. The songs themselves are taken from Billboard’s R&B and hip hop end-of-the-year charts from a timespan of approximately 15 years (from 2000 to 2015, excluding the year 2006, which is wholly missing from the website for some reason). At times, these songs will also be referred to by listing the year and the position in the chart in which they appear (e.g. “2003:14” refers to the song “Crazy in Love” by Beyoncé and Jay Z, which occupied the 14th place in the 2003 chart). This study will also discuss some linguistic and literary theories pertaining to the topic while providing some sociolinguistic perspectives on the matter as well.

The specific research questions in this study are the following:

1. What are the frequencies of the appellations *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* and *shorty* in the material gathered (i.e. the song lyrics from the 15 years)?
2. Are the entries in slang dictionaries still accurate for the words studied or has the natural development of language already brought along a change in the usage of some of the appellations studied?
3. Does comparing the meanings, connotations and uses of the four words in our specific context reveal some aspects worth noting?
4. What kinds of social dimensions does the language in R&B and hip hop have? (e.g. what is its part in encouraging and/or resisting the prevalent gender roles)

To find answers to the questions above, a self-compiled lyrics corpus (of 300 songs) along with a diverse set of background literature, slang dictionaries and general purpose dictionaries will be examined. Besides purely vocabulary-centered analyses, social dimensions and theoretical information concerning the two music genres and the topic of this study (i.e. language and identity, references to women) are also considered. This is done by providing some general background on R&B and hip hop, discussing their possible functions in a community as well the related social issues, introducing the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which suggests an influence of language on thought, going through appellations denoting women in general, briefly discussing the kinds of sexism and having a look at the language variants present in our study (slang and AAVE).

2. R&B and Hip Hop

2.1 General Observations

The American Heritage Dictionary (hereafter AHD) defines rhythm and blues (R&B) as follows:

pl.n. (used with a sing. or pl. verb) Abbr. R & B

A style of music developed by African Americans that combines blues and jazz, characterized by a strong backbeat and repeated variations on syncopated instrumental phrases.

Sound-wise one of R&B's most pronounced features are the impressively soft but strong and controlled vocal performances with comparably smooth background instrumentals. In contrast to hip hop, R&B could be described as a genre with a softer sound and less shock value, as the lyrics tend to be comparatively mild and listener-friendly. The lyrics used in this generally mellow music style are relatively neutral and quasi-objective and the songs tend to be appropriated in a way that is fitting for both internal (in-group) and external (outsider) audiences (Stewart 2005:201). This makes the genre quite pleasing and easy to accept to many if not most people.

In the case of *hip hop*, then, the AHD gives the following definition:

n.

1. A style of music usually based on rap and often including elements of other styles such as funk or rhythm and blues.
2. An urban youth culture originating in the 1980s in New York City, involving such forms of expression as hip-hop music, b-boying, and graffiti art.

What started as a modest musical mix of different beats and styles in the neighborhood of Bronx in the 1970s and 1980s, ended up taking the world by storm and spreading to other communities worldwide (Alridge and Stewart 2005:190). With the passage of time, hip hop has also become more openly intertwined with pop and is now generally described as containing various rhythms, beats, wordplay, electric effects as well as spins added by DJs. Rap is also strongly associated with hip hop, as they often go hand in hand and are interwoven together in songs for different effects. Hip hop by nature is quite multifaceted, making it difficult to define and categorize precisely (ibid.). Compared to R&B, hip hop has had noticeably more freedom in its lyrical and musical expressions. This advantage allows for more shocking content, (infamously) explicit language and sharper beats should the artist wish to make use of them. It is notable that hip hop and its youth culture has been adopted and further developed in other countries, sometimes even to an impressive extent, as hip hop has been molded into something distinctive and more local from its original form (e.g. France

has its own local hip hop scene). The distinction between R&B and hip hop is not always easy to make since the two categories are stylistically and thematically so closely linked. Thus some songs cannot clearly be categorized into one genre only.

2.2 Origins and Development of R&B and Hip Hop

According to Arnold Shaw, the term R&B (rhythm and blues) originally served as an umbrella term for African American music in general. Before the term we all have now come to know and recognize, the very same genre used to be called “race music” since the 1920s. The change of the term came about in 1949, when the trade paper *Billboard* made a conscious choice to replace the discriminatory term “race music” with the current one. The change of the name did not affect the classification criteria of the genre, since both terms were used to describe a genre of music that involved black records made by black artists (Shaw 1980:71).

The political aspect of R&B¹ suffered noticeably due to the beginning commercialization of R&B in the 1970s – an inevitable change brought about by technological advancement in radio formats (from AM to FM) as well as the rising role of the record industry that got to decide what was worth publishing, i.e. brought in more sales (Stewart 2005:210). Old R&B as a post-war music genre had influences from soul, blues, boogie-woogie, some electric instruments and gospel (Shaw 1980:74). In the late 1970s funk and disco elements were added in (Stewart 2005:216) and lastly the 1980s brought forth a re-appropriation of R&B, where it was reformed into its contemporary form with added elements of pop, hip hop and electric instruments and sounds (ibid., 218). In fact, the term R&B as used today most often refers to African American music after the 1980s disco period. *The Dictionary of Unfamiliar Words* presents the following definition of *contemporary R&B*:

The modern, commercially focused, version of R&B that developed from the urban R&B movement of the 1980s and 1990s.

Hip hop, a brother of a sort to R&B, has local and humble roots. Already in the 1970s, the poor but tough Bronx neighborhood² was predominantly inhabited by African Americans,

¹ As reported by Mark Puryear (2016), Sam Cooke’s “A Change Is Gonna Come” (1964) is one of the most notable examples of politicized music. This song was inspired by Cooke’s own experiences of racism and inequality and the song later went on to become the anthem for the Civil Rights Movement. A multitude of other artists followed in his footsteps with more songs covering topics such as the ethnic consciousness, civil rights and anti-war movements. For instance, Curtis Mayfield’s “Keep on Pushing” (1964), James Brown’s “Say It Loud—I’m Black and I’m Proud” (1968), and Marvin Gaye’s album “What’s Going On” (1971) all succeeded in directly addressing the civil rights and social issues.

² For more information on Bronx, especially pertaining to its trying local history, see Chang and Kool Herc (2005: 7-20).

Latinos³ and other immigrants (Forman 2002:39). It was this particular environment and the cultural and multiethnic *mélange* that led to the birth of a new music genre with Latino and Black elements (*ibid.*, 41).

Hip hop has had notable success in establishing and maintaining independent record labels – and thus guarding its freedom of expression – but the pursuit of profits is also catching up to this music genre with some hip hop moguls prioritizing sales over social and political content (Stewart 2005:220). Like R&B, hip hop has also been made a target of commodification⁴ by the culture industry (Chung 2007:34).

2.3 Social Aspects of R&B and Hip Hop – Community Theater vs. Commodification

Shaw specifies that during the time of past segregation and exclusion of the African American minority, R&B was a sociological product of the black experience, where black people were forced to find entertainment in black locations, at home or through a jukebox (1980:74). These distinct spaces form so-called “community theaters”, public or private spaces which provide the audience with a place where they can negotiate with others (Guthrie Ramsay as *qtd.* in Stewart 2005:200). The segregated “community theaters” made it possible for people to generate group-specific interpretations and political messages, which, in turn, helped the minority to form their ethnic identity, in-groups and political awareness (Stewart 2005:197, 200). The lyrics in R&B songs that are more politically inclined⁵ (as opposed to human relationships and love), tend to highlight the negative conditions prevalent in the black community during that certain time period with topics such as social control, racial justice, one’s own effort towards making a change, oppressive conditions and generally bad behavior⁶ witnessed and realized by all regardless of their background and ethnicity (*ibid.*, 201, 208).

The contemporary R&B, which aimed to make the music more accessible to the general audience by making it more versatile and upbeat, was also heavily influenced by a set of economic, political, sociological and technological factors (such as the challenging political atmosphere during Ronald Reagan’s presidency, which saw an increase in racial attacks and harassment, black male unemployment and other worsening social conditions). While the 1970s music had been politically quite muted, the 1980s music came to reflect the

³ E.g. Puerto Rican and Cuban immigrants and their descendants.

⁴ I.e. something that can be bought and sold, making it more important to have the sort of product that is of as high monetary value as possible.

⁵ See Stewart (2005: 204) for a table of political commentary types in R&B.

⁶ E.g. Curtis Mayfield’s song “Don’t Worry” from 1970 points out smoking, using drugs, polluting waters, political lies, flawed laws and prostituting people.

problems African Americans faced during these trying times, although within the limitations of its own genre (Stewart 2005:218).

While hip hop first emerged as a music genre, it later became a youth culture encompassing a style of dressing, language, dialect and a distinct worldview while also acting as a reflection of the awareness and feelings of a large population of youth. Hip hop by nature is difficult to define and categorize precisely, but this also shows how the hip hop community itself resists such simplification and limitation. Instead, many think that hip hop as a whole should be felt, experienced, communicated and appreciated as a dynamic phenomenon (Alridge and Stewart 2005:190).

Hip hop has become a new community theater project which initially surfaced as a form of mass expression that was mainly free from corporate attachments⁷. Inspiration was drawn from the realities of harsh urban life and social circumstances, and the same topics⁸ as in some more politically inclined R&B songs automatically crossed over to hip hop as well (Stewart 2005:219). The advantage of hip hop was being allowed comparatively more freedom in expression, since the genre of hip hop did not suffer from the general censorship of lyrics and content that was enforced on R&B.

Nevertheless, hip hop has not been spared from commodification by the culture industry either. As Stewart notes, there is no guarantee that the lyrical content would actually mirror the realities existing in the community it originates from after commodification has begun. The corporate interests that seek to maximize profits weaken the music's organic connection to the well-being of the community and its sensibilities (Stewart 2005:199). As a result of the somewhat weakened link between the music and its community combined with corporate aims, hip hop is often distributed to the public in ways that tend to reinforce historical stereotypes about African Americans by manifesting sexist, misogynistic and nihilistic lyrics and images⁹ (Alridge and Stewart 2005:193). This is problematic since hip hop is known to reach a wide audience, of whom some are young and impressionable children, who are not yet quite adept at differentiating between reality and illusion (Chung 2007:34).

However, one important factor that has not changed is that hip hop still acts as the voice of a community that cannot be suppressed even if the locations and the communities may differ from one country or state to another. Each community has its own problems and ways

⁷ E.g. advertisers (looking to benefit from the visibility and popularity of the music, music videos and the artists) and record labels like Sony, Universal and Def Jam.

⁸ E.g. police brutality, unemployment, incarceration, political apathy etc.

⁹ According to Deron Boyles, record companies maintain and feed the dominant group's (white people) stereotypes and misconceptions to attract a white demographic. To accomplish this, they tend to look for individuals who conform to these pre-placed expectations of an oversexed, promiscuous and criminal-minded black person (2008: 36).

of expressing them. As hip hop originates from low-economic areas and is their voice, the music often brings out the problems most present in those areas. For that reason the topics may sometimes seem quite raw and uncomfortable to an average listener outside the community (money, sex, drugs, violence, possibly differing definitions of respect etc.). But as the following citation implies, one way of self-expression can mean different things to different listeners:

...Ice Cube, a 19-year-old who writes most of N.W.A's¹⁰ rhymes, says the extreme language isn't just an attempt to shock. It is a reflection of N.W.A's world. ... "We make these records for our people first," he said last week. "Words like "bitch" and "nigger" may be shocking for somebody who is white, but that's not why we use them. It's everyday language of people around my neighborhood. When they refer to a girl, they might say 'bitch' or when referring to a guy, they might say, 'that nigger over there.' It's not used by us the way (bigots) used to use it."

(http://articles.latimes.com/1989-04-02/entertainment/ca-1582_1_black-rap, last accessed in 2019)

The above quotation serves to remind everyone of their right to express their opinions in their own way and how the targeted audience (the in-group) may take things differently than the wider audience (the out-group). As Stewart states, some messages in the songs may be similarly or dissimilarly interpreted by the African American community (as well as other sympathizing minorities that may be facing the same social conditions and circumstances) and the non-black audience. The interpretation itself depends on how extensively culturally specific linguistic features are used and how comparable people's worldviews and social experiences prove to be (2005:199).

2.4 Male and Female Roles in the Community Behind R&B and Hip Hop

The artists that made it to the R&B and hip hop top lists of this study appear to have quite remarkably varying ethnic backgrounds compared to the majority of the population in the United States¹¹. In fact, the traditional link between the music genres and the African American minority seems to be just as alive as ever. Thus, issues of race and its performance are not something we can wholly sidestep when dealing with a topic related to R&B and hip hop, despite our main focus lying on gender issues.

Vershawn Young emphasizes that language is one of the notable markers through which one can perform race, gender, sexuality and class (2007:5). As racial discrimination

¹⁰ N. W. A, a.k.a. "Niggaz Wit Attitude", was an American hip hop group especially known to have an influence on gangsta rap (songs about "gangsta" lifestyle) and hip hop in general.

¹¹ The US Census deems 60.7% of the population white as of 2017. This number rises to 76.6% if Hispanics and Latinos are included in this category. The US Census Bureau seems to struggle with their numbers when Hispanics are taken into count, as can be seen from some of their notes stating that: "Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories".

(<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045217#qf-headnote-a>, last accessed in 2019)

(notoriously based on having even a small amount of black blood in one's veins) became illegal, it was replaced by performance discrimination generally in favour of those performing more whiteness than others (ibid., 51). This favouring encouraged a split between those who did well in performing whiteness and those who would not conform be it by choice or surrounding social pressure (ibid., 4). Language, as is generally known, plays a major part in identifying and dis-identifying oneself with certain communities.

According to Young, in a ghetto community, linguistic choices and social performance atypical of black people place an individual in the position of a *faggot* – a deprecating position strictly juxtaposed to that of a glorified *nigga*, where one has more bragging rights when it comes to the discourse of black racial authenticity. The appeal in *nigga*-gender is directly linked to being able to own up to one's racial identity and masculinity with bracing independence and defiance against the idea of having to pass for a white person to be successful in life (Young 2007:60-61). In practice this independence and defiance translates to a strong preference for Black English (a.k.a. African American Vernacular English or AAVE) as a prideful marker of racial heritage and identity (ibid., 75-77). As for performance, Young adds that a *nigga* presents himself with a pimp walk and authenticity paired off with appropriate street apparel. This showcasing of hypermasculinity may also come at the cost of sacrificing women to secure a gender performance that is sufficiently masculine and appropriately sexually promiscuous and active (ibid., 70). R. Kelly's hit "I'm a Flirt" (2007) showcases the kind of performance he would associate with a *nigga*. The song itself is about upstaging another *nigga* by stealing his girlfriend:

Now swear to tell the truth and the whole truth
When it comes to hoes I be pimping like I supposed to
Rolling like I supposed to, shining like I supposed to
In the club fucking with honeys like I supposed to
I don't understand when a nigga bring his girlfriend to the club
Freaking all on the floor with his girlfriend in the club
And wonder why all these playas trying to holler at her
Just soon as she go to the bathroom, nigga I'm gon' holler at her
A dog on the prowl when I'm walking through the mall
If I could man I would probably fuck with all of y'all
Yeah, yeah homie you say she your girlfriend
But when I step up to her I'mma be like cousin
Believe me man this is how them playas do it in the Chi
And plus we got them playerette flirts in the Chi
Now the moral of this story is cuff your bitch
Cause hey, I'm black, handsome, I sing plus I'm rich and I'm a flirt

(<https://genius.com/R-kelly-im-a-flirt-remix-lyrics>, last accessed in 2019)

Young notes that in contrast to Black English, the use of Standard English in a ghetto community can cost a perceived loss of masculinity to the subject (2007:45-46). The choice to prefer Standard English is associated with compliance, willingness to identify with the white

people and femininity (previous research shows that in urban settings, formal English and standard pronunciation is gender marked for women) leading to the subject having to assume the more feminine *faggot* gender in the eyes of the community regardless of the subject's own sexual preferences and identity (Young 2007:91).

Jody Miller's study of African Americans in a predominantly black neighborhood (St. Louis), found the community to be a strongly masculine space - a trait that is quite distinctively visible in the hip hop songs, be it in the main themes, a few passing lines or the ethos behind the songs (2008: 25-26). Young men in deprived communities often face behavioral expectations that demand emphasizing one's masculinity, gaining the respect of their peers and displaying toughness and independence through readiness to use violence and prove one's heterosexuality via sexual conquests (*ibid.*, 27-28). These requirements are passed on from the surrounding community to the next generations, which adapt them into their own behavior and mentality as something that is normal. This version of normalcy in itself generates and upholds gender inequality, where male dominance is highlighted at the cost of women.¹² This also promotes an environment conducive to rape and sexual violence (*ibid.*, 25-26).

Where risks for young men were predominantly tied to gangs and violence, young women were more likely the target of predatory male behavior (Miller 2008: 74-75). Miller found that violence against women tended to take a carnivalesque flavor, as violence towards women was something people would actively watch and laugh at but most often not prevent nor help with (*ibid.*, 90). The audience (be it men or women) reportedly would often have a victim-blaming attitude instead (*ibid.*, 84).¹³ Sexual harassment, Miller adds, can also be masked as young men "just playing" (*ibid.*, 144). Reportedly, most young men react to women's admonishments for their inappropriate behavior with laughter, rendering the women's concerns illegitimate and belittling the issue at hand (*ibid.*, 161).¹⁴ Miller brings forth that such behavior (sexual joking and harassment) can be deployed as a social distancing technique that reinforces the woman's inferior and vulnerable position while consolidating the masculine dominance (*ibid.*, 147). Young men seemed to take complacency as a sign of encouragement, stating that the women would express their displeasure should

¹² For example being objectified as sexual conquests and being belittled and not taken seriously. Yet, as one of the interviewed young men in Miller's study states, it is not actually about sex itself, but what it would mean to the man in terms of a social reward provided by his peers (i.e. acceptance and status elevation) (2008: 108).

¹³ This victim-blaming attitude would lead the bystanders to believe that the victim of the maltreatment must have earned the abuse somehow, be it directly (e.g. angering someone or doing something wrong) or indirectly (e.g. she chose the person she is with or, especially in regard to rape, she asked for it with the way she is dressed).

¹⁴ The humor is deemed as something that benefits the young man and his friends at the expense of the young women, who generally find the "playful" behavior degrading and disrespectful (Miller 2008: 145-146).

they not wish such behavior. This shifts the responsibility from the misbehaving young men to the young women, as they are expected to show their disapproval and prove their respectability (as opposed to having loose morals) (ibid., 149, 159-160). Another direction the woman's rejection can lead to is one that includes derogatory gender-based name calling and a possible threat of violence or a violent reprisal (ibid., 161, 169).¹⁵

Miller notes that even in the dating scene, a prominent model for male behavior demands proving male-dominance at the cost of young women. Prestige and status among peers can be earned by showcasing a "playa" (i.e. player) attitude, where having multiple sexual conquests without emotional attachment is seen as the "cool act" (Miller 2008: 251-252). This can lead to boys feigning an interest in a girl and promising sweet nothings as a way to get sex. The playa ethos also associates love with softness and weakness – characterizations young men are unwilling to show amidst the masculine posturing. This then encourages the "game" to go on (ibid., 255).¹⁶ This is not to say that most men manage to avoid catching feelings, as Miller reports men to especially value the intimacy and emotional support they could receive in relationships. It is this contradiction of catching feelings, on one hand, and masculine posturing to their peers, on the other, that gives way to the "cool pose" – a mask to conceal attachment and vulnerabilities while emitting the expected toughness and aloofness (ibid., 258). In this general atmosphere of distrust and doubt, young men's jealousy and the resulting controlling behavior towards their girlfriends is not based on actual infidelity as much as knowing that the playa ethos would have other men trying to step into the "game" to boost their own perceived manliness¹⁷ (ibid., 266-267). Miller points out that accusing the young women of infidelity is also an attack to their integrity – an issue men themselves did not have to worry about (ibid., 268-269).

Mirroring the general values and the attitude in the community, Kyra Gaunt reports that the industry rarely takes women seriously as contributing artists. The status quo of leaving women out of the picture only reinforces the characterization of hip hop as a male domain, which can further discourage participation by women in the near future as well unless they can aggressively prove themselves and fight the above-described conditions (Gaunt 2006: 118). Yet, Gaunt suggests that black popular culture is intrinsically connected to the musical ideas often linked to girls' musical games on the neighborhood streets (ibid., 88). Gaunt brings into attention the similarity of the girls' games with hip hop, as the games, too, contain

¹⁵ This alternative reaction explains the possible willingness of some girls to allow some sexual harassment to pass since the retaliation could be quite harsh.

¹⁶ For examples of differing rules and double standards of the "game" for men and women, see Ciara's "Like a Boy" (2006-2007) and Beyoncé's "If I Were a Boy" (2008). Neither song belongs to the top hits that will be studied later in the analyses.

¹⁷ The intro in Usher's "U Don't Have to Call" (2002:2) shows a clear example of this mindset.

elements of speech-play, beats, cutting, mixing and sampling (ibid., 92). Children's music and games are informally influenced by their surrounding everyday life (ibid., 92-93). According to Gaunt, the children's games and popular hit songs share a deep connection, where the games may have elements (e.g. a certain dance move) pertaining to a certain artist or a well-known song, or where the songs can clearly be evidenced to borrow a piece of children's game to incorporate into the song (ibid., 94).¹⁸ While children's games can be performed by both boys and girls alike, Gaunt specifies that it is the girls that are primarily the agents and performers of these games (ibid., 95-96). This brings forth the view of the neighborhood streets as gendered with girls receiving, adopting and producing culture while also maintaining and passing on the cultural product forward from one circle of friends to another as well as to the following generations of children. In this way, girls are the primary influence on musical activity and the produce that is being appropriated by male artists (ibid., 103, 106). Also, Gaunt elaborates women reporting of their appreciation of music due to its jam and beats even if they actively disapprove of the lyrics. This phenomenon, Gaunt explicates, must be due to the women being attracted to their own sphere of musical practices found within hip hop (ibid., 120-121).

2.5 The Gendered Dimensions of R&B and Hip Hop

Gaunt characterizes hip hop as a contradictory space for women. Its tendency to overlook and exclude women utilizes means that range from more minimal devices of figuratively or rhetorically excluding women to the practical exclusion of women from participating in the community-building roles.¹⁹ Also, while hip hop is known to provide a means for social identification with African American group consciousness, promoting group cohesiveness and a sense of belonging, it also rejects all things feminine and womanly (Gaunt 2006: 108, 110). Yet, while hip hop has been commonly described as strongly masculine, women do not just stand by and watch idly from the sidelines. According to Gaunt, the battle of the sexes is more easily discernable in R&B than hip hop. This battle places both sexes against each other in a "call-and-response" tradition²⁰ and lyrical dialogue (ibid., 122-123). The dialogue

¹⁸ One of the examples of such instances provided by Gaunt is the children's game "Down, Down Baby" (also known as "Hot Dog" in some circles). The game is borrowed and somewhat remodeled by the rap artist Nelly from St. Louis in one of his hit songs called "Country Grammar" (2006: 94-95). While Nelly did revise the original lyrics to be more appropriate for the masculine-coded hip hop, Gaunt notes that the original tune, rhythmic delivery and key linguistic features that make the game distinguishable and recognizable are still unmistakably there (2006: 96).

¹⁹ For example taking an active part as producers of music versus being backup dancers, who have no power to influence the production.

²⁰ Aside from R&B, this "call-and-response" tradition can also be found in various other music genres that either have similar roots in the African American minority or that have been influenced by these afore-described

between men and women in R&B, though sometimes caricatured and dramatized, helps to shape a genuine debate over gender roles and domestic responsibilities. In R&B women can freely offer sharp and witty critique on black male inadequacies, showcase their assertiveness and construct themselves as active sexual subjects to counterbalance the prominent tradition of objectifying women in other traditionally black music genres (ibid., 123). Particularly hip hop and rap have been stigmatized for propagating misogyny, employing derogatory appellations for women and stereotypically depicting them as sexual objects (Alridge and Stewart 2005:193, Chung 2007:36).

While the traditional view tends to emphasize black women's unfortunate fate of being oppressed and abused by the men in their community, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting emphasizes the often more invisible ways women fight back. Sharpley-Whiting takes into account the influences of third wave feminism, which has undoubtedly left its mark in hip hop through the few female rappers in the industry with their takes on status consumption, provocative use of words such as *bitch*²¹ and rapping about getting what they want by means of sex.²² Their strong take on what Sharpley-Whiting names "punanny politics" encourage the use of sex as a means to an end by one's own choice and reconstruct the present beauty culture as something enabling rather than oppressive (Sharpley-Whiting 2008: XVII).

According to Sharpley-Whiting, one of the most rapped about tropes in hip hop is the groupie culture, where women are objectified as something similar to wet wipes – convenient and disposable, not to mention the associated assumption on willingness and availability (ibid., 13). These women do not enjoy much regard from the hip hop culture, as they are often painted in a negative or devaluing light with names such as "gold digger", "ho", "trick", "chickenhead", "bitch" and "hoochie". Sharpley-Whiting specifies that these names are not specifically tied to the groupies only and not all artists are particularly discriminatory in naming women (ibid., 87-88, 107-108). Sharpley-Whiting further explicates that while on the surface it might seem as if women were at a helpless disadvantage in the hip hop groupie scene (being used for sex), groupies and rappers are in a symbiotic relationship where both have their roles and merits. Apparently, the presence of groupies safeguards the fragile masculinity based on female acquiescence and accessibility while also offering self-

genres. This tradition has many forms (e.g. affirmation, answers to questions, copying the call etc.) and can be used for multiple purposes. Typically this interaction is planted within one song and can be centered upon a single line/melody or act as a constantly recurring theme. For some examples, see the following: Jennifer Lopez ft. Ja Rule "I'm Real" (2001:19), Busta Rhymes ft. Mariah Carey & Flipmode Squad "I Know What You Want" (2003:13) and Kanye West ft. Jamie Foxx "Gold Digger" (2005:14).

²¹ Similar to *nigger*, which was semantically redefined and made to empower African American men in its newer *nigga* form, the female rappers' use of the word *bitch* has started the process of rendering a formerly offensive term into something empowering (i.e. *bitch* is a woman who speaks up and demands to be heard) (Sharpley-Whiting 2008: XVII-XVIII).

²² E.g. artists such as Lil' Kim, Shawna, JackiO, Remy Ma, Trina and Foxy Brown.

affirmation and ego-inflation (ibid., 88). The rappers are well aware that the women choose and collect famous people to add flavor into the own on-going narrative of titillating adventures and escapades of their own. This inspires the “rules of engagement” with groupies so that the men do not experience “getting played”. Such rules include getting rid of the woman soon, not being allowed to catch feelings, no kissing and not parting with money (ibid., 89). In a sense, these women are active agents in these scenarios instead of playing victims to unfortunate circumstances while also stirring the pot by adopting the “conqueror” attitude normally associated with men in their community (ibid., 106). This view of self-assured women in control of their sexuality fights the “girls gone wild” characterization and basks in sexual liberation and independence associated with third wave feminism²³ (ibid., 109).

Sharpley-Whiting also discusses hip hop’s connection with the stripping (and porn) industry. Strip clubs function as a male-dominated space where music industry people gather to do business (ibid., 118).²⁴ These locales also act as a notable space to test out new music. If the songs are popular at the club, that will be indicative of the coming success they will receive among the larger audience and their marketability (ibid., 119). With the highly sexually charged songs and the rise of third wave feminism (and encouragement to take control of one’s sexuality and enjoy it), stripping has become more acceptable and even empowering as an employment opportunity (ibid., 127). Of course, as was the case with the groupies, despite women choosing to strip for varying reasons and motivations, the negative and devaluing stigma does still persist (ibid., 129). Sexual liberation and the empowering aspects of the trade are juxtaposed to insults and constant rejection by the customers. In effect, the women are also getting paid to take a loss in their social standing (in the form of the “ho stigma”) (ibid., 136). Yet, women prove that this “ho stigma” is very much dependent on the perspective. Instead of being played themselves, women can assume the role of the pimp, a traditionally male role of a player who uses women emotionally and physically, to put men in the “ho” position for being weak, “played on” and tricked out of their money by smooth talk and exploitation of male desire (ibid., 142).

²³ See Carney, Hernandez and Wallace (2016) for more on the connection between black women’s erotic authority and ownership and feminism in hip hop. Roughly crystallized, there is a dichotomy of over-sexualisation, vulgarity and (moral) degradation versus asserting sexual power and challenging more traditional gender and racial norms faced by black women, as “...the history of [B]lack feminine sexual inscription is rooted in racist biases concerning what is perceived as their always already aberrant sexuality and morals” (416). In short, black women face judgement for erotic ownership and authority due to racial stereotypes that portray black people as sexually deviant. For this reason, sexual self-expression is a matter of much debate. Social pressure urges black women to perform respectability in a way that has traditionally closed off the discourse of pleasure and erotic self-expression under the surveillance and policing of their sexuality.

²⁴ E.g. brokering deals, scouting video vixens (girls for music videos) and securing guest stars to appear on records.

3. Language and Thought: Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Language is a common tool used to mentally construe and interpret the surrounding world. Thus, it is clear that language and thought are intimately interconnected in a way which enables them to affect each other. With the general censorship that R&B has faced since the 1980s and the comparatively more shocking lyrics present in the unusually tough-acting, explicit hip hop, the use of language in music has been studied and problematized, attempts having been made to place it under control for fear of possible negative consequences that could befall the listeners²⁵. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis addresses the connection between language and thought and, as such, can then offer more insight into this line of thought.

The connection between language and thought is a matter much discussed and hypothesized by linguists and philosophers alike across many time periods, yet the linguists best known for their contributions to the subject are the two Americans, Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Benjamin Whorf (1897-1941). According to John A. Lucy, it was their reformulation in the twentieth century that resulted in today's understanding of the linguistic relativity hypothesis (Lucy 1997: 293-294). Despite the hypothesis having been named after Sapir and Whorf, Paul Elbourne clarifies that the name *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis* was not something the two had invented themselves. Yet the hypothesis is obviously based on their writings, making the name more than well deserved (Elbourne 2011: 141). Sebastian Löbner elaborates on linguistic relativism (as opposed to universalism) as a view that, in its extremity, believes each language to be radically different with a unique grammar and a uniquely structured lexicon. This, then, represents a unique way of talking about the world and corresponds to a particular way of thinking and worldview (Löbner 2013: 256-257). Paul Kay and Willet Kempton add that although the "doctrine of radical linguistic relativity" led to certain excesses, it still supplied a needed corrective to the ethnocentric evolutionism²⁶ that was predominant before the linguistic relativity hypothesis gained momentum. Kay and Kempton describe the doctrine rather as a counter-reaction to a generally denigrating attitude toward unwritten languages fostered by the prevalent view in anthropology in the nineteenth century (1984: 65).

²⁵ E.g. Deron Boyles mentions the limited, traditionally unflattering, sexual scripts that hip hop propagates to African American women with labels such as *gold digger*, *freak*, *bitch* and *baby mama*. These sexual scripts are interactions between general representations, a person's subjective interpretation and development of selfhood based on these representations. Thus, these sexual scripts directly influence the women's construction of sexuality (2008: 37).

²⁶ Ethnocentric evolutionism placed minority languages in a position where they were not taken as seriously as major languages, which were seen as more prestigious and politically powerful at the time. Instead, the minority languages were often deemed lacking in certain areas (e.g. less systematic and logically rich), suggesting in-built inequality between languages.

The linguistic relativity hypothesis is quite notorious for being difficult to interpret and verify. Lucy also adds that instead of having only one clear-cut theory, there are actually several different linguistic relativity theories that all share common elements to at least some degree. All of them claim that certain attributes of a language affect patterns of thought concerning the perception of reality. To elaborate further, language embodies an interpretation of reality while also being able to influence thought regarding that subjective impression of reality. This is founded on the assumption that the interpretation stems from essential aspects of experience and how this experience is formally arranged and coded in the language. Hence, it is concluded that a particular interpretation is closely tied to a certain language and its verbal code, and there may be many different interpretations of the very same thing depending on a person's language. The interpretations then may guide or support cognitive activity, and thus, the beliefs and behaviour of the person speaking the particular language (Lucy 1997: 294-295).

Löbner provides examples of linguistic relativity through the cases of (1) hierarchical colloquial Japanese and (2) a garment with a name that reflects each society's sensitivity to sexualized body parts. Colloquial Japanese forces siblings to distinguish between the younger and the elder siblings through a tradition where elder siblings are given titles (e.g. *ane/ani* or *onê-/onî-san*) whereas the younger siblings are just called by their names. Unlike in western societies, where siblings can casually address each other with names, the mode of address between Japanese siblings is asymmetric. Japanese society is perceived as extremely hierarchical and Löbner explains that the ranking rules are deeply rooted in social behaviour, language use and structure of the speech community. The domain of sexuality also exemplifies the correspondence between language and culture. Many European languages bear testimony to taboos enforced by the Christian church through their many indirect expressions for words referring to something seen as less than appropriate. For example, the word for a bra in French, *soutiens-gorge*, literally means "throat support", while the Spanish word *sujetador* literally translates as "subjugator". The French choose to refer to a nearby body part that is not taboo whereas the Spanish forego the object that is to be subjugated altogether. English is not very straightforward either, as the English word *bra* is also very indirect, having originated from the French loanword *brassiere* for a short vest or top (Löbner 2013: 257). The actual body part (breasts) is left out of the names completely, as such mentions could be considered highly improper if not wholly vulgar. Both examples bring out the interwovenness of culture and language and how the language can direct the cognizant reality of a person by reinforcing certain conventions and beliefs.

Another much discussed area of research on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis lies in the domain of color. While some empirical tests have been conducted with various approaches, the methods as well as the results have been contested from time to time. One of the best-known series of studies on linguistic relativity is on the lexical codability of colors examined by Lenneberg, Roberts, Berlin, Kay, McDaniel and Lucy, among others. These studies reported that some colors were more codable than others (i.e. there was more agreement in the denotation regarding some colors than others). The difference in the codability of the colours turned out to have a cognitive significance since the more codable colors were more easily identified and remembered in nonlinguistic tasks (Lucy 1997: 299). Kay and Kempton, in their own version of the color experiment, chose two languages with differing color terminology: English with its separate color categories and lexical distinction for the colors ‘green’ and ‘blue’ and the Uto-Aztecan language Tarahumara that has the word *siyoname* for both green and blue. What they then studied, was the nonlinguistic variable that was the subjective distance between the colors, i.e. how similar or different the colors are. Their prediction was that according to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, English speakers should set the two colors further apart than their Tarahumara speaking counterparts (Kay and Kempton 1984: 68). It is important to note that although Tarahumara has a single lexical item for both colors, this does not mean that the two colors are not cognitively present (ibid., 71). English speakers tended to exaggerate the subjective distances between green and blue (i.e. differentiate the two colours more strictly) while the Tarahumara speakers showed no such effect. The Whorfian effect was proven in Kay and Kempton’s experiment and as a result, they proposed that a cognitive strategy of categorizing through names (“name strategy”) was at work, as their first experiment required the subjects to unconsciously deduce which colors were more similar to each other (from sets of three where two were always more or less similar compared to the third one). Kay and Kempton propose that the categorization of which color could be called *green* and which *blue* is very likely the key to the results they achieved (ibid., 72). Kay and Kempton further elaborate that while the “name strategy” seems to operate on an unconscious level, it can still be brought under conscious control (ibid., 73-74).²⁷

The accounts of the strength attributed to the hypothesis vary with some interpretations leaning heavily on the side of strict linguistic determinism, while others would rather accept that although the correlation is there, the relationship between language, thought and identity

²⁷ Their second experiment, where they blocked the possible use of the “name strategy”, showed a lack of the Whorfian effect, thus effectively confirming their deductions from the first experiment. The second experiment had the test subjects agree, with prompting from the experimenter, that all the chips are in effect both *green* and *blue* already before reporting the odd one out. This particular adjustment in the second test would help block the test subjects’ independent categorization of color based on their names (*green* and *blue*) (1984: 73-74).

is not as unyielding and dramatic as to limit individual freedom of thought (Lucy 1997: 294, Kay and Kempton 1984: 75). On a closer look, Elbourne presents three versions of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. The first version, the strong Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, is based on Whorf's writings while disregarding his hedges that would otherwise soften the deterministic view. This version claims that we can only distinguish conceptual differences that are encoded in our language since our language imposes those dissimilarities on our sensory data. According to Elbourne, this version is universally agreed among cognitive scientists to be false. Elbourne explicates that even when people have no specific words for something, the concept is still detectably present and thus somewhat recognizable to all.²⁸ Also, new words to express previously un verbalized meanings are being coined on a regular basis. If thought was fully constrained by our language, people would not be able to formulate new concepts and adapt to them with such ease (Elbourne 2011: 142-143).

The second version, the restricted Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, allows that the basic deterministic assumption in the strong version might be valid only pertaining to certain topics, where language is the only source for such distinctions. Elbourne specifies that this version was also thought for a long time to be false. However, with the British psycholinguist Peter Gordon's visit to a hunter-gatherer tribe in Brazil called the Pirahã, the debate on whether or not this version is accurate has been rekindled. This small monolingual community with their own Pirahã language has no words for numbers – instead they employ few words to express quantities: *hói* (with falling pitch) for numbers one to six, *hói* (with rising pitch) for two to ten, and lastly *baagiso/aibaagi* for three to ten. The goal of Gordon's study was to find out whether the Pirahã were able to clearly differentiate between numbers despite their rather vague system. Predictably, the Pirahã could not reliably enumerate exact quantities when there were more than two or three items. This result is fully traceable to the Pirahã's limited counting system that is encoded in their language alone (ibid., 142, 144-145).

The third and last version, the watered-down Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, gives the speakers more power than the previous two. According to this version, we are able to perceive conceptual distinctions even when they are not encoded in our language, but the language does still have some (although less drastic) influence on our thought, as it affects the way we habitually or stereotypically process some topics (ibid., 142).

Some of the strongest evidence in support of the watered-down version is Lera Boroditsky and her colleagues', Lauren Schmidt and Webb Phillips', work on grammatical

²⁸ E.g. not everyone has names for gathering dust balls under one's bed, aka *dust bunnies/dust monsters*, yet they would recognize what is being referred to. Thus the concept is there even if one has no corresponding word for it in one's own vocabulary.

gender.²⁹ Boroditsky wondered whether the designated grammatical genders of the nouns had any effect on how people thought about the things in question, her main focus lying in nouns with no apparent link to biological gender. Boroditsky and her colleagues studied these nouns in German and Spanish, two languages with grammatical genders but which often assign different genders to equivalent nouns, e.g. “apple” in German is *der Apfel* (masculine) while in Spanish it is called *la manzana* (feminine). In their tests the researchers assembled twenty-four pairs of nouns (all of them signifying inanimate objects) for which German and Spanish had assigned different grammatical genders. Native German and native Spanish people were tested in English by giving the objects personal names that were either female or male names (e.g. Patrick or Patricia for an apple). The subjects were then tested on how well they remembered the personal names. As could have been predicted, the subjects were better at remembering the names for the objects when the grammatical gender was consistent with the name given to the object.³⁰ This test proved an obvious connection between memory and grammatical gender. Elbourne specifies that Boroditsky and her colleagues suggest that children learning a language with grammatical gender might have started focusing on stereotypically masculine and feminine qualities for objects with grammatically masculine and feminine genders, respectively. As a result, the conceptual representations of the words are affected and the objects are envisioned to actually have feminine or masculine properties (Elbourne 2011: 148-150).³¹

Elbourne presents criticism of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as well. In the case of the Pirahã counting system, Elbourne reminds us that the direction of causation in regard to language that is especially central in the strong and restricted hypotheses is hard to prove. How can we be certain that it is the language that imposes on our thoughts instead of our thoughts being constrained by something else (Elbourne 2011: 146)? An alternative explanation of the Pirahã counting system has been developed by the linguists Andrew Nevins, David Pesetsky and Cilene Rodrigues. The three point out that a hunter-gatherer

²⁹ Some languages divide their nouns into masculine and feminine (with some languages also having neuter) and frequently the divisions tend to follow biological gender, e.g. the grammatical feminine gender is applied to things directly linked to biological females (German: *die Frau* with the feminine article *die* for “woman”) and the grammatical male gender to things directly linked to biological males (German: *der Mann* with the masculine article *der* for “man”). These divisions have exceptions and a number of nouns with no clear set biological gender are seemingly randomly divided.

³⁰ E.g. for native German speakers an apple with the name Patrick was easier to remember while for the Spanish subjects Patricia was easier to remember.

³¹ In conformity with their assumption, the same effect was proven in another test by the same scholars, where native Spanish and native German subjects were tasked with writing down the first three adjectives that came to mind in regard to the same 24 objects from the previous experiment. Afterwards, a group of English speakers were asked to rate the adjectives according to whether they portrayed feminine or masculine qualities. The results were as expected; the subjects produced adjectives that were rated more masculine when their own language assigned a masculine grammatical gender to the word in question. Conversely, in cases where the grammatical gender of the word was feminine, the adjectives reflected that as well.

subsistence directly correlates with restricted numeral systems, since these societies have no commerce or complex administration that would require much by way of exact numerals (ibid., 147). Elbourne concludes that while the alternative hypothesis does not rule out the possibility of proving the restricted Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, there is a certain naturalness in the alternative hypothesis that makes it plausible as well. Thus, the restricted version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis should be regarded as not proven (ibid., 148). Actually, as concerns the earlier examples from colloquial Japanese and the area of sexual taboos, Löbner also observes that it is uncertain whether it is actually the language that forces the hierarchical social thinking the Japanese have and the sexual taboos in most of the Western European languages, as they could also be seen as cases where language reflects social structure and cultural standards instead of outright creating them (2013: 258). Elbourne clarifies that although the strong version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has turned out to be unequivocally false and the unrestricted version not altogether sufficiently proven, the watered-down version seems to hold up reasonably well (2011: 154). Boroditsky and her colleagues had quite dramatic results from their experiment with adjectives, yet while their subjects' native language does seem to influence their perception of inanimate objects, this does not mean that their thoughts would be caged inside their language. Native German speakers can surely appreciate a bridge (*die Brücke*) for its masculine seeming qualities as well (strong, sturdy...) despite its grammatical feminine gender (ibid., 155).

All in all, Elbourne concludes that the currently available evidence points to language having a certain influence on its speakers but only with respect to scarcely perceptible cognitive biases (as in the case of grammatical gender) and subtle stereotypes (2011: 155). Kay and Kempton assess their experiments on the codability of color as supporting modest Whorfianism with evidence of a correlation between a differing nonlinguistic cognition and a distinct linguistic structure. However, Kay and Kempton rule out the existence of radical linguistic determinism (at least when it comes to their experiments) as the divergence in English judgements (i.e. the distance between green and blue) could be made to disappear. Thus, we can affect our cognitive processes and are not unconditionally confined by our language (Kay and Kempton 1984: 75). Other studies on linguistic relativity include topics such as the following: the treatment of time with the language pair English and Hopi by Whorf (ibid., 76), spatial orientation in different languages as examined by a research team led by Levinson (Lucy 1997: 300-301), and understanding counterfactual or hypothetical information with Chinese and English by Bloom (ibid., 302-303), to name but a few.

For my study, the watered-down version is the most relevant. Of all the versions discussed, it also has the most validation from other researchers. As this particular study

centrally includes stereotypes and assumptions in (and on) the music genres studied as well, this version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis turned out to be a natural choice. While language can have an impact on a person's worldview, I would argue that this tends to happen especially in cases where the subjects themselves do not question the influence the language can have on them despite continuously employing and being subjected to it themselves. R&B and hip hop can be quite unique in some of their word choices and the social environment depicted in the songs often contains many questionable details that can perpetuate certain representations of community and societal structure. On one hand, this may offer the listeners a perspective to some matters while keeping things verbally interesting and fresh. On the other hand, it may also encourage, maintain and propagate certain problematic attitudes, social scripts³² and worldview through the language employed. These word choices and notions are then heard on repeat through popular music, making the language heard normalized through the frequency with which one encounters it. Yet, as Löbner deliberated, aside from forcing or encouraging a particular mode of thinking, language can also reflect the society it originates from. With this, we reach an impasse where it is close to impossible to determine with any degree of certainty whether it is the language or the source community (if only one of the two) that is the more probable force influencing people and their communities. Lupe Fiasco's "Bad Bitch" from 2012 is a straightforward commentary on how language from one's surroundings can have an effect on people from his point of view. In the first verse, Lupe raps about a boy and his encounter with the word *bitch*. Here, he comes to associate it with something positive, since his mother uses it of herself:

Now imagine there's a shorty, maybe five, maybe four
Riding 'round with his mama listening to the radio
And a song comes on and a not far off from being born
Doesn't know the difference between right and wrong
Now, I ain't trying to make it too complex
But let's just say shorty has an undeveloped context
About the perception of women these days
His mama sings along, and this what she says
"Niggas, I'm a bad **bitch**, and I'm bad, **bitch**!
Somethin' that's far above average."
And maybe other rhyming words like "cabbage" and "savage"
And "baby carriage" and other things that match it
Couple of things are happenin' here
First he's relatin' the word **bitch** with his mama, comma
And because she's relatin' to herself
As most important source of help
And mental health, he may skew respect for dishonor

(<https://genius.com/Lupe-fiasco-bitch-bad-lyrics>, last accessed in 2019)

³² A set of actions or a certain kind of behaviour expected from an individual in a particular situation.

In the second verse, Lupe introduces young girls' perspective on the matter. Here, the children readily learn what a *bitch* would look like from a paid video vixen:

Yeah, now imagine a group of little girls nine through 12
On the Internet watching videos, listening to songs by themselves
It doesn't really matter if they have parental clearance
They understand the Internet better than their parents
Now, being the Internet, the content's probably uncensored
They're young, so they're malleable and probably unmentored
A complicated combination, maybe with no relevance
Until that intelligence meets their favorite singer's preference
"Bad **bitches**, bad **bitches**, bad **bitches**
That's all I want and all I like in life is bad **bitches**, bad **bitches**."
Now, let's say that they less concerned with him
And more with the video girl acquiescent to his whims
Ah, the plot thickens: high heels, long hair, fat booty, slim
Reality check, I'm not trippin'
They don't see a paid actress, just what makes a bad **bitch**

In the third verse, the boy and one of these girls meet, the result being confusion due to their different preconceptions of the word *bitch* and “bad” *bitch*:

'Cause while I was rappin' they was growin' up fast
Nobody stepped in to ever slow 'em up, gasp
Sho' enough, in this little world
The little boy meets one of those little girls
And he thinks she a bad **bitch** and she thinks she a bad **bitch**
He thinks disrespectfully, she thinks of that sexually
She got the wrong idea, he don't wanna fuck her
He think she's bad at being a **bitch** like his mother
Momma never dressed like that
Come out the house, hot mess like that
Ass, titties, dressed like that, all out to impress like that
Just like that, you see the fruit of the confusion
He caught in a reality, she caught in an illusion
"Bad" mean good to her, she really nice and smart
But "bad" mean bad to him, "**bitch**" don't play a part
But "**bitch**" still bad to her if you say it the wrong way
But she think she a **bitch** – what a double entendre!

For the young man, *bitch* has come to mean something positive (in the first verse: “First he's relatin' the word **bitch** with his mama, comma”) being a “bad bitch” is simply the opposite of that. In his eyes, the young woman is not on par with his definition of a *bitch* and thus she is found “bad” or lacking. Conversely, for the young woman, being a “bad bitch” is something to strive for, as she thinks of herself as having successfully emulated the video vixen look that she had interpreted as desirable. This song is but a single occurrence of many that touch upon the same subject of the effects of language on people, yet this alone already shows that the problem is well acknowledged. The concepts of *bitch* and “bad” *bitch* will be later revisited in Section 6.3.

4. Vocabulary in its social context

4.1 Gender-bias in Words for Women

Together with the rise of feminism (especially the second wave of feminism in the late 20th century), consciousness of women's standing in society as well as cultural and social equality, became frequently discussed topics. The traditional western patriarchal society set men above women and language was said to mirror these values. As Susan Sontag (1973: 186) comments, “[l]anguage is the most intense and stubborn fortress of sexist assumptions, which crudely enshrines the ancient bias against women.”

According to Kate Burridge, one of the several aspects where the male dominance is visible is the asymmetry of the appellations denoting men and women. Burridge (2002: 58) notes that there are more derogatory appellations used of women than of men. Among the many linguistic phenomena demonstrating the male population's more favorable position compared to that of women, are the meaning shifts quite a few appellations have undergone. For example, the meaning shift may affect gender neutral words, turning them into female specific words, as in the case of *bitch* and *harlot* (Hughes 2006: 209). In these cases, it seems that the gender specification of the appellation is directly linked to moral deterioration. Words denoting women tend to be negative and sexually or morally derogatory, whilst corresponding words for men carry no such evaluative load. As an example, one can cite three dictionary entries on *bimbo* from *The American Heritage Dictionary* (AHD), *Collins English Dictionary* (CED) and *Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary* (RHD). The AHD defines *bimbo* as a sexually seductive, “intellectually vacuous” person that is typically a woman. Both CED and RHD additionally characterize the person as an attractive but stupid or empty headed young woman, with RHD also adding “[with] loose morals” into play. Both CED and RHD also give a second definition, namely, a foolish, stupid or an inept person. The similar male word *hunk*, however, receives a definition of a different kind from the same sources. All three dictionaries primarily define the word as a large piece, chunk or lump. The second definitions given are for a physically/sexually attractive and well-built man. It is noteworthy that none of these latter definitions comment on the moral nature or intelligence of a *hunk*, an aspect that is certainly integrated into the definitions of *bimbo*. Instead, aside from the attractiveness, the attribute of strength is the only other thing that is strongly implied in the case of *hunk* and that too in a positive note. All in all, while appellations denoting women tend to deteriorate, appellations denoting men have either remained neutral or acquired generally favorable overtones. With appellations such as *mistress*, *dear*, *lamb*, *damsel*, *maiden*, *hussy* and *whore*, to name a few, women do not seem to have many neutral appellations without strong evaluative, sexually derogatory, moral or emotive undertones

(Burridge 2002:61, Hughes 2006: 212-217).³³ Even words that are used euphemistically to avoid using the cruder versions only seem to be bidding their time before they too deteriorate with contamination (Hughes 2006: 223).

Contemptuous appellations for women are sometimes applied to homosexual men for derogatory purposes, *bitch*, *gay* and *faggot* being examples of such instances. While *bitch* went through changes from being a gender-neutral appellation to a derogatory appellation for women especially, it also came to be used of men in its derogatory sense. *Gay* and *faggot*, however, went from gender neutral appellations to derogatory appellations for women, only to come back from that semantic field and become almost exclusively used of male homosexuals (Burridge 2005: 58-59).

Another aspect of language emphasizing men's dominant position in society is the male normativity of language. In addition to the use of the pronoun *he* as a gender-neutral term in contexts where the gender is often unspecified, many words tend to arouse normative male imagery instead of gender neutrality. Words denoting certain male dominated professions, such as *doctor* and *headmaster*, are relevant examples. Options like adding the word *lady* in front of the term for the profession to make the reference explicitly female or adding female suffixes, e.g. *-ess*, at the end of the word, are helpful with gender differentiation. However, it is widely perceived that such references are less highly valued than their counterparts without such additions (Allan and Burridge 2007: 142). The female versions of the words seem to emphasize the exception to the male norm and thus bring out the gender excessively and unnecessarily.

Some appellations (e.g. *girl* when used to refer to women post-childhood) are criticized for the demeaning and diminutive effect that their overly cautious use can cause – the more these appellations are placed in focus and problematized, the more demeaning and diminutive they seem due to possible over-interpretations, excessive carefulness and avoidance in usage. The casual use of these words in passing would not necessarily evoke the possibly less-than-favorable word interpretations without this overtly raised awareness. However, it should be noted that while general feminism, and perhaps even the African American community (where the music genres studied in this thesis largely originated and to which they are still closely connected), condemns these words in serious social contexts, some of the words should still be perfectly applicable as familiar endearments in more informal circumstances. Uses and attitudes to different references vary from one context to another and one community to another and whether a word is perceived as insulting (in general) has much to

³³ According to Hughes, even the term *woman* itself loses its neutrality in cases of criticism, e.g. “This stupid woman...”, “Some woman driver...” (2006:212-217).

do with the context in which it used. It seems that general feminism follows the Middle Class Politeness Criterion, meaning that the default evaluations of the nature of the word or expression are anchored in the concepts of politeness and propriety as conceived by the white middle class in a situation where one would be addressing a casual acquaintance of the opposite sex (Allan and Burrige 2007: 54). There are alternative points of view in different communities at different times and that should always be taken into consideration. In this case, these appellations (e.g. *girl*) may not be as negative in the African American community as they might be in standard American middle-class environment.

The tenacity and resilience of the negative stereotypes of women are still reflected in a variety of hostile phrases and appellations where, at worst, women are reduced to disembodied sexually available objects. However, according to Hughes (2006: 227), feminist writings and awareness groups have not fought for their cause in vain, as they indeed have made some progress in eradicating some of the linguistic prejudices. Despite best efforts, change is difficult and slow, while some of the conventions are deeply rooted in grammar and thus hard to change. However, the work clearly does bear fruit and will most likely bring about more changes in language as time passes.

4.2 Sexist Implications in Context

This study focuses on four female appellations in two music genres often thought of as misogynistic. Being aware of the kinds of sexism possibly present in these genres is important, as it will help to examine the undertones and attitudes these four appellations convey in their given contexts. With the male artists forming the majority of the high-ranking artists in the top R&B and hip hop charts, the results are somewhat distorted by the male over-representation (i.e. the results are more based on the men's songs, which may or may not result in a biased and one-sided picture). Yet, this could also mirror the actual situation in the music business, where it is (reportedly) easier for men to break into the scene (cf. footnote 19). This could be attributed to a persisting role distribution where men are seen as the more active agents while women are viewed as passive and reactive.³⁴

According to Peter Glick and Susan T. Fiske, sexism can be broken into three cross-cultural subtypes: benevolent sexism, ambivalent sexism and hostile sexism (2001:109). Reportedly, benevolent sexism parades as something favorable, romantic and even chivalrous,

³⁴ Interestingly enough, this kind of role distribution is also attested in other linguistic research, such as Pearce's study based on the British National Corpus. As reported by Pearce (2008: 19), *man* occurred more with verbs of action requiring strength, as well as adjectives depicting physical size and potency, whilst *woman* was strongly linked to words related to emotional sensitivity and emotional reactions. This directly translates to those who do and those who react with gender being the defining factor.

as women are promised protection and affection, provided that they willingly accept the conventional gender roles.³⁵ In this subtype of sexism, women are to be adored, protected, and supported (/provided for). These weaker, pure creatures would then give support and love in return (ibid.). While this stance is viewed as patronizing by others, some would rather think of it as cherishing women. Another study by Glick together with Mariah Wilkerson and Marshall Cuffe brings into attention that the preference to uphold and encourage the conventional gender roles and stereotypes in benevolent sexism also enforces gender dichotomization³⁶ and interdependence between the sexes. In practice, this means that men and women are viewed as different but complementary to each other, as traditionally they are thought to need one another to wholly fulfill their gender roles. (2015:111). Thus, love can be thought to transform a person for the better, improve one's quality of life or even complete the person after having found the "missing half". Glick and Fiske add that although benevolent sexism is quite widely accepted, it is actually complementary to hostile sexism for it plays an essential part in subduing women's resistance to gender inequality (2001:109). It offers assurance that men's faculties would be employed to women's advantage and thus encourages dependability and acquiescence (ibid., 111).

In hostile sexism women are characterized as threatening and non-cooperative (e.g. rejecting the conventional gender roles). They seek to gain control over men either through sexuality or feminist ideology (2001:109).³⁷ At the heart of hostile sexism, Matthew Hammond and Nickola Overall add, are threatening and aggressive attitudes towards women who could potentially challenge men's power (be it on a general level or in their own private relationships) (2013:1585). According to Hammond and Overall, men who promote hostile sexism have a propensity to feel relatively more manipulated and dissatisfied in their intimate (heterosexual) relationships and exhibit hostility towards their partner for fear of sexual manipulation and the woman exploiting the intimate relationship to undermine the man's power. In general, these men also found violent behavior and verbal aggression more justifiable (ibid., 1586). Overall, men with hostile sexism tend to see their relationship with women as a fight over dominance and control, where their power and personal autonomy must be aggressively protected (ibid., 1587). In another study, Lucy Travaglia, Nickola Overall and Chris Sibley add that for these men, being able to attract physically attractive women reinforces the men's status and power as it proves their capability to acquire highly valued partners (i.e. a trophy wife as a status marker). Thus, the women's looks and status are

³⁵ I.e. domestic roles like a home-maker, mother etc.

³⁶ I.e. women should be distinctly feminine and men, correspondingly, unmistakably masculine.

³⁷ The power struggle can be very visible from the men's point of view, e.g. teasing men sexually and then denying their advances (2001:112).

assigned a greater importance (2009:600). Ultimately, this thinking could also lead to sexual objectification with no regard to the actual voice, thoughts, plans and desires (i.e. the agency and person) of the woman in question, as her “worth” to the man lies elsewhere.

Glick and Fiske also note that men are significantly more likely to practice hostile sexism, whereas women mostly reject this particular subtype (2001:114-115). Even though benevolent and hostile sexism can be thought to be the opposing poles of attitudes towards women, they both do their part to uphold patriarchy. In short, women who “know their places” are rewarded with benevolent sexism, while open antagonism is reserved for those who deviate from traditional roles (ibid., 110). Glick, Wilkerson and Cuffe add that despite the emphasis placed on women as objects of hostile sexism, this form actually promotes punitive attitudes towards gender nonconformity in men as well (e.g. feminine men, feminist men, stay-at-home dads, etc.) (2015:115).

Glick and Fiske place ambivalent sexism in-between the benevolent and hostile sexism. This can manifest itself as conflicting feelings and beliefs towards individual women³⁸ (2001:113). This, Glick and Fiske explain, is made possible by women’s capability to display different subtypes (e.g. “housewife”, “career woman”, “babe”, “bitch” etc.). The benevolent and hostile sexism, then, compliment each other by being applied to different subtypes: a “housewife” can elicit benevolent sexism, a “career woman” hostile sexism, in one’s mind. Similarly, a woman can transform from a “babe” (benevolent sexism) to a “bitch” (hostile sexism) as the man’s opinion of her changes (ibid.). Appellations can be crucial in creating, shaping and maintaining the norms and the expectations towards others for they too, place people in certain categories. This makes language an integral tool for oppression and/or liberation that influences people’s worldview, biases and values. Glick and Fiske have found that as hostile sexism declines, women can reject benevolent sexism more freely without a possible hostile backlash (ibid., 115).

4.3 Slang

A careful reading of the song lyrics studied for this research shows that there are strong links between slang and R&B and hip hop. That stands to reason, as the use of slang potentially brings the music closer to its target audience while also keeping its ties to the place and community of its origin alive. In fact, most appellations at the center of this study appear to have been used as slang words, as the definitions provided by slang dictionaries yield insights

³⁸ E.g. loving and hating someone at the same time.

more fitting to the context (the song lyrics) in which the appellations appear (compared to the definitions provided by general-purpose dictionaries).

According to Kate Burridge, many regard slang as “bad language” due to its highly informal and colloquial nature and its connection to swearing and offensive language (Burridge 2002: 113). Compared to Standard English, which is generally considered ‘pure’ and ‘natural’, slang is often seen as something ‘corrupt’ and ‘false’. However, these two language varieties are difficult to compare to each other, as they have a different basis. While Standard English is artificially construed and cultivated, has institutional ‘gatekeepers’ (dictionaries, grammar books, handbooks) and relies heavily on written language, slang is more informal and colloquial due to its ties to spoken language (Burridge 2005: 8-9). Without written records and rules, slang is under constant change and is highly prolific and inventive – especially in vocabulary.³⁹ Slang is noted, among other things, for its frequent use of euphemisms, metaphors, reduced words, dropping the g (at the end of words), and creating new words (Burridge 2002: 155). All of these features can easily be found in the hip hop and R&B lyrics in general. Since slang is used informally and is primarily situated in the spoken context, the inventive use of words can really flourish. Slang can be used to startle, amuse or shock. To achieve this, the words have to be able to maintain their novelty. Should the novelty factor wear out, the words would risk being dropped out of use or losing their slang labeling, the words becoming neutral and usual and thus losing their effect. For the function of startling, amusing or shocking people, the language may sometimes seem quite offensive or be borderline dysphemistic. In some contexts, this offensive/dysphemistic use may well have been intentional. However, listeners have differing levels of understanding slang, which may complicate matters. For instance, people outside a certain group may not understand the seemingly offensive words in the same way as the in-group (Allan and Burridge 2007: 54). As a result, what seems jocular and affectionate to some may sound rude and improper to others. Kate Burridge emphasizes that offensiveness is subjective and context dependent. No words are inherently bad; the determining factor of whether or not something is offensive lies in the context and use (Burridge 2005: 53-54).

Another interesting feature of slang is its association to toughness and strength. It seems that the use of slang can provide covert prestige and street credibility. According to attitude studies, this ‘lower’ speech style is associated with qualities such as solidarity, integrity, social attractiveness and friendliness (Burridge 2002: 93). Integrity, solidarity and toughness have always been the basis of street credibility and when it comes to solidarity, slang is

³⁹ According to Burridge, Standard English is relatively resistant to change due to it being anchored in written language, whereas there seems to be nothing that could stop slang from constantly changing (2002: 155).

inherent to certain groups of people and can act as a separating or uniting factor in encounters by hinting at people's background and identity. People of the same in-group can share similar values, aspirations and accomplishments, and may have been brought together by history or placed in a group of their own by other people (Burrige 2002: 92). In this way, slang can act as an in-group recognizing device that further promotes solidarity and perhaps even some sort of secrecy in in-group matters.

4.4 AAVE

Besides slang, signs of African American Vernacular English (AAVE)⁴⁰ are also present in the material studied. This is hardly surprising, when the artist list for the lyrics is perused. The role of white Americans is reduced to a minority on the lists. R&B and hip hop hits are being churned out by people mainly belonging to American minorities. African Americans, in particular, seem to be dominantly featured in this hall of fame. As a vernacular, the multifaceted AAVE contains many distinct features on all levels of language. While many of these features can be observed in the lyrics⁴¹, this study will mostly focus on the lexical attributes in this study.

To some, the thought of AAVE brings forth an impression gleaned from the slang words used in rap and hip hop, such as *whip* for 'a car'⁴² and *bling* for 'glittery, expensive accessories'⁴³ (Rickford 2003). Yet, while AAVE undoubtedly does have its own prolific slang, Rickford notes that there are also words only known in the African American community – “black” words that, unlike slang, have been around for ages and are used by all those belonging to the community no matter what the region or age group, e.g. *kitchen* (which is used for 'the especially kinky hair at the nape of one's neck') and *ashy* (referring to 'the whitish appearance of black skin when dry, e.g. in winter') (ibid.). It is worth noting that while AAVE grammar and phonetic conventions have been under some scrutiny, the specific

⁴⁰ John R. Rickford (2003) introduces many names for African American Vernacular English, including *Ebonics* (a name that simply means 'black speech' coined by a team of black scholars in 1973 to counter the unfavorable connotations in the previously used term *Nonstandard Negro English*), *Black English*, *African American English* (AAE) and *African American Vernacular English* (AAVE). Rickford (ibid.) specifies that the use of the term AAVE emphasizes a language variant that does not include the black minority's use of Standard English, i.e. the elements of Standard English are discounted.

⁴¹ E.g. omission of the present tense verbs *is* and *are* (visible in the song “Soldier” by Destiny's Child Featuring T.I. & Lil Wayne (2005:10)), *be* as a habitual marker (“Break Up” by Mario Featuring Sean Garrett & Gucci Mane (2009:3)), *done* used to express completed actions (“Teachme”, Musiq Soulchild (2007:5)), the stressed *bin* as a marker of remote aspect (“Don't Tell Em”, Jeremih featuring YG (2014:11)), *finna* as a marker of immediate future (“Cashin' Out”, Ca\$h Out (2012:16)) and the omission of *b*, *d*, and *g* at the beginning of auxiliary verbs (“My Last”, Big Sean featuring Chris Brown (2011:7) has many examples of the use of *ama* instead of “I'm going to”), to mention but a few grammatical features.

⁴² “Independent”, Webbie Featuring Lil' Phat & Lil' Boosie (2008:19).

⁴³ “Superwoman Pt. II”, Lil' Mo featuring Fabolous (2001:20).

words existing in their particular meanings in the African American community alone are difficult to spot and interpret since not much is known about them.⁴⁴

Opinions on AAVE vary depending on who is being asked. Some black writers praise the variant and choose to use it in their literary works (e.g. Paul Laurence Dunbar, Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison). Black preachers, comedians, singers and rappers make use of it to add a dramatic and realistic effect in their preachings and works (Rickford, 2003). Yet, some may even connect it to the legacy of slavery and there are also those who deprecate it or deny its existence. Generally, however, both black and white people tend to consider it a sign of limited education or *savoir-faire* with possible limitations on social mobility as a consequence (ibid.).

While the lyrics gathered for this study exhibit numerous features particular to AAVE, the more exhaustive word analyses in Section 6 will only briefly focus on the features actually present in the songs chosen for the case studies. Instead of delving into the details concerning AAVE too deeply, the main goal is to understand the larger picture of the context (the song).

⁴⁴ They may also (unintentionally) mask themselves as something more familiar to the mainstream audience, as is the case with the aforementioned *kitchen*, which has both a general meaning and another meaning among the African American community.

5. Methods Employed and Material Studied

As mentioned earlier, R&B and hip hop are often known to employ quite an infamous repertoire of appellations for women, such as *bitch* and *hoe*. Other similarly interesting (though perhaps not equally derogatory) appellations that can often be heard in the lyrics are words such as *girl*, *baby*, *shorty*, *lady*, *chick*, *babe* and *woman*. These appellations are not exclusive to R&B and hip hop, as other music genres employ some of them in their songs as well.⁴⁵ However, as it is, other music genres have not been blamed of dire misogyny similar to the allegations against hip hop and rap in general. For this reason, these appellations coupled with the genres R&B and hip hop make an interesting case to study. In this study, we will focus on the words *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* and *shorty*. Of the nine previously mentioned appellations, these four had the most occurrences, and thus, were used the most.

The occurrences of the appellations *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* and *shorty* will be counted from each year to gather numerical data and detect possible trends in the numbers of the words in the time span of approximately 15 years (i.e. to see if an appellation has become more popular in use). The occurrences will be counted and documented via AntConc, a freeware corpus analysis toolkit.⁴⁶ The material from which the appellations are gathered consists of the top hits ranked from 1 to 20 in the Billboard's Year-End charts on R&B and hip hop from the years 2000-2015, with the exclusion of the year 2006. In total, this means 300 songs from a timespan of 15 years with a one-year gap (2000-2005 and 2007-2015). The aim of this step is to count and compare how many songs have used which appellations each year at least once (recurring references in the same songs will not be counted, as it does not matter in this counting method), and possibly see if the sheer number of occurrences can reveal a trend worth noting. The numbers for each word also determine the importance of each appellation in comparison to others. The more frequently certain lexical items appear, the more likely it is that the general audience encounters the item, making it seem more quotidian in music and consequently in the vocabulary of the audience (be it passive or active vocabulary).

The next process is to look up the lexical items in a number of dictionaries for a comparison of their definitions. A further analysis will then be conducted with the help of the following slang dictionaries: *Cassell's Dictionary of Slang* (2nd edition, 2005), *The Dictionary of American Slang* (3rd edition, 1995) and the *Dictionary of Contemporary Slang* (4th edition, 2014). For an additional feminist point of view, *Amazons, Bluestockings and Crones: A*

⁴⁵ E.g. Jessica Simpson's pop song (synth-pop to be exact) "Public Affair" from 2006 makes use of the appellations *girl* and *baby*, just as Guns N' Roses' Rock song "Back Off Bitch" features the words *baby* and *bitch*.

⁴⁶ This tool allowed me to freely choose and compile the material for my study without having to choose and rely on precollected material of someone else's choosing.

Feminist Dictionary (1992) will also be employed. The reason for consulting slang dictionaries instead of other dictionaries is that the words examined (referring to women) are not necessarily listed in the same senses in them as in general-purpose dictionaries. For example *baby* is a relevant case: in general-purpose dictionaries, one of its most prominent meanings is ‘an infant’. In slang dictionaries, *baby* has many senses listed, including references to men, women and objects (or substances) rather than an infant. Also, some of the words are not even listed in general-purpose dictionaries, as they are either censored or ignored as non-central items, e.g. *shorty*. Thus, slang dictionaries were a natural choice, and consulting several of them in contrast to just one is bound to bring forth more information on the terms studied. With some controversial words denoting women as the core of this study, a feminist perspective is not to be ignored, either. In the very few places where definitions from general-purpose dictionaries are useful, this thesis will make use of several online dictionaries via The Free Dictionary website. The use of the many dictionaries again allows for comparisons between the definitions provided by each dictionary. These definitions, then, provide a basis for the word analyses that will employ the song lyrics studied as contextual evidence that may or may not support the definitions assigned to each word in the dictionaries. Specifically word meanings, connotations and the uses of the words in the given context will be placed under scrutiny. For each lexical item (*girl*, *baby*, *bitch* and *shorty*), the material for the contextual analysis comprises a sample of randomly chosen songs that feature the particular word – one per each year it occurred – from the combined 15 years’ time (in practice, this means that there will be a maximum of 15 randomly chosen songs for a lexical item where this is possible, as some appellations did not occur every year). Ultimately, the word analyses will also take the social aspects of the music genres and the theoretical background provided in the theory section of this study into consideration to carry out a more comprehensive analysis of each lexical item in its contexts. More information about the methods employed is given at the beginning of Section 6.

5.1 Billboard

One of the main sources for the study was Billboard’s Year-End charts on R&B and hip hop. The lists were the basis for the selection of the songs to be studied. Billboard’s charts are one of the most consulted sources used to track a certain song’s, artist’s or album’s ranking and overall popularity. These charts are often utilized in different music programs, for example as reference material to uncover a song’s rise and fall. Despite its very different start as a general advertisement publication back in 1894, Billboard gradually started to cover more and more

music related topics before choosing to focus solely on music and the increasingly popular music charts. With this new direction, Billboard managed to carve out a niche for itself as a reputable music magazine and information source on the topic of music that it is still known as today.⁴⁷ Billboard is considered to publish the most trustworthy music charts and reports on the latest music, music videos, digital and mobile entertainment issues and trends, and music entertainment in general. Billboard also has its (almost) annual Billboard's Music Awards Show, in which artists are awarded based on their success on Billboard's Year-End charts. These year-end charts are based on radio airplay audience impressions⁴⁸, sales data and online streaming activity data as tracked and compiled by Nielsen Music. The extract below is taken from Billboard's own website:

The world's premier music publication, Billboard has served the entertainment business since 1894. Beginning as a weekly for the billposting and advertising business, Billboard and its popular music charts have evolved into the primary source of information on trends and innovation in music, serving music fans, artists, top executives, tour promoters, publishers, radio programmers, lawyers, retailers, digital entrepreneurs and many others.

(<https://www.billboard.com/articles/events/467859/about-us>, last accessed in 2019)

All in all, due to Billboard's objective nature, general applicability and trusted position in the media, Billboard charts were deemed as a suitable source for this study.

5.2 Lyrics as material

As it is, reading the song lyrics posted on the Internet alone would have proved inadequate for this study due to their frequent inaccuracy. Lyrics on the Internet should be considered subjective interpretations of the songs, as the websites' databases are mostly compiled from individual posts with rarely anything to authenticate them. For this reason, in order to obtain correct information on the occurrences of the appellations studied here, each song had to be listened through carefully while simultaneously looking at the lyrics. Even a clear and simple song could have many versions of transcriptions on the Internet. The deviation in the lyrics was anything from missing parts, misheard words, changed order of the verses, to stylistic differences (e.g. *my homies cruising with me* vs. *mah homies cruisin' wimme*). Most of the lyrics on the Internet also opted to leave out the words in the background singing and the ad lib parts⁴⁹. All this was taken into account in my analyses and special attention was paid to the correctness of the lyrics (where possible), verses and background singing to ascertain that the

⁴⁷ For more information on this, see: <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/6304263/billboard-magazine-120-anniversary> (last accessed in 2019).

⁴⁸ I.e. the number of people who are listening to a radio station at any given moment when the song is played.

⁴⁹ (Somewhat) spontaneous improvised singing that can sometimes be heard in the background.

occurrences in my corpus searches would be as correct as possible. However, if the background singing was deemed to be unnecessary (e.g. the many *ooohs* and *aaahs*)⁵⁰ or too complex (e.g. overlapping long verses on repeat in the background to accompany the main vocal)⁵¹ to be added to the lyrics found on the Internet, I chose to leave it out unless it made use of the appellations central to this study.

⁵⁰ For some examples, see Usher's "Burn" (2004) and Ne-Yo's "Mad" (2009).

⁵¹ For example, the end part of "Peaches and Cream" by 112 (2001).

6. Word analyses

The word analyses are ordered according to the occurrence of each appellation in the songs, starting from the words that occur in the studied songs the most and finishing with those used least often. While the total number of occurrences is very relevant information, the number of the songs where the appellations occur showcases the actual spread of the appellations as used by different artists in different songs.⁵² Taking this into account reflects the actual popularity of each appellation more accurately. In addition to providing the total number of occurrences, the mean for how many songs out of the 20 from each year feature the appellation will be calculated to provide more insight into its usage (the number of songs featuring the appellation divided by 15). The average repetition of each appellation in the songs where it occurs will also be counted (occurrences divided by the number of songs). This is done to see if the particular appellation is something the songs tend to focalize (with constant repetition) or if it is something that has rather been mentioned in passing. Each word analysis will also include a table with exact numerical data displaying the number of songs where a certain appellation is used each year and the occurrence of the said appellation (taking every use of the appellation into account). Additionally, there will also be bar graphs with percentages converted from the exact numbers in the tables (for the number of the occurrences and songs) accompanied by trend lines. The program Excel coupled with StatPlus was used to perform linear regression analyses to calculate the *p*-value, which determines the statistical significance and validity of the changes as suggested by the trend lines⁵³. Alongside the numerical data, slang dictionaries will also be consulted for relevant entries. A more specific contextual analysis will then be done based on one random song with the studied appellation chosen from each year it is attested⁵⁴. This contextual analysis will reveal the different uses of the appellation, which will be introduced starting from the ones appearing the most frequently. These qualitative analyses will also delve into nuances, implications and social factors, such as evolving meanings and sexism, more closely.

⁵² As opposed to having few artists with some select songs that repeat the same appellation over and over again, boosting the number of occurrences of the particular appellation in a situation where other artists barely use it. In these cases, the distribution is in fact quite limited.

⁵³ The calculated *p*-value is used to conclude whether or not the *null hypothesis* (i.e. no effect/difference) can be discarded giving way to the *alternative hypothesis* (i.e. there is a change). The *p*-values can be interpreted as follows:

1. $p < 0,001$: the result is statistically *very significant*, reject the *null hypothesis*.
2. $0,001 \leq p < 0,01$: the result is *statistically significant*, reject the *null hypothesis*.
3. $0,01 \leq p < 0,05$: the result is *almost significant*, reject the *null hypothesis*.
4. $0,05 \leq p < 0,10$: the result is *marginal*, weak evidence against the *null hypothesis* – cannot be straight out rejected, readers can draw their own conclusions.
5. $p \geq 0,10$: insufficient evidence to reject the *null hypothesis*.

⁵⁴ E.g. out of the 15 years included in this study, *chick* was present in only 13. Thus, the material for its contextual analysis comprises 13 randomly chosen songs – one from each year – where it occurs.

6.1 Girl

The numbers yielded by AntConc place *girl* as the most common female appellation. Out of the total of 300 songs, the appellation occurred in 198 songs with a total of 1199 occurrences. Table 1 lists the uses of *girl* from each year.

Girl*

Year	Occurrences	Songs
2000	108	16
2001	67	13
2002	113	16
2003	105	14
2004	51	13
2005	59	12
2007	80	12
2008	59	11
2009	90	15
2010	120	12
2011	85	14
2012	103	15
2013	66	13
2014	47	10
2015	46	12
total:	1199	198

Table 1: *Girl*

During the years examined, the number of the songs in which the word occurs seems to be subject to frequent changes both upwards (max. 16 songs out of 20 in 2000 and 2002) and downwards (min. 10 songs in 2014). The number of the occurrences also shows some major fluctuations ranging from 46 occurrences (in 2015) to 120 (in 2010).

Out of the 20 studied R&B and hip hop top hits per each year, the mathematical mean of songs in which *girl* can be found is 13.2, making the appellation exceedingly popular and widely distributed. On average, the songs that did feature *girl* would repeat it ≈ 6.056 times per song. To illustrate possible trends in growth or decline, the normalized Figure 1 gives out the numerical information in Table 1 in percentages accompanied by trendlines.

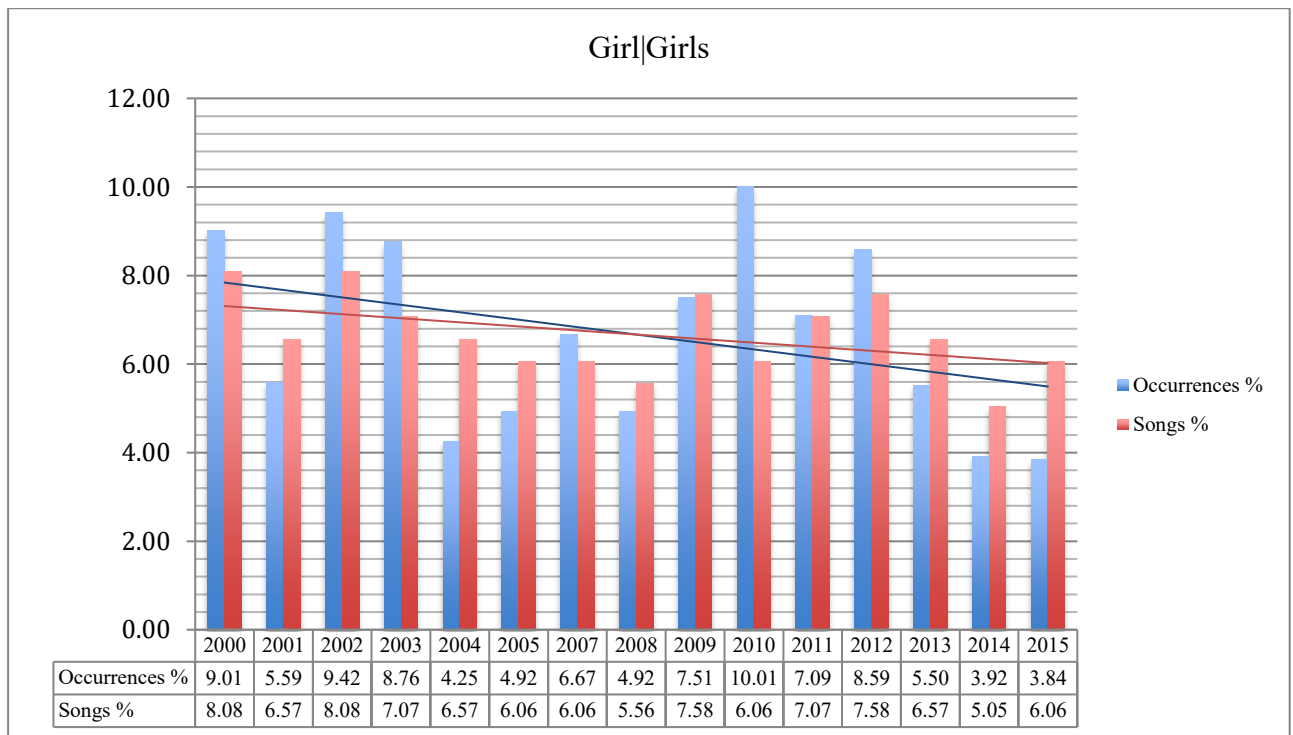


Figure 1: *Girl*

The trend lines in the graph illustrate a decrease in both the number of songs as well as occurrences, with the trend line for the occurrences heading down in a steeper angle. The regression analysis, however, shows that due to the constant fluctuation in numbers, the trendline alone is not to be trusted. The p-value for the occurrences from the regression analysis is approximately 0,197. As it is more than 0.1 (> 0.1), the *null hypothesis* (i.e. there is no change) cannot be rejected. The p-value of the songs, then, is $\approx 0,086$. This number is slightly above the cutoff, 0.05, but not necessarily inconsequential for being < 0.1 . In practice, this means that any possible change is statistically marginal.

In general-purpose dictionaries such as *The American Heritage Dictionary* (hereafter AHD), *Collins English Dictionary* (CED) and *Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary* (RHD), *girl* is mostly said to be a young female child. Both CED and RHD list the use of the appellation for a young woman as well. CED especially ties the use of *girl* for young women to their marital status as unmarried. RHD implies the same with additional characterizations of immaturity. RHD and AHD also mention the use of *girl* for a daughter, with CED listing the same use as informal only. Additionally, RHD and AHD also state that *girl* is often found to be offensive when used of an adult woman. According to RHD, *girl* can be used as an offensive term for a female servant or employee as well, which could be seen to denote inequality between the speaker and the subject of the appellation. CED also lists a derogatory use for a female servant but specifies that it is restricted to a black woman. Lastly, in AHD and CED, *girl* is informally listed as a term of address that can indicate a level of

familiarity. Both AHD and CED also mention the informal use of *girl* for a sweetheart. Exceptionally, in RHD this use is not marked as informal.

Of the three slang dictionaries, neither the *Dictionary of American Slang* (DAS) nor the *Dictionary of Contemporary Slang* (DCS) has a definition for *girl* in reference to women in particular. Most likely, these dictionaries did not deem *girl* as a slang word but perhaps rather an appellation that has both formal and informal uses. *Cassell's Dictionary of Slang* (CDS), however, along with *Amazons, Bluestockings and Crones: A Feminist Dictionary* (FD), do list *girl* as a term for women with detailed information and comments. According to CDS, *girl* used to refer to prostitutes from the 17th century up to the 19th century. From the late 18th century, this appellation also came to be used for one's sweetheart or girlfriend and interestingly, from the late 19th century, *girl* was also used for any black woman irrespective of age in the US. This point is also repeated with the note that since the 20th century, the appellation has been used between two women, neither of whom needs to be a *girl* in terms of age, among the black minority in the US. FD presents multiple characterizations and implications brought forth by the appellation. Among other things, *girl* can imply childishness, immaturity, dependency, conformity, delicacy and non-aggressiveness. FD goes on to explain that the use of the diminutive term "undoes any implications of status, authority, and true seriousness of purpose." FD also mentions the use of *girl* for young women but sets the boundary to middle or late teens (the latest), after which the appellation is just as offending to a woman as calling a man a *boy*. Only family and those belonging to the close circle of friends can use the term with impunity after that certain age is passed. FD specifies that while some men erroneously use this term for a complimentary purpose, the word still retains its demeaning and patronizing undertone. Interestingly, though, like CDS, FD also mentions a different use in the black community, where *girl* is often used to address women in a familiar manner, and sometimes to show affection or for emphasis. In this context, the appellation is not used as a sign of inequality or disrespect.

One of the most common uses of *girl* in the songs studied was in a context where the appellation was used to refer to women in quite a general way. The level of specificity, however, can vary noticeably. For examples of the range, I will consider "Fiesta" by R. Kelly featuring Jay-Z, "The Motto", by Drake featuring Lil Wayne and "Same Love" by Macklemore and Ryan Lewis featuring Mary Lambert. In "Fiesta" the woman in question is clearly someone specific:

Switchin lanes in my Six, in the 'burbs (right)
I met a **girl** named Tasha, in the 'burbs (uh-huh)
Took the hood then I moved it, to the 'burbs (uh)
Now no more sheriffs or polices, in the 'burbs (that's right)
(2001:1)

In “The Motto” the lexeme is used to refer to a group of women based on their ethnicity:

I'm the fuckin' man, y'all don't get it, do ya?
Type of money, everybody acting like they knew ya
Go Uptown, New York City, bitch
Them Spanish **girls** love me like I'm Aventura
(2012:4)

Unlike in “The Motto”, the reference made in “Same Love” does not define the group of women in any particular way:

When I was in the third grade I thought that I was gay
'Cause I could draw, my uncle was, and I kept my room straight
I told my mom, tears rushing down my face
She's like “Ben you've loved **girls** since before Pre-K”
(2013:13)

“Fiesta” and “The Motto” are contextually quite similar. Neither song describes women in a romantic light but rather uses them for validation of the male protagonists’ ‘game’ and virility to further boost their male ego and status. “Fiesta” revolves around men boasting about things such as partying, alcohol, cars, guns, drugs, wealth and women. The context mainly consists of violent threats to other men, depictions of extravagant partying and fine vehicles. Some slight benevolent sexism is hinted at through an offer to pay for the woman’s drinks. Additionally, one of the male protagonists also has a line stating that he’s “throwing hundreds up for grabs” for the woman. On one hand, this could be figurative, in which case it would refer to spending a notable amount of money on the woman. On the other hand, with the song having a strong focus on the partying scene, this could also be taken literally, as in, he is throwing money at her as he would at a stripper (although it is not directly stated if she really is one). The reference strongly hints at women with ‘gold-digger’ -ish tendencies (going after men’s money) and the artist’s prodigal ways. Additionally, the protagonists do not concentrate on any woman for too long a time, but instead choose to include many in their song. This, supposedly, is done to emphasize their ‘playa’ attitude and prove that they can attract multiple women at once – even a possibly taken one. The use of women as status markers, here, indicates hostile sexism. Yet, while women are quite strongly sexualized⁵⁵, they seem to have retained their agency⁵⁶, since contextual clues hint that they clearly make their own decisions. This significantly reduces the hostile sexism on the whole. In short, the

⁵⁵ E.g. a taken woman is described as a cheater who is performing fellatio on her knees on another man while her boyfriend/husband is looking for her.

⁵⁶ As opposed to not having any (agency), which is where objectification steps in.

song has some characteristics of both benevolent and hostile sexism, but depending on the interpretation and attention to detail, “Fiesta” could swing either way.

Similar to “Fiesta”, “The Motto” is a song centered around the male protagonists’ bragging about making money, their material possessions (e.g. a condo in Biscayne), getting their fair share of women, sleeping around with no emotional attachments, smoking weed, etc. The chorus of the song emphasizes the transient nature of life and encourages the audience to live life to the fullest (“You only live once: that's the motto, nigga, YOLO”). Storywise, there are snippets of different occurrences (mostly instances and elements tied to bragging and a certain kind of lifestyle) meshed together with varying scenes ranging from different big cities (New York and Miami), clubs, the recording studio used for this single, a bedroom (assumedly, since there is a very sexual reference), to the streets. Each location is mentioned in passing and they change from one to another relatively quickly. In this particular song, women are used instrumentally with the aim of elevating the male protagonist by safeguarding and proving the men’s virility, ‘game’ and boosting their egos. The use of women as status markers is a definite indicator of hostile sexism, but as in “Fiesta”, women here have also managed to retain their agency, which mitigates the possible sexual objectification⁵⁷. Thus, while the song definitely showcases some signs of hostile sexism, the degree of its severity would depend on the interpretation. After all, there is a difference between women who are depicted in a very sexual way but have power and control over their own actions and women who mindlessly fulfill men’s wants and needs and act/are treated like objects that can be owned.

“Same Love” is drastically different from the two other songs. This song tackles the issue of same-sex love and delves into the matter of inequality experienced by the non-heterosexual individuals mainly from the male protagonist’s point of view. “Same Love” revolves around the idea that all people are equal and no love should be judged. Instead of focusing on the dynamic between a man and a woman (or exploiting some version of it), this song concentrates on love and a strong narrative about how same-sex love is condemned in the mainstream media and society. This song does not include any indications of sexism, even with the line “she keeps me warm”. This could either mean that the romantic partner of the female protagonist in the chorus keeps the protagonist warm (literally or figuratively), or that love, “she”, keeps one warm. In any case, this is not really tied to any gender roles nor other

⁵⁷ “Cause the pimpin ice cold, all these bitches wanna chill / I mean maybe she won’t / Then again maybe she will / I can almost guarantee she know the deal”. These lines imply that the male protagonist is willing to give the woman space to make her own decisions and that her own volition and understanding of the situation is being respected.

expectations placed on love in benevolent sexism, which would be heavily implicated by the traditional gender roles. No signs of hostile sexism could be found either.

Another very common use of *girl* as a term of address is in a loving or intimate context that suggests a close bond between the speaker and the target. Notions of commitment are often present as well, even if the lyrics may not readily label the woman as a girlfriend or wife. In “21 Questions” by 50 Cent featuring Nate Dogg, the male protagonists want reassurance of a woman’s love should they lose everything they have or face other hardships in life:

Now would you leave me if your father found out I was thuggin'?
Do you believe me when I tell you, you the one I'm loving?
Are you mad 'cause I'm asking you 21 questions?
Are you my soul mate? 'Cause if so, **girl** you a blessing
Do you trust me enough, to tell me your dreams?
I'm staring at ya' trying to figure how you got in them jeans
If I was down would you say things to make me smile?
I treat you how you want to be treated just teach me how
If I was with some other chick and someone happened to see?
And when you asked me about it I said it wasn't me
Would you believe me? Or up and leave me?
How deep is our bond if that's all it takes for you to be gone?
We only humans **girl** we make mistakes, to make it up I do whatever it take
I love you like a fat kid love cake
You know my style I say anything to make you smile

(2003:7)

In J. Holiday’s “Suffocate”, the male protagonist is describing his intense and needy love for a woman that feels like suffocation when she is gone but breathlessness when he is with her:

Don't ever leave me, **girl**
I need you inside my world
I can't go a day without you
And see, nobody else will ever do
I'll never feel like I feel with you (oh)

(2008:5)

Not unlike the last two songs, Chris Brown’s “She Ain’t You” is definitely a love song, too. The difference, however, is that this song is about a break-up. The male protagonist is still very much in love with the woman despite having found someone else.

You make it hard for me to see somebody else
I'm calling her your name
Yea it's messed up, cause I'm thinkin 'bout you
It's your fault babe
I never wanted us to break up
No not this way
But you don't understand it **girl**
When she touches me, I'm wishing that they were your hands
And when I'm with her it's only 'bout the sex
With you I had a bad romance
And if I could, just trade her in I would
Cause nobody compares to ya (no, yeah)

(2011:10)

The song “21 Questions” by 50 Cent featuring Nate Dogg is based on the male protagonists’ speculations of situations and problems that could arise and the men’s need for reassurance that the woman in question would be there to love and support them to the (possibly bitter) end, even in cases where they could face imprisonment, run out of money, get shot or end up having a less-than-ideal job, to mention a few scenarios. The expectations the male protagonists place on themselves and the woman strongly exemplify benevolent sexism. These expectations are very congruent with the traditional gender roles, where the man would take care of the woman, provide for her, please her and protect her both physically and emotionally in exchange for her love, devotion and support. The song even has a direct declaration of love “I love you like a fat kid love cake” with the adoration towards the woman made evident. Aside from love and devotion, the song strongly focuses on the what-if scenarios that contrast with the protagonists’ current situation (“Girl, It’s easy to love me now”). Thus, it is quite understandable that “21 Questions” is comparably quite tactful about expressing love (i.e. ideal actions for the woman are clearly brought forth to form expectations that would really prove her devotion to him) and involving the woman in the song as a partner in a dialogue built on all of his questions, even when her voice is not actually heard at any point. J. Holiday’s “Suffocate” is quite different, as the floodgates to the male protagonist’ overflowing feelings of love towards a woman are opened and no space for an actual story is left. The song solely revolves around the male protagonist’s needy and helpless love and adoration for her to the point of emotional dependency. The woman is placed on a pedestal and he is yearning for her to complete his existence by providing him with romantic closeness and intimacy. Here, this highly romanticized love and the idea of lovers complementing and completing each other strongly exemplifies benevolent sexism, as well.

Unlike the last two songs (“21 Questions” and “Suffocate”), Chris Brown’s “She Ain’t You” is about a break-up that happened due to the woman’s wishes. The male protagonist of the song is seeing someone new now, but he is still having a hard time moving on and forgetting her, with claims that no one compares to her. Despite him missing her, there is no talk of traditional gender roles, romanticized love or belonging together. His strong longing could be interpreted to be a sign of him positively needing her in his life. Yet, the romanticized idea of completing each other is not really stated here as she left him out of her own volition and might not feel the same way he does for her any longer. Clearly, his life goes forward without her in it, too: he implies that while he wants her back, he would have to move on should she not want him anymore. Interestingly, even when she left him and he obviously disagrees with the decision, the male protagonist does not display any hostility or

verbal aggression towards the woman either, nor is he trying to degrade her or be hurtful in any way. All in all, the song does not display any signs of sexist thinking, as no markers for neither benevolent nor hostile sexism were met.

Closely connected to the previous point of *girl* quite often alluding to intimacy and commitment, the term was also quite often found in conjunction with possessive pronouns. In “Addictive” by Truth Hurts featuring Rakim, the male rapper (Rakim) has his male protagonist explicitly state his commitment to the female protagonist of the song:

Thinkin' of a masterplan
You know anything you need baby ask your man
You was there from a half a grand
Now it's kilos to C-notes and high fashion brands
We ball like we own the world
The only concern is you my only **girl**

(2002:13)

In “My Chick Bad” by Ludacris with Nicki Minaj as the featuring artist, the male protagonist makes a clear division between “his” woman and his adversary’s woman. While no long-lasting commitment is made obvious, intimacy and sexual tension is most definitely present:

Now-now-now-now-now-now, now your **girl** might be sick but my **girl**'s sicker
She rides that dick and she handles her liquor
Will knock a bitch out, annnnd fight
Comin' out swingin' like Tiger Woods' wife

(2010:17)

“Addictive” is a song mostly starring a female protagonist as the main narrator singing about her explicit relationship with a man and their devotion to each other that extends to outside of their bedroom, as well. The male protagonist, then, adds to the narration with his own verse from his perspective regarding their relationship and things he does to keep them comfortable: “You just pray I don't get killed when I hit the hood / Just another hundred mill' and I'mma quit for good”. Context-wise, love is not directly stated, but heavily implied. The adoration both protagonists have for each other is also more than obvious. This is reinforced by the male protagonist’s rap verse too, where he shows his willingness to provide for her and expresses his gratitude for her support and presence, no matter the circumstance. The aforementioned traits in their romantic relationship with him as the provider and her as his emotional and mental support⁵⁸ adhere to traditional gender roles, and thus showcase benevolent sexism.

“My Chick Bad” also has both male and female protagonists to move the narration along, but in this song it is the male protagonist that has more lines. The male protagonist is

⁵⁸ It is unconfirmed whether or not she actually has a job herself, since she mostly seems to wait for him on the sidelines.

very proud of “his” woman and boasts that she is better than anyone else’s: not only is she *bad* (i.e. sexually attractive) and “hood” (allusion to her street credibility), but she can also do “stuff” other women only wish to be able to do, she has the swagger, the body, she is always ready for a showdown, does not play games (“she’s full grown”), she’s good at sex, can hold her booze, is sexually very desirable, etc. While the male protagonist’s depictions of her tend to be quite sexual, he makes it clear that is not the only aspect he is proud of when it comes to her. Notably, unlike many other songs that tend to focalize on bragging and boasting, the woman here is not used instrumentally to boost the man’s ego and standing. Instead, the woman gets her own verse, where she verifies his claims and shows her tough and defiant attitude to those who dare to challenge her. The song includes no mention of romanticized love, commitment or other expectations tied to traditional gender roles, although his adoration of her is very apparent. Thus, this song is contextually neutral and shows no signs of sexism.

An exception to the male possessor behind the possessive pronoun can be found in Donnell Jones’ “U Know What’s Up”, in which “your girls” refers to the woman’s friends. The reference itself is neutral and does not allude to anything romantic or sexual unless the context further implies so. This use, however, was very rare in our lyrics corpus:

Me and my niggas be rolling
Scheming on you and your homies
The very first day of summer
All chromed out in a hummer babe
Hit the park and parlay
Hope that you walk this way
Do you and your **girls** wanna ride
Play all day, puff on the la

(2000:5)

In “U Know What’s Up” the male protagonist focuses his admiring gaze on a woman he hopes to persuade to have sex with him. The admiration towards the woman is evident and his lustful intentions are heavily hinted at (“Said I’m big on you and I’m wanting you”). Yet, other than his offer to ‘play’ and smoke something together, there is no further talk of providing anything or romantic feelings. The woman is not used to improve his own standing either, nor is there any indication of the male protagonist needing to dominate and prove his power over her. This makes the song contextually neutral, as it includes no signs of benevolent or hostile sexism.

Some songs also illustrated the use of the term as an endearment or a device for persuasion and/or sweet talk. The aforementioned song “U Know What’s Up” with its flirty and suggestive tone directed at a woman the male protagonist is talking to is a prime example:

Ooh say what, say what, say what
You know that I like it baby
Ooh **girl**, you know what's up
And you know what I need
Ooh say what, say what, say what
You know that i'm bout it baby
Ooh **girl**, you know what's up (hmm)

(2000:5)

Other such cases include songs such as “You” by Lloyd featuring Lil’ Wayne and “Na Na” by Trey Songz. In “You” the woman turns out to be someone the male protagonists consider special enough to leave the ‘game’ for and they try to persuade her to leave with them and, ultimately, get together with them:

Stop, wait a minute
The way you move that **girl**
You done got my heart all in it
And I just wanna be with you tonight
Girl please, I'm a player that is true
But I change the game for you
I wanna see what it do

(2007:6)

In “Na Na” the male protagonist is suggesting to a “bad” (i.e. sexy) woman that she should choose him as her companion over the other men, as he can do better than they ever could:

You're the one that's hella bad, yeah
You're the one I ain't never had, yeah, oh yeah
All the problems you did have, yeah
Leave them broke niggas in the past, yeah, oh yeah
Girl, you had good but I could give you better
I'll have you thinking 'bout forever, I'ma make you say

(2014:16)

Both songs have a strong focus on the sex appeal of the women that are being wooed with descriptions of the women enticing the men with the way they move, be it intentional or not, with the setting being a club or a party of some kind. In “You” love is described as something that can change a man for the better. The male protagonists’ adoration towards the woman is clearly evident and his love for her is directly stated. They would provide for her, be good to her and “be real” with her. Additionally, the woman is described as special compared to other women. All this paints a picture of romanticized love with the protagonists embracing the traditional gender roles, which translates to the song including benevolent sexism. Similarly, “Na Na” also contains the idea of providing for the woman (the male protagonist hints at his wealth and states that he would be spending money on her/for her) and his adoration for her is evidently present as well (although the tone in this particular song is decidedly more sexual than in “You”). Both “You” and “Na Na” make references to a future together with the women proving that the male protagonists are making long-term plans – an

aspect that was notably absent from the previously discussed “U Know What’s Up” by Donnell Jones.

While the previously mentioned cases paint *girl* in quite a positive light (ranging from having a neutral tone to something romantic or at least quite sweet/endearing), some songs illustrated the use of the term in other, less than commendable, ways. Notably, the appellation could appear with varying connotations even within one song. This use can be seen in songs such as the previously discussed “You” by Lloyd featuring Lil’ Wayne and “Gold Digger” by Kanye West featuring Jamie Foxx. In “You”, as stated earlier, the appellation is used for a woman the male protagonists take a long-term interest in to the point where the protagonists would be willing to change their ‘player’ ways to get her. Yet, before they attempt to persuade the woman to leave the club with them, there is a verse stating that women tend to levitate towards them for their money and reputation. Thus, in this song, one of the uses of *girl* is directly connected to a stereotype of women as ‘gold diggers’ or ‘groupies’, who cheat on their own spouses. These women are only used for sex:

Right off the bat ma, the boy got dollars
So women come frequent like flight mileage
It ain't no secret I, I might holla
But I ain't gonna sweat ya, baby I'mma let'cha
Catch up with your game, run faster
Don't let him lose you cause I ain't gon' bless ya
Unless ya, feelin a little desperate
Send a nigga a text message, **girl**

(2007:6)

In “Gold Digger”, the male protagonists use the appellation in two different ways. Firstly, it is used in a context where the woman is strongly hinted to be a ‘gold digger’ or at least have strong tendencies to act like one. The chorus also suggests that in exchange for the wealth, she is urged to perform fellatio in an ambiguous line where “Get down girl, go 'head, get down” can also be interpreted as an invitation to party:

(She give me money) Now, I ain't sayin' she a gold digger
(When I'm in need) But she ain't messin' with no broke niggas
(She give me money) Now, I ain't sayin' she a gold digger
(When I'm in need) But she ain't messin' with no broke niggas
(I gotta leave) Get down **girl**, go 'head, get down
(I gotta leave) Get down **girl**, go 'head, get down
(I gotta leave) Get down **girl**, go 'head, get down
(I gotta leave) Get down **girl**, go 'head

(2005:14)

The second use of *girl* in the song is more neutral by nature. One of the lines where this occurs is when the male protagonist is quoting the woman:

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."

(2005:14)

The reference to his arm could mean that he has something there that informs women of his wealth (e.g. an expensive watch), which would attract the 'gold diggers', but it could also mean that she has seen many women figuratively hanging from his arm. Thus, this use of the word *girl* seems to carry no negative connotations. This use of the appellation in the general sense is also evident in the last verse of the song (before the chorus) where the male protagonist turns the tables on the woman: he reminds her that the men can also leave the women behind should the chance present itself, i.e. it is implied that when they have money, they can afford a trophy wife (here, the trophy wife is referred to as the "white girl"⁵⁹):

I know there's dudes ballin', and yeah, that's nice
And they gonna keep callin' and tryin', but you stay right, **girl**
And when you get on, he'll leave yo' ass for a white **girl**

(2005:14)

Context-wise, the song mostly describes women as manipulative, self-centered, unfaithful and exploitative in their ways. They use men to get money and other benefits men would provide in a relationship with the traditional gender roles. Due to the distrust towards women, the male protagonist uses the call-and-response tradition in the song to call out to the other men and remind them that a pre-nup is a must. This distrustful and negative attitude towards women (with the connection of maintaining traditional gender roles in a relationship) and the insertion of the objectifying trophy wife trope are clear indicators of hostile sexism in the song.

Mystikal's "Shake Ya Ass" is more extreme in terms of both content and the use of the appellation in a non-flattering way:

They don't fuck with me and they don't
Y'all bitches can't catch me and you won't
Pay ya fare, fix ya hair, throw that pussy
Got a Prada for boonapalists, and Donna for my babooski
You think I'm trickin'? Bitch, I ain't trippin'
I'm buyin' if you got nice curves for your iceberg
Drinkin' Hennessy and actin' like it do somethin' to me
Hope this indecent proposal make you do somethin' with me
Fuck a dollar **girl**, pick up fifty
And fuck that coward you need a real nigga
Off top knick-a-boxers hurtin' shit
Bend over hoe; show me what you workin' with!

(2000:20)

⁵⁹ According to Sharpley-Whiting, idealized youthful white femininity is highly regarded among black men in the mainstream strip trade (2007:132). In fact, black women tend to be treated more commonly and in a more objectifying way while white strippers were met with more restraint on the men's part and given an almost "queenly" status (ibid., 132). This same imbalance between the white and black femininity is also visible in "Gold Digger".

The woman in the song is either a stripper, a prostitute or a woman who acts like one. In this context, a *girl* is an overly sexual, good-looking woman that can be bought and used when convenient to the male protagonist, should she be qualified to do so (this is determined by the size of her behind, as the male protagonist does not pass “small booties”). The male protagonist of the song is exerting his power over women, telling them what to do and objectifying them by reducing their worth and humanity to their mere sexual capabilities and features while displaying a condescending attitude towards women. These are clear indicators of rampant hostile sexism in the song.

Be it intentional or not, some songs also subtly brought out the connection of the appellation to a female child. While this attribute did not surface that often in the songs of the male artists (comparatively), it was present in some songs such as “Hotline Bling” by Drake. Essentially, this song is about a past break-up, with the male protagonist wondering what has happened to the woman he used to be with. She seems to be different now:

These days, all I do is
Wonder if you're bendin' over backwards for someone else
Wonder if you're rolling up a Backwoods for someone else
Doing things I taught you, gettin' nasty for someone else
You don't need no one else
You don't need nobody else, no
Why you never alone?
Why you always touching road?
Used to always stay at home
Be a good **girl**, you was in the zone
Yeah, you should just be yourself
Right now, you're someone else

(2015:8)

On the surface, there seems to be some longing to have the same woman back by his side again and with the shared history, the male protagonist does seem to have retained some tender feelings towards her, still. Yet, why this song was not discussed in the group where the appellation is simply used for someone with whom he is close with/intimately connected to, is because of the insinuations the male protagonist loads on the phrase “good girl”. Now that they have broken up, she has new friends, she travels, she dresses herself differently, goes out to parties and drinks freely instead of staying home and contacting him (in the early hours of the morning), like a “good girl”, in his opinion, would do. The male protagonist seems to judge her for stepping out of her more passive role as the one to obediently wait for him at home and her new-found independence is seen as non-cooperative and threatening. Even when they are no longer together he still wants to tell her what she should do and who she should be, though this is stated quite subtly. This power struggle and the inclusion of the idea of traditional gender roles and power dynamics in the song reflects hostile sexism: the man

seeks to claim a traditionally dominant role whilst the woman would ideally be kept in a childlike state, where she is to remain compliant with little power and independence to make her own decisions – especially those from which the man would not benefit in any way (e.g. the ego boost from knowing that she is pining after him).

Among the female artists, *girl* is quite often used in reference to self. Depending on the context, the term can be quite neutral, as was evident in most such cases, but in some songs allusions to a state of childishness and immaturity were clearly present. Among the female artists, this use surfaced somewhat more frequently than among the male artists. In “Goodies” by Ciara featuring Petey Pablo, the female protagonist showcases self-assuredness and a strong will to have things go as she wishes instead of being influenced by the male protagonist:

You may look at me and think that
I'm just a young **girl** but I'm not just a young **girl**
Baby, this is what I'm lookin' for
Sexy, independent
Down to spend it type that's gettin' his dough
I'm not bein' too dramatic
That's the way I gotta have it (that's how I)

(2004:12)

Here, the female protagonist uses the phrase “young girl” in reference to self, but also defiantly states that there is more to her than that. She depicts herself as sexy, realistic, independent and too smart for his ‘game’ despite being young. The male protagonist’s rap verses boast about how good he is with women and at getting them, but she teases him and rejects him. The male protagonist tries to take the lead and tell her that she is not the one in charge but she is not deterred. The song in its entirety revolves around this power dynamic and the back and forth between the characters. The female protagonist mentions that she is selective with her men and that she wants someone who is “Down to spend it type that's gettin' his dough”. This may or may not suggest benevolent sexism. Aside from this line, she does not really elaborate what other things she would like in her man or expect in a relationship. She also does not seem to value material possessions much (the male protagonist’s Mercedes Benz makes no difference to her). If these clues are interpreted to mean that she would rather have a romantic relationship with a providing man who does not even need to have much, then her parts are definitely indicative of benevolent sexism. If, however, these clues imply that she would rather have a self-sufficient man, then her parts are actually not sexist at all. The song on the whole could be interpreted to be somewhat along

the lines of hostile sexism on the man's part⁶⁰, but this is also very well counteracted and even bested at the end by the strong and independent female protagonist with her adamant rejection, where she states that her self-worth stays the same regardless of her rejection of him (and her much-discussed age) even when he insinuates that she should be happy for his interest because he could have any woman he wanted.

Some appellations straddle the line between neutral and childlike in their connotations in their respective contexts. Songs such as "Put It On Me" by Ja Rule featuring Lil' Mo and Vita, "I Love you" by Faith Evans and "Girl on Fire" by Alicia Keys featuring Nicki Minaj exemplify those cases. In both "Put It On Me" and "I Love You", the woman is depicted as somewhat helpless. In "Put It On Me" there is also the element of needing someone else to shelter and support oneself:

What would I do without the nights that you kept me warm?
When this cold world had a **girl** caught in a storm (What would I do?)
And I accept who you with when you caught in the wrong
(2001:12)

In "I Love You" an element of unrequited, strong love is added:

(Each and every day) I try to make some sense of this
(What you mean to me) I know it could be serious
(Each and every night) I dream about just holding you
(Loving you like this) what is a **girl** supposed to do
(2002:11)

Both "Put It On Me" and "I Love you" are romantic songs with benevolent sexism. In "Put It On Me" the female and male protagonists sing about their love and support for each other with implications of belonging together, needing each other and sharing a special connection. In "I Love You" only one narrator is included. The one-sided love the protagonist is feeling is described through a strong need with lines such as: "You're the one that I live for", "You're the only one for me" and "I know it's meant to be". These lines also embody the idea of romantic love with fate and sense of belonging.

Exceptionally, "Girl On Fire" is not centered on love but on the inner strength of the female protagonist:

Looks like a **girl** but she's a flame
So bright she can burn your eyes
Better look the other way
You can try but you'll never forget her name
She's on top of the world
Hottest of the hottest **girls**, say
(2013:12)

⁶⁰ The power struggle between the man and the woman in the song is evident. The male protagonist also keeps undermining her decision (to reject him) as he subjects her to a childlike treatment by hinting at her youth and calling her 'little one' before trying to convince her that he is in charge. All this is coupled with his somewhat objectifying attitude to women as well.

This female protagonist is filled with strength to overcome her obstacles and can rise above the others and place herself as an unforgettable person with ambitions and achievements. The song is more of an empowering power-ballad with hues of defiance and independence than a love song of some sort – in fact, there is hardly any mention of romance. With the lack of romantic content and descriptions of people the protagonist could show interest to, no sexism is evident. Contrary to the last two songs, the female character here is not helpless in any way, but determined and resolute about her path even despite her loneliness. Thus, the childlike connotation of the term in this case is not based on the possible impotence and submissiveness of the protagonist, but rather on how the lyrics are phrased. Namely, the recurring term *girl* in some instances acts as a way to bring out the diminutiveness of the protagonist in contrast to the power she holds inside: “She's just a girl and she's on fire” and “Looks like a girl but she's a flame”. In the first line her significance is reduced with the addition of the adverb ‘just’, which makes her appear more ordinary and unremarkable. The second line, then, seems to imply that a *girl* is also expected to be harmless and submissive by nature (contrary to the flame that represents a blazing and wilful independence and strength).

Besides the aforementioned self-referential use, female artists also tended to use *girl* quite generally with neutral connotations when speaking of other women. This kind of use was briefly discussed above in connection to the song “Gold Digger” (by Kanye West featuring Jamie Foxx). Other examples of such usage can be seen in songs such as “God In Me” by Mary Mary Featuring Kierra “KiKi” Sheard and “Pretty Girl Rock” by Keri Hilson. “God In Me” is a song with female protagonists singing about their faith in God and how God has given them what they have in exchange for their prayers, devotion and effort:

You see her style you think she nice
You look at her whip you say the whip tight
You look at her crib you thinking she paid
You look at her life you think she's got it made
But everything she got the **girl's** been given
She calls it a blessing but you call it living
When it comes to money she can be a hero
She writes them checks with a whole lot of zeros

(2009:13)

This song has no indication of any kind of sexism, as its focus lies on themes like faith, Christianity and success in life instead of love and/or romance.

“Pretty Girl Rock”, then, is a song about a woman who knows she is attractive and has no qualms about admitting it, either:

Pretty as a picture
Sweeter than a swisher
Mad 'cause I'm cuter than the **girl** that's with you
I don't gotta talk about it baby you can see it
But if you want I'll be happy to repeat it

(2011:19)

The female protagonist also heeds other women not to direct bitter feelings at her for being “a 10” (i.e. a perfect score) but join in on her “pretty girl rock”, instead. While the female protagonist is clearly upstaging other women in some of her verses, there seems to be no real heat behind the bragging and needling. On the contrary, there is a clear message in the lyrics encouraging women to get along with each other, love themselves and embrace their gorgeousness (as she has). This song does not really focus on love and romance either, but some brief mentions about men could be found in the lines, such as: “Boys wanna marry, looking at my derrière“ and “Cameras flashing, daddy turned his head just as soon as I passed him”. The song as a whole places a great deal of emphasis on the outer appearance of the woman with no deeper discussion of inner characteristics. This shallowness could be read to hint at the appearance being the base of a woman’s worth – this line of thinking would be a sign of hostile sexism. Then again, the female protagonist could also be using men to prove her point about how attractive she really is, be it based on her confidence or looks. This aspect, then, would make the song only debatably sexist.

Lastly, some evidence of the use of the term in a familiar manner among women could also be found. That was the case with songs such as Erykah Badu’s “Bag Lady” and Toni Braxton’s “He Wasn’t Man Enough”. In both contexts, the appellation appears with a piece of advice from one woman to another. In “Bag Lady” the purpose is to reassure other women:

Girl I know
Sometimes it's hard and we can't let go
If someone hurts you oh so bad inside
You can't deny it, you can't stop crying
So if you start breathing then you won't believe it (one of these days you gonna see)
You'll feel so much better, so much better baby (one of these days you gonna see)
(2000:12)

In “He Wasn’t Man Enough”, the advice comes in the form of berating of the present wife because of her unnecessary jealousy and pity directed at the man’s ex-girlfriend (the female protagonist of the song):

Listen **girl**
Who do you think I am?
Don't you know that he was my man?
But I chose to let him go
So why do you act like
I still care about him?
Looking at me like I'm hurt
When I'm the one who said
I didn't want it to work
Don't you forget I had him first?

(2000:16)

In “Bag Lady” the female protagonist is talking to other women, telling them to take care of themselves and drop the emotional “baggage” they keep carrying around lest they miss their opportunities in life. The advice is directed at all kinds of women from different backgrounds (e.g. the rich, poor, promiscuous, intellectual, mothers...). The song is understanding and sympathetic in its core while also offering helpful support and heeding other women to deal with the said “baggage”. With the focus lying solely on self-care from one woman to another, the song did not really capitalize on romantic relations nor did it offer much description of the expectations placed on women or men (in and out of relationships). Thus, “Bag Lady” seems to carry no sexual implications in its context. In “He Wasn’t Man Enough”, the female protagonist tells the wife of her ex-boyfriend to stop acting jealous towards her when she was the one who chose to end the relationship. While the tone of the female protagonist is quite self-important and admonishing, the underlying message is that she really wishes no harm to the other woman and that she hopes that the man has quit lying, being unfaithful and playing around with women. The song itself does not really contain anything that would suggest some kind of sexism in the song. The female protagonist seems to set honesty and fidelity as measures that define a proper man. No expectations involving conventional gender roles between men and women are found nor are there signs of power struggle or sexual objectification.

The general dictionaries consulted proved to be of little use in the context of R&B and hip hop songs. The previously discussed songs do not provide much in terms of exact information on either the age or the marital status of the women. While some cases displayed clear implications of commitment, clarifications of whether the *girl* in question was an actual wife instead of a current or past girlfriend or someone else close to the male protagonist (i.e. a lover, etc.) were practically nonexistent. Thus, the claim of *girl* referring to an unmarried woman is dubious at best, here, as is the claim that the word is mostly reserved for a young woman. Additionally, uses explicitly referring to a daughter were extremely scarce, though this was only to be expected since the theme of (female) children was rarely, if ever, present in the songs.

The definitions given in CDS reflect the findings more accurately. As per CDS, the lyrics studied clearly show the use of the appellation in a more general way, though not as limited a manner as was originally stated. Instead of *girl* only being applied to black women in the African American community irrespective of their age (especially between women), the studied material proves the scope of the referents to extend further beyond the black community to refer to any woman/women (e.g. “Spanish girls”). These references seem to hold no signs of inequality or disrespect unless separately implied in the context. CDS also mentions the use of the term to refer to one’s sweetheart or girlfriend. This use is also confirmed in the many songs suggesting a close, loving and intimate bond between the protagonists of the songs and their women. This seems to be especially true when the word is used together with possessive pronouns (e.g. “my” and “your”). An exception to this rule comes in the form of a pronoun + *girl* in its plural form (e.g. “your girls”), a combination which is explicitly used to refer to a woman’s female friends. FD also states that *girl* can be commonly used to show affection and familiarity in the black community. This statement entails favoring and/or taking a liking to someone even without the implied element of commitment that would be present in the case of girlfriends and sweethearts. This usage was evident in the many songs using *girl* as an endearment in sweet talk or for persuading someone. As stated in FD, among the African American minority, this use is quite neutral by nature, if not complimentary, when the speaker’s intention is to attract the woman’s attention in a positive way (i.e. paying a compliment). FD also brings forth the more negative connotations the appellation can bear, all in line with the stereotype of a traditionally feeble female that is treated like a child. Some of the songs do indeed contain signs of the perseverance of this old-fashioned trope, though women seem to be more aware of this, as is shown by their many songs in which the word *girl* is quite often associated with childishness, immaturity and weakness. The more generally demeaning and patronizing use mentioned in FD can be seen in the context some of the songs provide. For example, a *girl* can also be called a *bitch* or a *hoe* in other lines and verses of the lyrics with possible implications of stripper and/or groupie pursuits, while also being the object of the male protagonist’s love and affection, at the same time. This complexity emphasizes the importance of the context surrounding the word, as well as the flexibility the term can have in use.

A closer look at the lyrics corpus shows that the appellation *girl* is mostly used as a vocative for addressing someone directly, attracting someone’s attention and/or to show some emotions towards that certain person. Of the 1103 occurrences of the singular *girl*, the percentage of the word used as a vocative is slightly over 70%. In the case of the plural *girls*, however, the vocative use is rare. Of the 95 occurrences, only circa 7% were used as

vocatives. Despite the contrasting tendencies noted in connection to the singular and plural forms, the use of the singular *girl* is overwhelmingly more common, and thus the more probable occurrence to encounter in the lyrics.

6.2 *Baby*

The second most commonly used female appellation in the material proved to be *baby*, with 840 occurrences in 150 songs. Table 2 reveals quite drastic changes in the number of songs featuring the appellation.

Baby|Babies

Year	Occurrences	Songs
2000	120	15
2001	93	15
2002	46	11
2003	31	6
2004	32	11
2005	47	9
2007	55	13
2008	67	9
2009	53	13
2010	65	9
2011	32	8
2012	45	10
2013	33	9
2014	49	7
2015	72	5
total:	840	150

Table 2: *Baby*

At its highest, the sample of 20 songs from a single year would have 15 songs featuring *baby* (2000, 2001), at its lowest the number is 5 (2015). The table indicates that the popularity of *baby* has certainly been more prevalent in the earlier years (120 occurrences in 2000 and 93 in 2001). While the usage of *baby* never reached the same numbers in this material again, recurring, unpredictable changes seem to be the norm for this appellation.

On average, though, each year 10 songs out of 20 would include *baby*, which makes the probability of encountering this lexeme a noticeable 50% and the 150 songs that did feature the appellation do so approximately 5.6 times per song. Figure 2 with normalized values shows the number of occurrences and songs in percentages to illustrate a possible growth/decline.

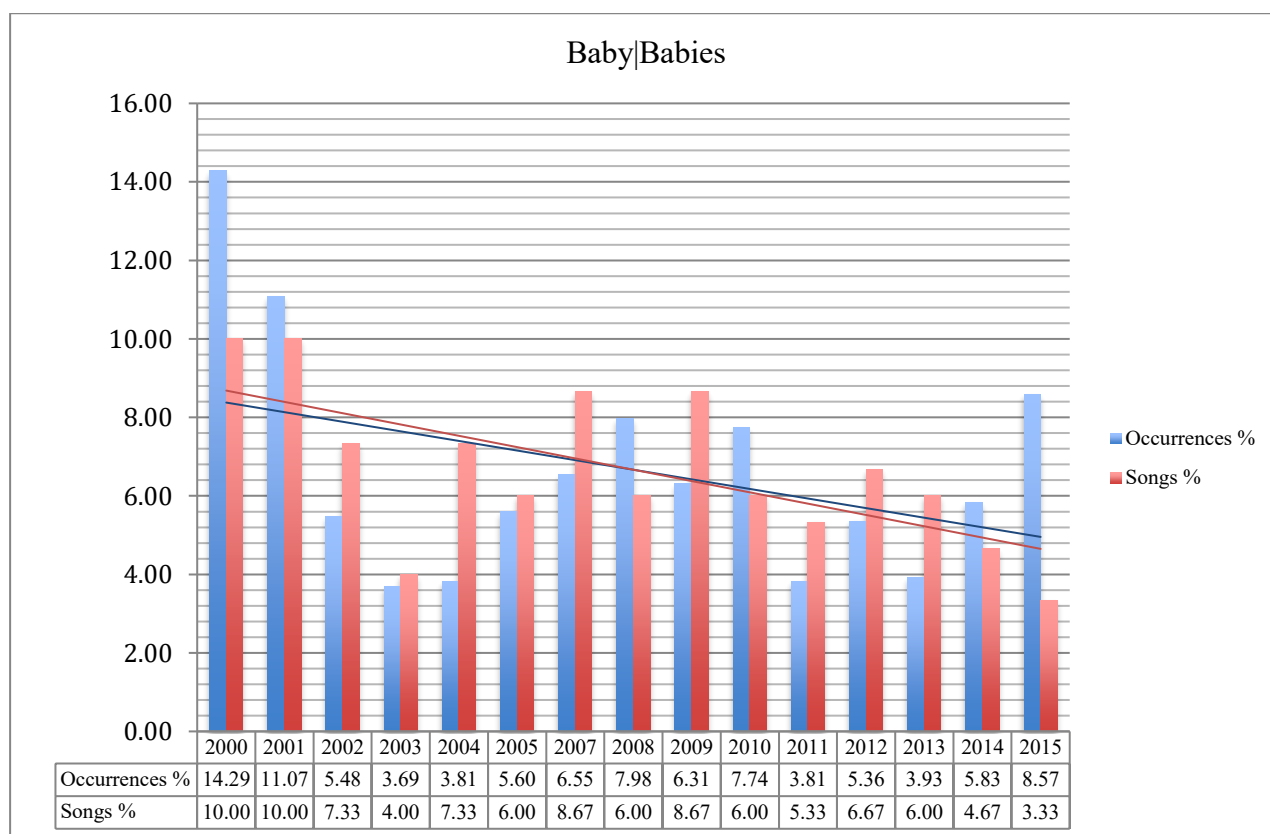


Figure 2: *Baby*

The figure illustrates a relatively steep decline in the number of both songs as well as occurrences. Yet, like *girl*, *baby* also showcases regular fluctuations and changes. The regression analysis yielded a p-value of $\approx 0,174$ for the occurrences. Thus, the calculations show that the *null hypothesis* cannot be discarded and no actual change with time as a factor can be proven conclusively. Conversely, the p-value of the songs is about 0,01, which makes the change in the numbers statistically *almost significant*. In this case, the *null hypothesis* can be discarded and an *alternate hypothesis* (i.e. there is a change) can be introduced.

FD only has an entry referring to children, which leaves the dimension of referring to women completely unaddressed. The slang dictionaries consulted provide quite varied definitions for *baby*. According to CDS, in the US, *baby* has been used for a person, often a woman, since the mid 19th-century, after which it has also been used of objects or animals one feels affection for. Since the late 19th-century, the appellation has also been recorded as a term of affection or general address between people of either sex among the African American population. Since the 1920s in the US, *baby* has also been used for something of one's special interest or responsibility. This usage is often accompanied by a possessive pronoun, e.g. *my baby*. The 1970s in the US brought on the use of the term to refer to attractive young women, and lastly, the 20th-century has also seen a self-referential use, as in *this baby*. DAS echoes CDS in many of its entries. DAS also mentions *baby* as a reference to a wife, girlfriend or other cherished

woman since the early 1900s, with possible but less frequent use for a husband, boyfriend or cherished man. By 1900 *baby* was also used for anything (be it man, animal or object) regarded with special affection, pride, admiration or awe. Since 1910, the word has also been found as a way of addressing men or women in a more neutral way too, similar to *bud* and *pal*. Interestingly enough, CDS adds that by the 1930s, *baby* was also used to especially refer to things one does not know the names of (e.g. new gadgets). The *Dictionary of Contemporary Slang* (DCS) bundles *baby* together with *babe* and *babes* – an interesting choice the other dictionaries seem to deliberately pass. According to DCS, these appellations originate from the US and stand for a sweetheart and/or a lover. DCS also adds that while it is used by both men and women, *baby* can be considered patronising or offensive when used by men for women.

Mostly, *baby* is used as an endearment to a person of the opposite sex in a context that seems to imply a deeper emotional connection or adoration. In “I Don’t Wanna Know” by Mario Winans, *baby* refers to a woman the protagonist of the song loves deeply, but who is also rumoured to be cheating on him:

I don't wanna know
If you're playin' me, keep it on the low
Cuz my heart can't take it anymore
And if you're creepin', please don't let it show
Oh **baby**, I don't wanna know

(2004:20)

The song “Never” by Jaheim describes an overwhelming love for a woman that makes the man “hang his jersey up and leave the game”:

From the day you came along
I sung a brand new song
'Cause I want to make it clear that see
That you're a special part of me
Before I had no clue
I was lost till I found you **baby**
And I want to make the whole world understand
I'm proud to be your man (hey)

(2008:11)

In “I Don’t Wanna Know”, the context of the song directly implies that the male protagonist has taken on the provider role (“Gave you extra cheese (c'mon) put you in the SUV / You wanted ice so I made you freeze / Made you hot like the West Indies (that's right)”). Additionally, he has also elevated her from her previous state of being and given her all his love. He does not want to know whether the rumors about her cheating on him are true. Rather, he tells her to either keep it to herself and stay with him or just leave if that makes her

happier, instead of “playing” him. The relationship has telltale signs of benevolent sexism: he obviously loves her and provided for her by giving her material goods and amenities. Despite the sad and disappointed tone and message in the song, no hostility is apparent. This song represents the benefits of benevolent sexism rather directly, with no consequences of hostile sexism for having overstepped the traditional boundaries of monogamous relationships. The missing connection to hostile sexism as a punitive measure makes the benevolent sexism here anomalous, but it does not take away the fact that the male protagonist acts out his masculine role in their relationship exactly according to the norms set by benevolent sexism in all other aspects of their relationship.

In “Never”, the woman is a highly romanticized catalyst for a vast life improvement. Jaheim completely changes his ways from his “player” lifestyle to embracing a committed relationship with vows of lasting love and adoration (“I wish that I could place the whole world in front of you, but a man is just a man so baby here's my vow to you, babe: / Never, will I break your heart”).

Not all *babies* are used in a context of vows of lasting love and relationships. In “Make Me Better” by Fabolous, with Ne-Yo as the featuring artist, an emotional relationship is strongly implied, but not directly stated.

I'm a movement by myself, ooh
But I'm a force when we're together
Mami, I'm good all by myself, ooh
But **baby**, you, you make me better

(2007:16)

The couple dynamic in “Make Me Better” is all about strengthening and bolstering each other in the endeavours of their present lifestyle. Despite the missing mentions of love, there are multiple lines that express the sense of belonging together (e.g. “You plus me, it equals better math / Your boy, a good look but she my better half”) that is characteristic of benevolent sexism. All in all, all three songs “I Don’t Wanna Know”, “Never” and “Make Me Better” are clear representations of benevolent sexism, especially when it comes to the traditional, romanticized ideas of absolute love and connection that can change lives and empower a person.

The endearment *baby* is often used for sweet talk and persuasion as well. Below, Jeremih with 50 Cent as the featuring artist sing and rap to a sexy woman in a club setting. The song itself is sexually very suggestive and very sex-centered with detailed depictions of her dancing and appearance. The woman in the song is the focus of admiration and lust and is being offered drinks on the men’s tab as they try to get her to have sex with them. *Down on me* here seems to act as a double entendre for “put it on my bill” and “let’s have sex”.

Say you independent, get it from your momma
Tell me if you with it, do you really wanna
Baby when you see me, you know I be on it
Can you keep it up and, put it down up on me
Down with that booty on me (On me)

(2011:20)

The protagonists admire the woman's appearance and dancing ("Work it like a pro-pro-pro sit and watch it go-go-go /Do her thing all on the flo' she bounce it fast and shake it slow / So sexual incredible she beautiful she edible"). For a chance to dance with her and keep her attention, the men are ready to buy her all the drinks she needs. In the setting provided, no mention of lasting love is to be found, which leads to speculating about a shorter intimate encounter between the woman and the men. The woman is also provided a chance to express her own stand on how the night will end, elevating her to a character with her own agenda instead of just keeping her a voiceless persona to bolster the protagonists' manhood ("Say you independent (hey) Get it from your momma (hey) / Tell me if you with it (what) Do you really wanna (wanna)"). Despite the heavy focus on appearances, the woman's wishes and feelings are being taken into consideration, not to mention that she is obviously being taken care of monetarily by the men. Thus, the song includes benevolent sexism with conventional gender roles. Of course, the importance set on looks alone can also seem objectifying, which would be more characteristic of hostile sexism. Yet, no aggressiveness is evident and while she can indeed act as something of a status marker to them for having gotten her attention (e.g. trophy woman), she is not treated as a mindless woman who has to bend to their will and dominance. In some cases, benevolent and hostile sexism can be treated as two sides of the same coin, which explains some blurriness in categorization.

Sweet talk, of course, is not always necessarily related to suggesting sexual acts with alcohol and other possible substances in the background. Usher, together with Plies, uses *baby* to sweet talk a woman at home too in "Hey Daddy (Daddy's Home)". This case strongly exemplifies the character of the appellation as a term of endearment that can effectively be used for sweet talk as well. In the rap verse by Plies, he clearly showers her with riches to show her his favor:

Knock knock, guess what? The goon's home
Gone three days, bought a quarter mil home
Miss me to death, guess what she wrote
I miss you too, put that on your ringtone
Told her when I get back, she can have the Range Rov'
But I'ma take it back, if she ride lame, hoe
Isn't that the house you wanted? I'll buy you two of those
A hundred thou, **baby**? That's just two shows
Have you ever made love with your neck froze
With all VVS diamonds in your ear lobes?

(2010:7)

Usher makes use of the call-and-response tradition in his own part of the song with female voices singing back to him, as requested.

Is you say, "Daddy's home, home for me" (oh)
And I know you've been waiting for this loving all day
Your daddy's home, it's time to play (daddy's home, it's time to play)
Now, **baby**, you ain't got to give my loving away
"Daddy's home, home for me"
And I know you've been waiting for this loving all day
You know your daddy's home and it's time to play (daddy's home, it's time to play)
So you ain't got to give my loving away
So all my ladies, say, "Hey, hey, hey, daddy" (hey, hey, call me daddy, babe)
/Hey, hey, hey, daddy/
So all my ladies, say, "Hey, hey, hey, daddy" (gotta know what they like)
/Hey, hey, hey, daddy/

(2010:7)

In the song "Hey Daddy (Daddy's Home)", the setting is moved to the domain of home. The protagonist comes home after being away and plans to get intimate with his partner. The use of *daddy* in the song could be taken as a rather obvious nod towards the conventional roles in their relationship. The obvious provider role brought along in Plies's verse with huge amounts of money, cars, houses and jewellery seems to place the man at the helm of the relationship. The man is depicted as the working partner, while nothing is said about the woman's employment. Instead, she is only described as someone who will be home, who is to be provided for and who will give love and sex in return ("Daddy's home, you know how that goes"). The conventional gender role division of a money-making man and a stay-at-home woman clearly illustrates benevolent sexism.

In Bobby V's "Slow Down", a man is infatuated by a woman he sees walking in the streets and he wants to attract her attention to ask for her phone number. Despite the many descriptions of how sexy he thinks she looks, the song is quite innocent and romantic in nature with little to no details of sexual acts.

Slow down I just wanna get to know you (to know you, **baby**)
But don't turn around
'Cause that pretty round thing looks good to me (so good)
Slow down never seen anything so lovely (so lovely, **baby**)
Now turn around
And bless me with your beauty, cutie

(2005:6)

Similarly to "Down On Me", the woman here is a stranger whom the protagonist just happens to encounter. He tries to attract her attention and sustain it with sweet talk, such as requests to get to know her better ("I'm in awe cause you shine like the sun / Let me be the one to enjoy you (enjoy you) / Let's kick it girl (girl)"). The depictions of the woman's beauty are being waxed like romanticized poetry dripping with adoration. In fact, all that the protagonist seems

to focus on is her appearance and that is enough for him to declare his determination to get her (“Oh baby you know by now that I want you bad / I'm floating on thin air I can't come down / Cupid hit me already damn / Now I can't leave till seven digits are in my hand, my hand”). The emphasis placed on appearance alone can come across as quite objectifying, which could indicate a degree of hostile sexism. Yet, the adoration and admiration here is overwhelming and no traces of aggression or cautiousness of the woman can be found. Instead, the woman is placed on a pedestal when the protagonist describes her as downright angelic. Furthermore, he compares her to a flower he could water, i.e. take care of and nurture. Thus, the context can be labelled as one of benevolent sexism in this case as well.

Female artists seem to generally acknowledge the use of *baby* as an endearment. This seems to be true especially in cases where the woman and the man are more intimately involved (e.g. in a relationship). In these cases, it is evident that *baby* is not used or taken as an offensive term. In Sunshine Anderson’s “Heard It All Before”, *baby* is employed as a term of endearment in connection to sweet talk and persuasion. Tellingly, the term *sweet talk*, in fact, occurs in the lyrics as well:

Heard it all before (heard it all before)
 All of ya lies, all of ya sweet talk
Baby this, **Baby** that
 But your lies ain't working now (now) look who's hurting now (look who's hurting now)
 See I had to shut you down (down, had to shut you down)
 Played the fool before (played the fool before)
 I was your fool I believed in you
 Yes I did yes I did

(2001:10)

While the context in the song is a woman breaking up with her partner due to his infidelity, the resentment towards him seems to be based on his actions and ‘game’ rather than him calling her his *baby*. Using the term seems to have been the norm for the pair, as can be seen in the lyrics where the female artist quotes her now ex-partner:

Heard it all before (heard it all before)
 Let me explain, **baby (baby)**, it's not what you think, that's what you said to me
 But your lies ain't working now (now) look who's hurting now (now)
 See I had to shut you down (down, I had to shut you down)
 Played the fool before (played the fool before)
 You got a good game I must admit I was it (I was it) but it's over

(2001:10)

The protagonist is tired of the man’s infidelity and breaks up with him with the concession that indeed his “game” was good and she was had (“Played the fool before (played the fool before) / I was your fool I believed in you”) but the situation would now change. Exceptionally, this song does not seem to include sexism of any kind. There seems to be no mention of a conventional role division, as we do not know about the employment of the

woman. Also, there is no talk of the man as the provider and the woman gets to keep the house after the break-up, which may indicate either a divorce settlement of a kind or that the house was hers all along. That eliminates benevolent sexism. And then, while the vengeful tone is easily discernible in the song, no verbal aggression is present (despite the threat of him getting a beating: “bout to call my peeps and take it to the streets”), nor is there any power struggle between the pair. That, in turn, excludes hostile sexism.

In Erykah Badu’s “Bag Lady”, *baby* is used as a form of address from one woman to another. In this context, the appellation, aside from its function as an endearment, also seems to imply a certain closeness and familiarity even when used between strangers:

Girl I know
Sometimes it's hard and we can't let go
If someone hurts you oh so bad inside
You can't deny it, you can't stop crying
So if you start breathing then you won't believe it (one of these days you gonna see)
You'll feel so much better, so much better **baby** (one of these days you gonna see)
(2000:12)

“Bag Lady” is a song clearly directed to other women telling them to “pack light” and not take too much baggage or hold on to it too tightly for that could lead to them missing out in life (“Bag lady you gon' miss your bus / You can't hurry up 'cos you've got too much stuff”) and scaring others away from them (“When they see you coming niggas take off running / From you, it's true, oh yes they do”). The *baggage* in the song seems to refer to emotional baggage. The message of the song is to leave most of it behind and move on in life. This song does not directly involve a relationship between a man and a woman. Instead, it chooses to focus on a sisterly female protagonist who speaks in a familiar manner giving advice on moving on in life. The context does not seem to include sexism of any kind, either.

As regards the definitions listed in the dictionaries consulted, the entries in CDS proved to be quite accurate. There is evidence manifesting the use of *baby* as a term of affection, as something used for an attractive young woman, and the self-referential use was also confirmed. CDS also mentions the use of *baby* as a general term of address between people of either sex among the African American community. This claim was also confirmed. *Baby* has proven itself as a multipurpose appellation, some of the contexts implying a longer relationship between two parties, others a shorter encounter with a clear sexual/romantic agenda or taking a familiar, sisterly stance to talk to other women. DCS also mentions the possible patronizing or offensive effect that the use of *baby* can have when men use it to address women. In the current context of R&B and hip hop (with strong ties to the African American community), this claim is not validated.

As concerns its function in the sentence, *baby* is overwhelmingly used as a vocative to address the listener/the woman in the song directly (first and foremost, most songs with lines including *baby* seem to be directed at a woman). Out of the combined 1275 occurrences of the singular *baby*, notably only about 7% were non-vocative. The plural form *babies*, in reference to women, yields but a single occurrence of the non-vocative nature, making it highly unusual.

It can lastly be observed that (within the scope of the 300 songs included in this study), quite a few occurrences of *baby* are found to refer to men, children, things or other people in general. The uses of the term *baby* shown in Table 2 and Figure 2 concern women either directly or, in a few cases, ambiguously (the appellation has no conclusive contextual evidence against it referring to a woman). The cases where the appellation refers to men or children, or is too general/ambiguous to verify a possible reference to women, are ignored in the figures. Interestingly, the number of terms that were left out was notably high (435 occurrences in as many as 96 songs), with the majority of the excluded terms referring to men. This proves that *baby*, in fact, is frequently used by both sexes for both women and men. The appellation is mostly used as an endearment to persons of the opposite sex, even when it refers to men, as shown by an extract from Beyoncé's part in "Crazy in Love" below:

Got me looking, so crazy, my **baby**
I'm not myself lately, I'm foolish, I don't do this
I've been playing myself, **baby**, I don't care
Cause your love's got the best of me
And **baby** you're making a fool of me
You got me sprung and I don't care who sees
Cause **baby** you got me, (you got me) you got me, so crazy, **baby**
(2003:14)

The cases where *baby* actually refers to an infant or a young child turned out to be quite rare in the context of R&B and hip hop lyrics, e.g. "Bitch ride a dick like she makin a baby" (2000:20). Some instances of *baby* were also used as part of a compound to refer to a role involving children, such as *baby mama* and *baby daddy*: e.g. "They like, "Monty, can you be my baby daddy?" (yeah)" (2015:7).

In some cases, it was difficult to interpret the referent of the appellation. For example, Nelly's "Country Grammar (Hot Shit)" makes use of elements from the children's song "Down, Down Baby" in its chorus, with *baby* borrowed and planted into the newer version with altered lyrics. The difficulty here is to ascertain whether Nelly is addressing women only, everyone in general or perhaps even some anti-fans that he intends to belittle and challenge with *baby*. In the light of the overall context, the audience is most likely "other

niggas”, i.e. men. This song works to boost a male voice’s masculine ego (a nigga) and prove his street credibility (*street sweepers* (‘shotguns’), cars, and money, etc.). In short, it seemingly acts as a bragging song. The term *baby* is only present in the verses adopted (and modified) from the children’s song:

I'm goin down down **baby**, yo' street in a Range Rover
Street sweeper **baby**, cocked ready to let it go
Shimmy shimmy cocoa what? Listen to it pound
Light it up and take a puff, pass it to me now.
(2000:19)

Additionally, *baby* is also used in general shout-outs, as well as the names of the artists (e.g. Lil Wayne often wants to be referred to as *Weezy Baby*, among other monikers, and his record label Young Money Entertainment, is often mentioned in his songs with the shout-out *Young Mula, baby!*). Lastly, *baby* proves its versatility in being also used to refer to anything generally. In Jay-Z’s “Holy Grail” (featuring Justin Timberlake), *baby* can be interpreted to refer to fame (2013:5). In the song “Lose my mind” from Jeezy with Plies as a featuring artist, then, *baby* acts more like a general interjection:

Why y'all trip
I'm just fine
12:45, bout that time
Couldn't get it all week, time to unwind
Drink like a tank, lose my mind (yeah)
This shit cray, way too bad (too bad)
Rosé **baby**, waste two stacks
Hottest thing in the lot, that there mine
Can't spell sober, lost my mind
(2010:19)

This use of *baby* in a general sense is not restricted to men, as evidenced by Alicia Keys in her song “This Girl is on Fire”:

Everybody stares as she goes by
Cause they can see the flame that's in her eyes
Watch her as she's lighting up the night
Nobody knows that she's a lonely girl
And it's a lonely world
But she gon' let it burn, **baby**, burn, **baby**.
(2013:12)

6.3 Bitch

The third most frequently used female appellation in the songs studied proved to be *bitch*, with 325 occurrences in 66 songs. While *bitch* does indeed place third when it comes to the number of occurrences, it is important to notice that unlike the last two appellations *girl* and *baby* that were each present over 800 times in at least 150 songs, *bitch* is in a different league with its smaller numbers of occurrences and songs. In fact, the former two appellations are clearly in their own category that no other appellation here can reach numbers-wise. Table 3 shows the frequency of *bitch* during the timespan of this study.

Bitch*

Year	Occurrences	Songs
2000	6	2
2001	1	1
2002	44	3
2003	31	4
2004	7	4
2005	11	3
2007	4	2
2008	11	1
2009	5	5
2010	8	4
2011	13	6
2012	24	8
2013	71	6
2014	37	10
2015	52	7

total:	325	66
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Table 3: *Bitch*

The number of songs that feature *bitch* ranges between 1-10 songs each year with the ultimate low points being the years 2001 and 2008 (with just one song featuring *bitch* each year) and the culmination in 2014 (10 songs). Despite some fluctuation in the number of songs attesting the appellation, the numbers seem to be on a rise despite the still relatively low numbers. A similar increase can be seen in the occurrences.

On average, out of 20 songs each year, the calculated mean of songs with *bitch* lies at 4,4 and the songs that feature *bitch* tend to do so $\approx 4,924$ times each (the mean is pushed upwards by the relatively high numbers during the more recent years). For an illustration of the changes, Figure 3 provides the numbers in percentages with accompanying trend lines.

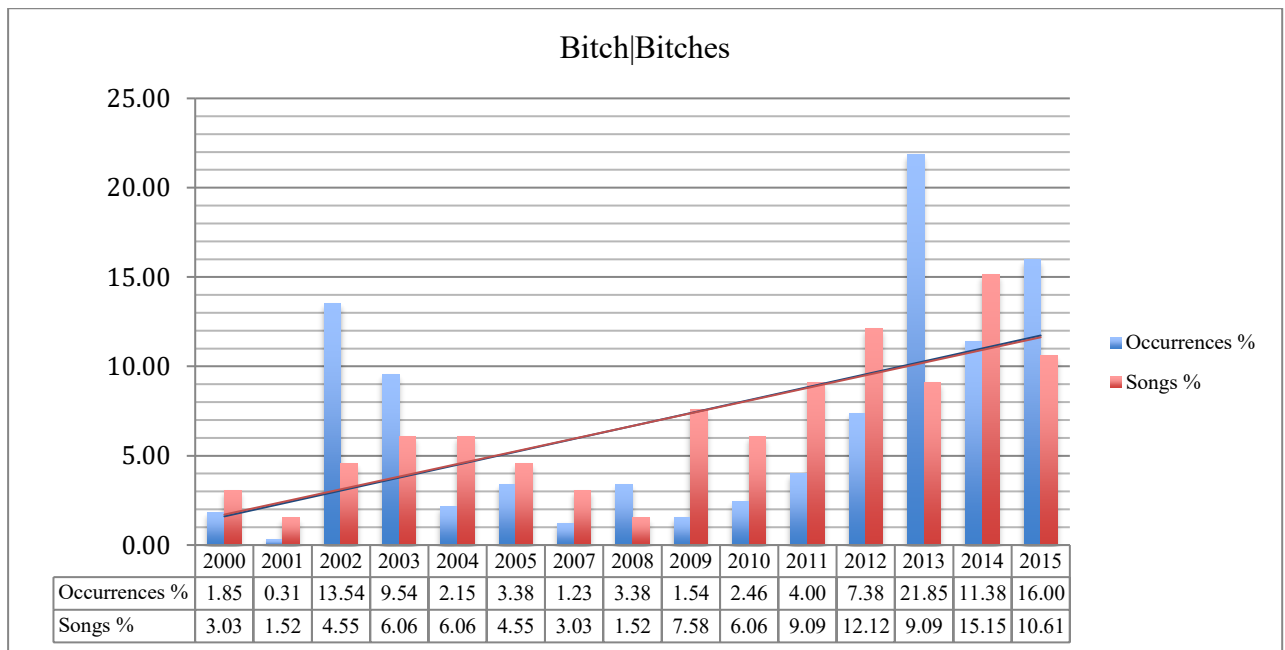


Figure 3: *Bitch*

The figure indicates a drastic growth in the number of songs and occurrences. Interestingly, the trend line for the occurrences is so parallel to that of the number of the songs that they can hardly be told apart in the figure at all. The regression analysis supports this increase. The p-value of the occurrences is approximately 0,057, which means that there may or may not be some increase in occurrences. While this may sound quite uncertain, the value is still enough to prevent discarding the *null hypothesis* straight out, since some marginal changes may (or may not) be present. The p-value of the songs, however, is 0,00034, making the change statistically *very significant* with undeniably strong evidence against the *null hypothesis*.

The contextual material on *bitch* is rich in language and varies much in terms of connotations and sexism. The word itself has many uses, some having more to do with women than others. According to CDS, *bitch* has been a derogatory word since the 17th century with the earlier derogatory use implying disapproval of either the woman's character or her sexuality. From the 18th century on, the word came to be used for prostitutes as well. CDS further specifies that in Black speech since 1910, the term has also been applied to a person in a way that is not necessarily negative. This use is not aimed solely at women nor only used by men. Since the 1970s, the Black community in the US has also used the word for a girlfriend. DAS dates the derogatory term further back to about the 15th century, although without the sexuality dimension – the word is said to have been used for a disliked/disapproved woman (especially one of a malicious, devious or heartless nature). Interestingly, though, there is a mention from the 1990s of black teenagers using the word as a synonym of *girl* too. DCS also defines the term as highly pejorative for women – a term that has been around since the Middle English

period. Importantly, DCS also has information about the African American community, stating that “[i]n black American speech ‘bitch’ can be used with proprietorial or condescending overtones rather than with personal malice.” FD offers more depth on the matter in the form of multiple quotes from scholars. Contrary to the dictionaries cited, one of the quotations in FD claims the following: “...Bitch should not be regarded as a derogatory word, but a complimentary one...” Apparently, this is especially true when it comes to a quality in a woman that would traditionally be thought of as a good quality in a man, too (e.g. ambition). Another quotation describes the term as a rebuttal or a response from a (male) oppressor group to the (female) oppressed group when the latter is challenging the oppressor on their oppressive tactics⁶¹. Furthermore, one of the quotations describes *bitch* as “[a] female character introduced on television in lieu of female villains”. Also, she is “...strong-willed, selfish, destructive, a sneak and a cheat” with minor crimes as she still lacks what it takes to make her truly evil in character. The relatively comprehensive entry in FD also speculates that it is unlikely for the word to be rehabilitated from its negative connotations since it has commonly been established as an offensive swearword and its delivery can easily be done in a way that clearly implies an intention to offend.

The three slang dictionaries all describe *bitch* as a derogatory term mainly for women. Under some of the definitions listed, both CDS and FD mention possible connections to sexual depravity (i.e. lewdness) when the lexeme is applied to women. DAS and CDS also state that *bitch* can be offensive without being sexist as well. Reversely, the appellation can be sexist without being straight-out offensive as well, which will be shown by the analyses of the 15 randomly chosen songs in the paragraphs that follow.

Most songs featuring *bitch* illustrated a use for women who were of no particular importance to the protagonist of the song. No promises of emotional involvement were given - in fact, these women were mostly described as more fitting for short-term relationships, with many cases hinting at women who are sexually promiscuous if not straight out prostitutes. In the song “Wait (The Whisper Song)” by Ying Yang Twins, the male protagonists strongly focus on the female character’s bodily attributes while constantly making sexual suggestions imbued with male arrogance about being able to satisfy her without any doubt:

⁶¹ One of the examples given is between a rapist and his victim.
V: “You’re hurting me.”
R: “Shut up, you bitch, and do as I say.”

Hey **bitch**, wait til' you see my dick
Wait til' you see my dick
Hey **bitch**, wait til' you see my dick
I'm a beat that pussy up

(2005:9)

In “Blurred Lines” by Robin Thicke with Pharrell Williams and T.I. as featuring artists, the male protagonists use the appellation to refer to a woman they take a liking to in a club. Thicke straightforwardly says to her “You the hottest bitch in this place” in a tone that could be interpreted as quite complimentary. In a later verse, T.I. raps about the same woman with the same lexeme, but offering more depth to how he would picture the relationship between them:

Had a **bitch**, but she ain't bad as you
So, hit me up when you pass through
I'll give you something big enough to tear your ass in two
Swag on 'em even when you dress casual
I mean, it's almost unbearable (hey hey hey)
In a hundred years not dare would I
Pull a Pharcyde, let you pass me by (okay)
Nothin' like your last guy, he too square for you
He don't smack that ass and pull your hair like that (you like that)
So I'm just watching (just watching) and waitin' (and waitin')
For you to salute the true big pimpin' (hey)
Not many women can refuse this pimping (hey hey hey)
I'm a nice guy, but don't get confused, this pimpin'

(2013:2)

The main theme in “Wait (The Whisper song)” revolves around seducing a woman, sexual intercourse and proving male virility via suggestions of rough copulation and promises of (somewhat violent) satisfaction. Despite the overtly sexual tone, the context itself is neither adoring nor is it hateful by nature. What can be found, though, is sexual objectification of some level, as the woman is only considered in light of satisfying sexual needs. However, while the woman has been given no voice in the song, the constant suggestions can also be interpreted to mean that she actually has the possibility to decline whenever she so wishes. That is a sign of agency, of a semblance of control retained in the situation. Thus, while this song is somewhat sexually objectifying, which is a marker of hostile sexism, the agency here mitigates the effect and brings the context closer to neutral ground.

In “Blurred Lines”, *bitch* is generally reserved for a sexually attractive, ‘hot’ woman. The male protagonists admire her appearance and tell her to embrace her freedom and get a man who could satisfy her better than her last one – preferably one of the male protagonists, of course. More specifically, in T.I.’s rap, he calls a woman with whom he has had some relations a *bitch*. Disregarding the traditionally offensive connotation associated with this lexeme, the word is actually used quite neutrally here. The line “[h]ad a bitch, but she ain't bad as you” draws a parallel between the last woman and the present with both of them

sharing the appellation, the distinction being that one of them is ‘badder’ than the other. In this context, being ‘badder’ is apparently better and something worth mentioning to the woman as a compliment (– most likely concerning her appearance). Despite the woman being such a ‘bad’ *bitch*, the rap verse by mentioning other women also specifies to the woman that the nature of their involvement will not be monogamous. There is also no talk of a deeper commitment or serious future together. Instead, the rap verse, like the rest of the song, is more lighthearted in nature with an admiring man asking the woman to choose himself to satisfy her sexually. While “Blurred Lines” can seem quite sexually objectifying at the first glance, a closer inspection reveals a retained agency in regard to the woman. Undeniably, the song is purely centered on the male protagonists’ sexual suggestions to her – yet, as was the case with “Wait (The Whisper Song)”, she still has the option and power to turn down their advances. Thus, as opposed to including hostile sexism brought on by sexual objectification, this agency makes the song more contextually neutral in nature. Of course, not everyone would agree with this somewhat optimistic interpretation. Surprisingly, this song was critically received for possible misogynistic connotations and promoting date rape culture. While an interpretation of the song as involving hostile sexism is possible, it is interesting that “Blurred Lines” was labeled as extremely scandalous when there are a plethora of remarkably more questionable songs in the same genres in regard to expressing misogyny and promoting date rape culture (e.g. “Move Bitch, Get Out The Way” by Ludacris featuring Mystikal and I-20 from 2001). Personally, I think this scandalized interpretation works only on the surface level and disregards the space and power given to the woman in this scenario.

Some of the songs characterize *bitch* as a taken woman, and quite often an unfaithful one at that. In this use, some cases are paired with possessive pronouns, such as “your” and “my”, to further highlight the woman’s existing involvement with somebody, be it long-term or short. “Slow Motion” by Juvenile with Soulja Slim as a featuring artist describes a situation where these *bitches* are married women who cheat on their spouses with the male protagonists. Soulja Slim introduces these women in the first verse as follows:

Keep being hard-headed and I'ma make you get on me
Got human enough disguise but my face is a doggy
If you loving my bark let me bury my bone
I got four or five bad married **bitches** at home
One of my **bitches** feel in love with that outside dick
That outside dick keep them hoes sick like

(2004:11)

The use of the appellation is then continued by Juvenile in the second verse:

It's like I got the world in my palms
Your girl up under my arms, she fucked up from the charm
She love the way the dick stay hard from 12 till early in the morn
Fine **bitches** if you listening, you heard me I'm strong
If you going through your cycle I ain't with It I'm gone

(2004:11)

R. Kelly (in collaboration with T-Pain and T.I.) also echoes this depiction of an unfaithful woman in his song “I’m A Flirt”, in which he warns other men to keep their women away from him lest he steal them away:

A dog on the prowl when I'm walking through the mall
If I could man I would probably fuck with all of y'all
Yeah, yeah homie you say she your girlfriend
But when I step up to her I'ma be like cousin
Believe me man this is how them playas do it in the Chi
And plus we got them playerette flirterers in the Chi
Now the moral of this story is cuff your **bitch**
'Cause hey, I'm black, handsome, I sing plus I'm rich and I'm a flirt

(2007:15)

In “Slow Motion” Soulja Slim straightforwardly states that the male protagonist has multiple married women he keeps in circulation. The women are also characterized as ‘bad’, which here could be a comment on their immorality for cheating on their own spouses – yet, as in the case of “Blurred Lines”, it is more likely that the ‘bad’ here is more of a compliment on her attractiveness and/or her sex appeal. The women in the song are strictly for short-term involvements of a carnal nature with promises of sex without deeper attachment. Juvenile’s part in the song seems to address these aforementioned (‘bad’) *bitches* with the adjective ‘fine’ to make a distinction between these ‘bad’ and ‘fine’ *bitches* and those of the regular kind without approvingly descriptive words. The message is that the male protagonist will only consort with women he deems attractive/sexy enough and that he will not put up with any extra ‘baggage’ that women may spring on him aside from sex (the “cycle” in the lyrics refers to possible mood swings and emotional reactions often connected with menstruation). Also, the context places these women in a position where they are treated like tokens of ‘toughness’ and virility earning bragging rights to the male protagonists who manage to steal them from other men and thus successfully one-up their competition. *Bitch* in this song has minuscule agency: *bitches* are described as women who can fall in love, and who may even dare to try to spring their emotions and vulnerabilities on men – yet, this independence and power is mitigated by the sexual objectification forced upon them by the men in the song. This thinking of women as prizes of a sort coupled with the power struggle between these women and the male protagonists (e.g. who plays who) indicates hostile sexism – especially since *bitch* is used alongside *hoe*, which, in itself, seems to include no agency whatsoever.

“I’m A Flirt” by R. Kelly featuring T-Pain and T.I. mostly concentrates on proving just how successful the male protagonists have been with their careers, accumulating wealth and getting (and satisfying) women. These women cannot seem to resist them nor can they be trusted to stay faithful. Similar to “Slow Motion”, there seem to be no plans for long-term involvement with these women, as the focus lies in purely carnal needs – with other women on the side too, it seems. The agency of *bitch* in this case is also very minimal. Apparently, she would need to be ‘cuffed’ or she would wander away. This implies that she is an independent decision-maker and can indeed make moves as she wishes. However, the women in the song apparently cannot seem to resist these men and their ‘game’ as they get ‘played’ if nobody is there to guard them. This critically downplays the women’s intelligence and presents them more as puppets (subordinate position) ready to be manipulated at any time, as they need to be controlled and observed. Also, as in “Slow Motion” these women are mostly used instrumentally to, more or less indirectly, shore up the male protagonists’ masculinity, sexuality, accomplishments and wealth. This song could be deemed to include hostile sexism due to sexual objectification and mistrustful attitude displayed towards women leading to controlling behavior and possible power struggle between men and women.

Even when the woman is not taken, either by the male protagonists or some other men (from whom they could ‘steal’ the woman away), she can still be used as a status marker for the male protagonists. Similar to trophies, cars, certain apparel and other material goods, these women serve as proof of the value and character of the man, making him more street credible, wanted and virile. In “Hot Boyz”, a song by Missy Elliot featuring Q-Tip, Nas, Lil’ Mo and Eve, Nas’s rap verse does not especially specify the status of the *bitches* as single or taken. For that reason this song also has no commentary on the fidelity of these women.

Escobar CBR bikes
I'm switching gears
Headlights, shine so bright
Bitches freeze like deers
Them fiends want that deep boy
Feds send in a decoy, pack that heat boy
Push ya where ya rest in peace boy

(2000:4)

In this song, the male protagonist uses the women instrumentally to emphasize his assets; namely his motor bike that acts as a showstopper. Unlike “Slow Motion” and “I’m A Flirt”, in this song *bitch*, as used by Nas, has no agency whatsoever. The brief mention of these *bitches* in the rap is not given much importance and the reference gets buried under the other things Nas mentions to prove the status of the protagonist as a ‘real nigga’ (i.e. violence, guns, cars, sex). The set-up of the song alternates between the male and female protagonists. The male

voices' lines revolve around street credibility, violent scenes and sex, whereas the females voices validate the men's identity by expressing their admiration for them; they are impressed with the men, their act, wealth and their material possessions and offer to take care of the men ("Can I move with you, do you need some help? / I cook boy, I'll give you more"). While it is not directly stated, the song strongly implies the dynamic where the woman takes care of the man and he will in turn provide the material goods. For that reason, this song clearly includes some benevolent sexism, though clearly not in the most romantic sense.

Bitch can also carry quite an emotional load. In Gucci Mane's verse in "Break Up" by Mario featuring Sean Garrett and Gucci Mane, the woman arouses some bitter feelings in the male protagonist:

Now baby girl had dumped me, she no longer wants me
I'm no longer hired, she said that I been fired
On to the next one - more fish in the sea
Girls are like buses: miss one next 15 one comin'
Gucci Mane crazy and the ice game stuntin' (Burr)
Swag so stupid still the **bitch** straight dumped me (what)
Over, no more smoking doja (no)
Baby girl went A.W.O.L, she used to be my soulja
(2009:3)

The woman wants to break up with the male protagonist. Despite his unfaithfulness, he still loves her and wants to convince her to reverse her decision on the break up. The context includes clear signs of benevolent sexism: there is a straightforward statement where he confesses his love to her, he still adores her and wants to work things out, and has not failed to provide her with material goods and satisfy her needs for sex and closeness in the past. Here, *bitch* is used in a passing comment that stands out in the otherwise benevolently sexist song. In this context it could have been meant as a general appellation with no ill will towards the woman. More likely, though, the lexeme was used in a more insulting manner to punish her for leaving him despite his 'stuntin' ice game' and 'swag'. This behavior, though only a little hostile, indicates a small amount of hostile sexism, which is not surprising considering the close connection between benevolent and hostile sexism as flipsides of the same coin.

"I Don't F**k With You" by Big Sean featuring E-40 is also about a break up, though in a more angry, offensive and hostile tone. In this song *bitch*, in reference to women, is used in two different ways. Towards one of the male protagonists' exes, they are offensive and crass. Big Sean's chorus peppered with negatively evaluative adjectives is nothing if not provocative and confrontational towards the ex:

I don't fuck with you
 You lil' stupid ass **bitch**, I ain't fuckin' with you
 You lil', you lil' dumb ass **bitch**, I ain't fuckin' with you
 I got a million trillion things I'd rather fuckin' do
 Than to be fuckin' with you, lil' stupid ass
 I don't give a fuck, I don't give a fuck
 I don't, I don't, I don't give a fuck
Bitch, I don't give a fuck about you
 Or anything that you do
 Don't give a fuck about you, or anything that you do
 (2015:18)

When it comes to other women in general who may or may not be prostitutes, the male protagonists are noticeably less offensive (though not perhaps very respectful either) with lines such as “On the phone with a bitch who can't do shit/ For a pimp but make a nigga hella rich” by E-40 and one of Big Sean’s verses:

I swear I hear some new bullshit every day I'm wakin' up
 It seem like nowadays everybody breakin' up
 That shit can break you down if you lose a good girl
 I guess you need a bad **bitch** to come around and make it up
 I guess drama makes for the best content
 Everything got a bad side, even a conscience
 Now you're drinkin' 'til you're unconscious
 Feel me when you get a fine **bitch**
 Just don't forget to read the fine print
 (2015:18)

The core of the song, as relayed by the male protagonists, revolves around having dodged the so-called bullet (i.e. the ex-girlfriend), their success with business and accumulating wealth, being street-credible and tough men (allusions of spending money in a casino, keeping violent and dangerous company, smoking weed, driving an expensive vehicle, etc.) and playing around with other women (if not actually pimping them out). The male protagonist with the ex wants nothing to do with her, claiming that he has had it with her and that there are no feelings left for her with a clear statement that encapsulates his feelings towards her: “Yeah, and every day I wake up celebratin' shit / Why? ‘Cause I just dodged a bullet from a crazy bitch”. Other women are described either as prostitutes who stand outside to attract customers and make their pimps rich or as ‘bad’ or ‘fine’ *bitches* (i.e. sexy/attractive women) that can turn a bad situation into a better one – though with a possible flipside (“Feel me when you get a fine bitch / Just don't forget to read the fine print”). As in the previous cases, these women are described without any implication of emotional involvement or a possible long-term relationship. Instead, it is suggested that they have hidden agendas and motives. Calling the ex-partner *bitch* demotes and degrades her and, with the more or less hidden passive aggressiveness, is obviously meant to offend her or act as a punishment of a kind. Taking the strongly punitive, mistrustful and hateful nature of the song into account, the

context contains clear signs of hostile sexism. Some indication of ambivalent sexism is present as well, since one of the male protagonists reluctantly hopes she is “doin’ cool” at the end of the last verse before launching into an outro part that echoes the more offensive chorus. This contradiction brings out the conflicting feelings for the ex-partner who has gone from a loved one to someone more distant, who evokes bitter feelings. Similarly to most of the songs in this section, the women here have the power to act and make decisions on their own. Even the prostitutes are not described as impotent, though markedly less independent. While some lines in the song uses women instrumentally to boost the male protagonists’ status, this was not a constant in the song since one of the main themes was the woman herself (the ex).

The female artists use the appellation as well, though not nearly as frequently as the male artists. In their use, the lexeme seems to be used as a device for distinguishing either the in-group or the out-group. In “My Chick Bad”, a song by Ludacris with Nicki Minaj as the featuring artist, Nicki uses *bitch* for women she does not consider part of her group. She disregards their attempts to get close to her, creating a distance by verbal means:

Young, now-now-now-now/ (let’s go)
Now all these **bitches** wanna try and be my besty
But I take a left and leave them hangin’ like a teste
Trash talk to ‘em then I put ‘em in a Hefty/ (oh)
Runnin’ down the court I’m dunkin’ on ‘em, Lisa Leslie
(2010:17)

Nicki uses the appellation in the same way in Drake’s “Make Me Proud” after the male protagonist’s compliment of her being “bad as fuck”:

...B-b-b-bet I am
All of them **bitches** I’m badder than
Mansions in Malibu, Babylon
But I never mention everything I dabble in
And I always ride slow when I’m straddling
And my shit’s so wet you gotta paddle in
(2012:10)

Context-wise these two songs are remarkably similar. In “My Chick Bad” the woman in the song is sexy (so sexy he might just tip her for her stripper moves on the pole), tough, and apparently better than any woman at seemingly whatever is thrown at her, which makes other women envious. This is primarily brought up by the male protagonist who tells all the other men that whatever ‘their’ woman could do, ‘his’ could definitely outdo. Similarly, “Make Me Proud” is essentially an adoring praise of the woman in the song who is tough, smart, fit, healthy, productive with matters that she needs to take care of, attractive, and quite frankly, wife material. The male protagonist in the song also calls her “the one” for him. While the

romantic idea of love coupled with the strong adoration present in “Make Me Proud” could mistakenly be thought to indicate benevolent sexism, the woman in the song is not characterized as someone the male protagonist protects or provides for – instead the rap verse by Nicki reinforces the idea of the woman as a capable individual with her own dealings. “My Chick Bad” is essentially quite similar both in its nature, as well as in its role division in the song; i.e. the man proudly watches from the sidelines as a vocal spectator and the woman speaks up for herself in an assertive way with clear agency.

In “Hot Boyz” by Missy Elliot featuring Q-Tip, Nas, Lil’ Mo and Eve, it is shown that women in the same in-group can also be *bitches*:

Get a tingle in my spine, what spot? Only he knows
He's a hot boy, Missy sing it out and I'm gon' spit it
Ruff Ryders scream it loud, daddy is you with it
If your team can't handle my **bitches** then we gon' ride
Brickhouse stallions, keep thugs open wide, huh
'Illadelph's best E-V-E stay committed
Mess with many, but if he ain't the realer
I ain't with it, with it

(2000:4)

In Eve’s rap verse, the possessive pronoun “my” coupled with the *bitches* is used to refer to the female protagonist and her friends. They keep together as a group by making collective decisions and leaving together should they not be satisfied with the company. This depiction of their group portrays them as strong, independent, proud and demanding. As previously mentioned, this song illustrates traditional roles of men as providers and women as caretakers despite the context not being of the most romantic or adoring kind. Yet, a more careful reading of the women’s lines in the song reveals that despite the women’s compliance and admiration towards the men’s attitude, offerings and wealth, they also take a strong stand and make demands for themselves in an almost wilful way with lines such as: “Can you treat me good, I won't settle for less“ and “Hot boy, keep me right / Play your part and I'll keep it tight”.

A woman can also label herself as a *bitch* to show her assertiveness as a positive quality. In “Fancy” by Iggy Azalea featuring Charli XCX, the appellation is used to refer to the female protagonist herself:

First things first, I'm the realest (Realest)
Drop this and let the whole world feel it (Let 'em feel it)
And I'm still in the Murda Bizness
I can hold you down, like I'm giving lessons in physics (Right, right?)
You should want a bad **bitch** like this (Huh?)
Drop it low and pick it up just like this (Yeah)
Cup of Ace, cup of Goose, cup of Cris
High heels, something worth a half a ticket on my wrist (On my wrist)
Taking all the liquor straight, never chase that (Never)
Rooftop like we bringing '88 back (What?)
Bring the hooks in, where the bass at?
Champagne spilling, you should taste that

(2014:3)

The female protagonist in the song describes herself as ‘real’, hard-working, sexy, successful, fierce and tough. She is not afraid to claim her own space in a domain mostly occupied by men be it in the music industry, with her business transactions, in the club with flowing alcohol, or in regard to having sex as she wishes, her body, and looks. This fearless independence, pride and dominant attitude culminates in labeling herself a “bad” *bitch* – a moniker with which she is proud to associate herself. The female protagonists in the song are self-reliant, so no men as providers are needed. There is also no mention of romantic feelings or traditional female roles in the context. No ill-will or distrust towards men can be found either – in fact, the perspective of the song is really quite subjective and focused on bragging and proving the female protagonists’ might, success and independence, instead of commenting on love, and any gender roles. For that reason, this song does not really seem to reflect any sexist attitudes.

Bitch is generally characterized as derogatory by all three slang dictionaries, with FD also stating its disparaging potential. In contexts imbued with bitter feelings, the punitive use was definitely there. Oddly, though, not many of the songs in the sample actually displayed this openly bitter and hateful attitude towards women, per se. The disparaging use mentioned in FD in the form of oppressing others by setting oneself in the role of the oppressor (i.e. calling the adversary a *bitch* to undermine them), on the contrary, was present in notably many songs where the protagonists wished to elevate themselves. In these contexts the oppressors could either be men wishing to undermine women in general to tone down the women’s importance in the narratives, or even women setting themselves apart from other females by stepping on a pedestal themselves and figuratively trampling others. Yet, the use of the lexeme in these contexts was mostly condescending but not imbued with personal malice by any means – this reinforces the statement given by DCS of the possible lack of focused personal animosity.

Many of the songs by the male artists also highlighted the character of these *bitches* as somewhat sexually promiscuous women that may in some cases be prostitutes, too. Both FD

and CDS had mentions of such usage in their definitions. Even when the woman is mostly the object of observation only, the promiscuity is postulated by the male protagonists: she is sexy/dressed sexily, thus she must welcome my gaze, in which case, she should welcome my advances and suggestions, too. The use of the lexeme for one's girlfriend in the black community is stated in CDS and it is apparent that even in this kind of context, the assumptions of promiscuity can still persist. In these cases, this promiscuity is also extended to women who are in a committed, long-term relationship, as some of these *bitches* seem to fool around with other men while having a companion elsewhere, whom they are cheating on. The aforementioned act of immorality makes the women seem devious and heartless by nature similar to a depiction in DAS that focuses solely on the character of the woman bearing the appellation. Interestingly, the topic of cheating also brings the proprietorial aspect of the term mentioned in DCS to the forefront in a particularly notable way. Being able to lure in someone else's spouse (or being in a position to reject someone else's willing spouse) elevates one's status and validates the male as more manly, virile and wanted compared to the one who is getting cuckolded. The cuckolded person is seen as lacking or unable to perform well enough sexually by default. The characterization of these *bitches* as people who are adulterous and only after better profits and gains for themselves is demeaning to say the least and could perhaps be thought to parallel the FD depiction of *bitch* as a female villain capable of comparably small, harmful incidents. With the negatively evaluative content mostly focused on the woman's personality and character, the definitions in CDS and DAS also show their accuracy here once again. The unfavorable characterization of these unfaithful women, however, is largely overshadowed by the male protagonists bragging about their own might and greatness in most of the songs. For bragging and displaying one's masculine power, these women are mostly used instrumentally as status markers with heavy objectification involved.

Importantly, though, not all cases supported the claim of the appellation being pejorative by nature. The use of the lexeme was also quite neutral in some cases, as was stated in DAS, with the word being used almost as a synonym for any woman in black speech, including one's female friends. Additionally, as stated in FD, *bitch* may also denote a woman that has generally admirable male traits (e.g. ambition and assertiveness). This complimentary use occurred in self-reference by a female protagonist in a context where she shows herself unafraid to break into a traditionally male-dominated domain. That, however, was not the only complimentary use of the lexeme. While not mentioned in any of the consulted dictionaries, especially the male protagonists had the tendency to place a strong emphasis on the appearance of the women with additional descriptive words, such as 'fine' and 'bad' to comment on their looks as something sexy or attractive (e.g. a 'bad' *bitch*, as opposed to

bitch, is sexy and wanted by men). It was these descriptive words that really seemed to make the difference between the term being complimentary and neutral/pejorative in the songs. Regardless of the *bitch* possibly being a ‘bad’ one, most songs still hinted that involvement with these women was typically a short-term arrangement of a sexual nature. Even if they were not perhaps thought to be ideal for long-term relationships, they were still sought out for other kinds of company.

Careful reading also reveals that these women were depicted as quite rebellious, too, often stated to possibly act against the will of the men and the basic notion of traditionally agreeable women. While this revolt against lady-like behavior and sexuality could be gleaned from some of the definitions included in CDS and FD, the perspective of being wilful to men is not especially itemized in any of the consulted dictionaries. Interestingly, even the most sexualizing and objectifying contexts could still bring out the agency of the *bitch* (space and power) ranging from minimal (i.e. freeze) to notable (i.e. deny and leave/ invite and initiate). This also reinforces the role of *bitch* as a woman with revolutionary independence – whether or not it is welcomed by the men.

As regards its function in the sentence, the appellation *bitch* in reference to women is mostly used as a vocative. The corpus showcased many cases of non-vocative use as well (approximately 40%), but the vocative use was about 1.5 times more common. The plural form *bitches*, however, was remarkably more often used as a non-vocative (circa 90%). All in all, in the lyrics corpus, the singular *bitch* is much more common (218 occurrences) than the plural *bitches* (107 occurrences).

Lastly, the songs studied bring forth many instances where *bitch* is used of a place, some other people or a thing. *Bitch* has proven to have multiple meanings and uses besides the ones referring to women. All in all, 123 occurrences from 24 songs were excluded from the figures. Besides the references to women, *bitch* is also of a club and a large home in the lines “I’m sellin’ shit up in the club like I work in the bitch” (2002_16) and “I just bought a crib, three stories; that bitch a trilogy” (2015_18). That said, there are also some unclear cases, where it is unsure whether the reference is to a man, woman or club – the song “Get Your Freak On” by Missy Elliot clearly illustrates this problem:

Go, get ur, get ur, get ur, get ur, get ur freak on
Is that your **bitch**?
People you don't know
Me and Timbaland been hot since twenty years ago (yes)
(2001:11)

The context as a whole gives no clear clue nor is there anything in close connection to *bitch* to either prove or disprove any interpretation. *Bitch* could refer to some competition/anti-fan (aka. *a hater*), the girlfriend of the aforementioned person or the place that the said other person occupies and has come to call their own. As it stands, the referent could be anything from the list above. In fact, there are multiple songs and shout-outs to these *haters* as proving oneself to them seems to be a recurring trend. For example, the song “A Milli” by Lil Wayne (2008:14) sported lines such as: “...I do what I do, and you do what you can do about it / Bitch, I can turn a crack rock into a mountain — dare me! / Don't you compare me, ‘cause there ain't nobody near me...”. Additionally, *bitch* with its multipurpose use appears to be fitting for a car as well, e.g. Rich Boy featuring Polow Da Don in “Throw some D’s”:

Rich Boy sellin' crack
Fuck niggas wanna jack
Shit tight no slack
Just bought a Cadillac (Throw some, throw some D's on that **bitch**
Just bought a Cadillac (Throw some, Throw some D's on that **bitch!**)
(2007:18)

In these cases where *bitch* did not refer to a woman, only about 45% of the appellations occurred in a vocative use. Mostly, these non-vocative cases were preceded by words *this*, *that* and *my*.

6.4 Shorty

The fourth most frequently occurring female appellation is *shorty* with 216 occurrences in 58 songs. While one is less likely to come across *shorty* than *bitch*, the number of songs still indicates that the possibility of the former happening is still at a solid 19% in general. Table 4 lists the occurrence of *shorty* during each year.

Shorty Shorties		
Year	Occurrences	Songs
2000	1	1
2001	4	2
2002	16	4
2003	10	8
2004	8	4
2005	15	3
2007	59	8
2008	44	5
2009	15	7
2010	12	6
2011	9	4
2012	7	3
2013	0	0
2014	4	2
2015	12	1
total:	216	58

Table 4: *Shorty*

The number of songs featuring this appellation fluctuates with a peak in 2003 and 2007 (with 8 songs each year) and a low in 2013 (with no songs).

Of the 20 songs from each of the years 2000 to 2015 (excluding the year 2006), about 3,9 songs on average tend to feature *shorty* each year and each song with the appellation repeats it $\approx 3,724$ times on average. This average, however, is obviously pushed upwards with the noticeable increase in the occurrences during the years 2007 and 2008. Figure 4 presents the numbers in Table 4 in percentages with trend lines for a clearer analysis of the decline during the 15 years.

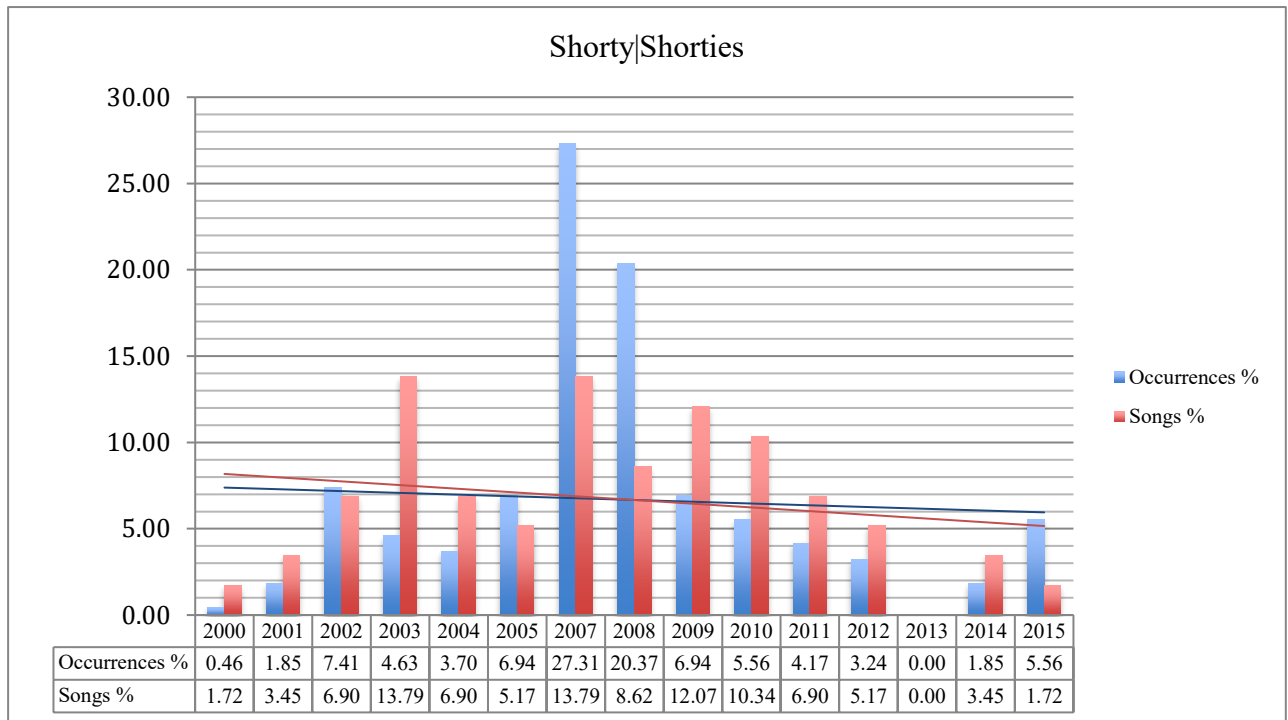


Figure 4: *Shorty*

With the figure showing obvious, major fluctuation in both the number of songs as well as the occurrences, a trend prediction can be somewhat unstable. The trend lines seem to indicate a minimal decrease. The regression analysis, however, disproves the trend lines with the p-values for the occurrences ($\approx 0,828$) and the songs ($\approx 0,429$), both being high enough for the *null hypothesis* to remain effective (no change over time).

The definitions given in DCS seem quite contradictory at first glance. On one hand, DCS states that in black speech, *shorty/shortie* refers to one's girlfriend and that the word has often been used as a term of endearment by males since 2000. On the other hand, DCS also has an entry for *shorty* as a girlfriend (from US usage), but this time the word is characterized as less than respectful. Like the previous entry, this one also mentions males speaking to or of their partners. Similar to the case of *girl*, there seems to be a fundamental difference in the connotations depending on the speech community. *Shorty*, like *girl*, does not seem to be offensive when used among the black community. CDS also lists uses in the black speech community, the most relevant one for this study being an entry stating that the black community (in the US) has been using *shorty* for a woman or girlfriend (occasionally even for a boyfriend) since the 1990s. Neither FD nor DAS lists *shorty* as a term for women in particular.

Generally, the uses of *shorty* could be divided into four main types. Most commonly the appellation is used to refer to an attractive woman who is either having fidelity issues herself or is encouraging such behaviour from a man. Both “Get It On Tonight” by Montell Jordan and “Lollipop” by Lil Wayne featuring Static Major provide examples of this usage. In Montell Jordan’s song, the male protagonist mentions having a steady partner:

Girl if it's alright (alright)
Let's go somewhere and get it on tonight (get it on, get it on)
I've got a girl, but you look good tonight (**shorty** you know my situation)
It's one on one tonight, tonight (get it on, get it on baby)
(2000:6)

Later details in the song reveal the relationship to be suffocating and loveless, which is driving him away to look for romantic love elsewhere. Content-wise, the obvious adoration and idealization of the woman coupled with the included notion of belonging together indicate benevolent sexism.

In “Lollipop” the narrative of the song introduces an attractive, sexually proactive woman in a club looking for a “thug” to “hump”:

shorty say the nigga that she with ain't shit
shorty say the nigga that she with ain't this
shorty say the nigga that she with can't hit
But, **shorty**, I'ma hit it, hit it like I can't miss
And “he can't do this,” and “he don't do that!”
shorty need a refund, need to bring that nigga back
Just like a refund, I make her bring that ass back
And she bring that ass back, because I like that
(2008:6)

The reason why the woman is scoping the club for sexual partners is stated to be her apparent dissatisfaction at her current partner at home. The song is very sexual by nature and strongly suggests that the men she chooses must be sexually superior to her partner. This creates an opportunity for the male protagonists of the song to prove and reaffirm their superior masculinity and sexual prowess with a jeering message to the other men about them not measuring up and thus losing their women. This song contains no mentions of love or emotional dependability. Instead, the relationship between the male protagonists and the woman is purely based on sexual needs and satisfying and boosting the male ego. Remarkably, the woman here is actually given enough space for her own agency when it comes to executing sexual acts and speaking her mind. Thus, while her role is very sex-centered, she has not been reduced to a purely sexual object either. For this reason, the song could be interpreted to be quite neutral when it comes to sexism despite its explicit content. Yet, it is her use as a status marker of a kind that accentuates her instrumental role in the song that also would suggest slight hostile sexism. The male protagonists’ use of women to

ascertain bragging rights and put down other men is actually found quite commonly in songs using *shorty* like this in cuckolding scenarios. In fact, Montell Jordan’s “Get It On Tonight” with romantic undertones is quite unusual in this category.

The second main type of use of *shorty* is employed for insignificant acquaintances. In these cases the appellation tends to refer to women who are of little importance to the male protagonists of the song. In “Frontin’” by Pharrell featuring Jay-Z, *shorty* is a woman one can meaninglessly flirt and play around with:

Every time your name was brought up
I would act all nonchalant in front of an audience
Like if you was just another **shorty** I put the naughty on
But uh, truth be told you threw me for a loop, this Hov
I'm too old to be frontin' what I'm feeling
Denzelin', acting like you ain't appealing when you are
Stuntin like you ain't my only girl when you are
(I was just frontin') I'm ready to stop when you are

(2003:10)

The juxtaposition of a *shorty* and “my only girl” here emphasizes the very different roles coded behind these appellations. Whereas *shorty* could be any woman at all, the male protagonist explicitly goes out of his way to explain to the object of his affections that she is more important and special to him than a mere *shorty*. In fact, for her, the male protagonist would readily drop his “cool act” and stop “frontin’”. This implies a willingness to show emotional vulnerability and to form a mutual deeper emotional connection. The context of the song is romantic but neutral when it comes to sexism.

In “My Nigga” by YG Featuring Jeezy & Rich Homie Quan, *shorty* is a completely expendable woman, far behind “my niggas” on the priority list:

YG my nigga and I ain't goin' in, ain't trynna leave my niggas (YG, no)
shorty seein' me and want to leave with a nigga (leggo)
But it wasn't enough room cause I came with my niggas (that right too!)
My niggas, my niggas (hey)
I need a set of wings cause I'm too fly, nigga (that true)
And I'm all about my business like a suit and tie nigga
I ride for my niggas (Believe that)

(2014:17)

This song capitalizes on the “bros before hoes” –mentality where the male in-group members should always choose each other over any women no matter what the situation. In the song, the streets are described as violent and dangerous with guns and drugs around. Brotherhood and a level of safety can be found amongst one’s own gang and thus utmost loyalty, convening priorities and staying together are valued as important aspects. The women in this song are mentioned only in passing with no observations on personality, appearances, or

anything to actually distinguish them. They are convenient, secondary and used only instrumentally to get something (sex) or to prove something (solidarity among these men). The context strongly indicates hostile sexism.

The third main type of use of *shorty*, which occurs just as often as the second, is associated with strippers. Interestingly enough, the feelings these strippers evoke can vary quite considerably depending on the song. In “No Hands” by Waka Flocka Flame featuring Roscoe Dash and Wale, while the woman in question is not outright stated to be a stripper, the constant focus on her appearance, dancing and the mentions of earning money (tips) from men strongly insinuate it:

Roscoe Dash, okay
R-O-S-C-O-E, Mr. **shorty**-Put-It-On-Me (oh-wee, please)
I be goin' ham, **shorty** upgrade from bologna (ham, please)
Them niggas tippin' good girl but I can make it flood (I can)
Cause I walk around with pockets that are bigger than my bus (walk it)
(whoa)

(2011:6)

Here, *shorty* is a girl that has “upgraded” from her previous man to the male protagonist, who calls himself a *hard ass motherfucker*, a.k.a. “ham”. This new man has pockets full of money and thus happens to be a more lucrative client compared to the others. The men in the song flaunt their wealth and spend money freely on women, alcohol and drugs. Despite the clear admiration and lust directed at the woman, there is a certain emotional distance to prevent the men from getting too involved. Notably, the woman’s efforts to get money is accepted as an unsurprising, neutral fact with what seems like a consensus between the all counterparts; all is done in the name of good fun without serious repercussions and the men would pay for what they get. The song in its entirety is quite neutral (no sexism), as the women still retain their agency and what they offer is more or less of an honest business transaction. Yet, some hints of hostile sexism could be detected, too for treating the woman in question as a status marker used to reaffirm the male protagonists’ manhood by choosing them over the other men.

Whereas “No Hands” seems to give a quiet nod of approval to the working woman, “Don’t Mind” by Usher featuring Juicy J downright commends them for their ability to take care of themselves financially:

shorty, I don't mind
If you dance on a pole
That don't make you a hoe
shorty, I don't mind
When you workin' til three
If you're leaving with me (au)
Go make that money, money, money (yeah)
Your money, money, money (yeah)
Cause I know how it is, go handle your biz (woah)
And get that money, money, money (yeah)
Your money, money, money (yeah)
You can take off your clothes (woah)
Long as you coming home, girl, I don't mind

(2015:17)

The stripper is described as an attractive, self-sufficient, independent woman who knows how to move her body to encourage more income for the night by letting others openly admire her. The male protagonist that acts as her love interest has enough money for both of them but she still wants to work for her own things and he respects that decision and is proud of her. This male protagonist makes a clear distinction between her work and their private life; she can choose to dance for money as long as she allows his touch only and always chooses to come home to him. This suggests both parties being emotionally invested and involved with the kind of closeness that is not awarded to her clients.

The second male protagonist in the song takes the role of one of those customers frequenting the strip club:

Knock that pussy out the park like my name Babe Ruth
shorty she just want a tip, I just want to see her strip
If you fuck me like you love me **shorty** you might get rich
Have her own cake, her own place, blow her own gas, no role'

(2015:17)

Between the customer and the stripper there is a more evident emotional distance that seems to come with the understanding that the service she provides is mostly about letting people admire her body while allowing them to imagine and fantasize about her. For a price, she might also be willing to do more. From the customer's point of view, this wanton, devious, possibly promiscuous stripper with a sense for business is also seen as an independent character with her own aspirations. The underlying perspective that places the strippers as people who do honest business transactions to get money emphasizes their strong agency and own volition. Even with the romantic relationship outside of work and the work description containing undeniable exposure to the appraising male gaze, this song seems to contain no forms of sexism. Notably, despite the social stigma women in this industry stereotypically bear, many songs in this category (with *shorty* used for strippers) mention the client having thoughts and dreams of possibly falling in love with these women. The male protagonists often reflect these thoughts with either a positive outlook or with wary apprehension. Thus,

either the women are stellar at their work of inspiring fantasies, or these women are encountered with more humanity and understanding than might stereotypically have been assumed.

The last main type of use of *shorty* involves either ambiguous, established relationships or romantic relationships. In “Lovers and Friends”, a song by Lil Jon and the East Side Boyz featuring Usher & Ludacris, it is unclear whether romantic feelings are in the picture to begin with. In this song, the term “lovers” seems to suggest closeness through sexual relations rather than romantic feelings despite the underlying tenderness in the lyrics:

I's been knowing you for a long time (**shorty**)
But fucking never crossed my mind (**shorty**)
But tonight I seen something in you (**shorty**)
That made me wanna get with you (**shorty**)
You ain't been nothing but a friend to me (**shorty**)
And a nigga never ever dreamed we'd be (**shorty**)
Up in here kissing, hugging, squeezing, touching (**shorty**)
Up in the bathtub rub-a-dubbing (**shorty**)
Are you sure you wanna go this route (**shorty**)
Let a nigga know before I pull it out (**shorty**)
I would never ever cross the line (**shorty**)
shorty let me hear you tell me one more time
One more time

(2005:3)

“Lovers and Friends” is a song about old friends crossing the line from friendship to lovers. The *shorty* in question has transformed from someone the male protagonist used to see purely platonically into someone for whom he feels sexual attraction. Despite this sexual awakening, as a friend the male protagonist clearly cares about her opinions and thoughts, as he expresses the need for reassurance that she is fine with choosing this route for them. The song seems to contain neither outright promises of love nor speculations of a possible future together. Other than his passing suggestion that she be a “good girl” and submit to him in the bedroom (this imposition displays hostile sexism), in its entirety, the song seems to contain no sexism.

Drake’s “Best I Ever Had”, on the other hand, is overtly clear when it comes to expressing romantic feelings and intent:

Know you got a roommate, call me when there's no one there
Put the key under the mat and you know I be over there (Yup)
I be over there, **shorty**, I be over there
I be hittin' all the spots that you ain't even know was there
And you don't even have to ask twice
You could have my heart or we could share it like the last slice
Always felt like you was so accustomed to the fast life
Have a nigga thinkin' that he met you in a past life
Sweatpants, hair tied, chillin' with no make-up on
That's when you're the prettiest

(2009:4)

Overall, the male protagonist proclaims his love for this woman with claims of her superiority over other women and promises of how well he can take care of her. While it is obvious that sex plays a great role for him, his attraction and love is not superficial only. She acts as his emotional support and is there whenever he needs her. His role in the relationship seems to run along the traditional lines of going to work, earning money and providing for her. This traditional gender role division indicates benevolent sexism. In general, the use of *shorty* in such blatantly romantic contexts as in “Best I Ever Had” is quite rare.

As regards the treatment of *shorty*, the dictionaries were found markedly lacking. Through the contextual analysis, four different uses of *shorty* emerged. The two definitions from DCS both stated that the word refers to a girlfriend with either positive and loving connotations or in a more disrespectful tone. While this was indeed confirmed, not all relationships could actually be verified to be of the steady kind. This use also proved to be the least popular in the context of the songs. Instead, *shorty* was firstly reserved for attractive women with loose morals who have problems in staying faithful to their spouses. Secondly, the lexeme referred to women with whom the male protagonists had no intimate ties. These women were treated as unimportant passing figures in the narratives of the songs. Thirdly, many uses of the lexeme had to do with strippers. Remarkably, these women were found to elicit very different responses in men ranging from men wanting to marry these women to just admiring them in their working environment. Thus, the strippers in this category are surprisingly quite well regarded. The perspective of a workingwoman also highlights the agency and authority of the women as active, productive individuals.

In the lyrics corpus, *shorty* is most commonly used as a vocative. This applies to almost 60% of the cases. The non-vocative use of *shorty* was slightly over 40% out of the total of the 214 occurrences. Remarkably, the plural *shorties* was extremely rare, as only two occurrences were found, both non-vocative.

7. Conclusion

In this study, the use of the appellations *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* and *shorty* in R&B and hip hop were closely examined against the background of literature on the music genres and their social dimensions, general gender-bias in language, implied sexism in different contexts as well as the language variants commonly used in the aforementioned music genres. The theoretical background, then, was provided in the form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Four dictionaries were also consulted for an in-depth vocabulary analysis. The numerical data was gathered from the lyrics of 300 songs, all of which were found among the top 20 songs from Billboard's R&B and hip hop year-end charts from a timespan of 15 years (2000-2015, excluding 2006). The aim of this study was to delve into the usage of the appellations and to see if the contextual analysis of the songs would shed more light on the actual use of the words and perhaps even provide some more detailed information and uses not listed in the dictionaries, as language has been known to change over time. Another central goal of this study was to contemplate on the relationship between the language in the songs and the (African American) communities that act as both the source as well as the main consumers of the music.

According to the calculations yielded by AntConc, of the four lexemes, *girl* was the most popular appellation with 1199 occurrences found in 198 songs. In the case of *girl*, it was found that the word itself was popular for a reason, as it was easily applicable when generally referring to any woman/women irrespective of their age. *Girl* was also used as a term of endearment when speaking to a woman. In this use, some of the contexts clearly suggested a more intimate and loving bond between the man and the woman in the song, while others would describe their relationship as something with a certain degree of fondness but without the element of commitment. The use of the possessive pronouns ("my", "your") coupled with the lexeme in the plural (*girls*) simply applied to one's friends. Despite the use of *girl* as a multipurpose appellation in R&B and hip hop, the more negative connotations often associated with the word are visible in quite many songs as well, making the concerns presented in general discourse valid. These anxieties revolve around reducing women to a stereotype of traditionally feeble, powerless, immature and childlike females that are treated like children. The perseverance of this trope could indeed be found in some of the songs, though it was mainly something the female artists would either find themselves using or attempt to counteract. In conclusion though, the appellation proved to be very flexible in its use in both negative and positive contexts. As was stated by Kate Burridge, no word is

inherently bad, and thus the word itself lets the context largely influence the way it is to be interpreted.

The second most common appellation was *baby* with 840 occurrences in 150 songs. This lexeme was used as a general term of address or a term of endearment and it was applied to both men and women. The contexts where it appeared could hint at a longer, committed relationship between a man and a woman or a shorter romantic/sexual encounter between the parties involved. Notably, women also used *baby* to speak to each other when they wanted to emphasize belonging to the same in-group (“us girls”) or taking a sisterly stance to give out advice on something. In general discourse, this lexeme has been criticised for possibly being patronizing or offensive (much in the same manner as the aforementioned *girl*). This concern, however, remains invalidated in the context of R&B and hip hop, as the songs used for this study showed no particular evidence of such demeaning usage.

The appellation *bitch* with its 325 occurrences in 66 songs was ranked third in frequency. Unlike the last-mentioned two words, this lexeme is generally treated as a highly stigmatized derogatory word with negative connotations and disparaging potential. While some of the more bitter songs did employ the word in a punitive way (i.e. its use was intended as a punishment to whoever was addressed), only a relatively small number of the songs in the sample would actually display an openly hateful attitude towards women. Although *bitch* was commonly used to reinforce the dynamic between an oppressor and the oppressed, the gender of the oppressor was not fixed (i.e. both men and women could take up the role) and despite the condescending name-calling, there was rarely personal hatred present. In many songs, these *bitches* were characterized as sexually promiscuous women that may or may not have been prostitutes (depending on the context). While this promiscuity can be quite bluntly stated as a matter-of-fact detail that both the men and the women agree on, it can also be thrust on the women by men who have taken it upon themselves to assume what they wish, as the women seem to have little to say for themselves. The lexeme is also used to refer to one’s girlfriend in the black community. Even when the women have a role that suggests a committed relationship between the parties, the stigma of *bitch* as an immoral loose woman still perseveres, as they are often depicted as unfaithful women with other men either on the radar or already on the side. This premise of unfaithful women creates an especially fruitful space for masculine posturing where the idea of women as tokens of manhood is really given a chance to flourish. The one to get the others’ women to stray would have proven themselves better men than those who are left behind. In conclusion, there is plenty of evidence to support the claims of *bitch* being a derogatory word with disparaging potential. Yet, the lyrics also brought out instances where the word was used in a neutral way to refer to any black

woman, as well as cases where *bitch* was used as a compliment for women who were not afraid to deviate from the mould of traditionally agreeable women and who were unafraid to showcase admirable male traits (e.g. independence and ambitiousness). Especially male protagonists displayed a tendency to emphasize the women's appearance in their complimentary use of *bitch*. This was done with the addition of words such as "bad" and "fine" to describe sexy and attractive women. Importantly, all songs had clear signs of agency and independence in connection to *bitch* regardless of the context, be it slandering or glorifying.

Of the four appellations, *shorty* was the least used. AntConc came up with 216 occurrences of this appellation in 58 songs. This lexeme was more in line with *girl* and *baby* given that the word itself is more neutral by nature, which gives the surrounding context a greater importance. Mostly, *shorty* was used to refer to attractive, unfaithful women. Other uses of the lexeme had to do with either women who were of no importance to the male protagonists of the song (passing characters) or to strippers who were often targeted with admiring male gazes. Unexpectedly, despite the persisting stigma of the industry, the strippers are actually often regarded more as respectable workingwomen, which emphasizes the women's own agency and authority over themselves. Lastly, the appellation was also found to refer to a girlfriend or a partner in a romantic relationship regardless of the level of the commitment. This usage proved to be the least common of the four listed.

In general, while the dictionaries consulted mostly offered many definitions and usages for the appellations *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* and *shorty*, quite a few new ones emerged from the contextual analyses. This further emphasizes the ever-changing nature of language – especially when it comes to slang. The appellations proved to be extremely flexible in their connotations and open to different kinds of manipulations of perception to bring out new perspectives. In addition, the words also seem to adjust to varying narratives with relative ease.

It was common for the songs to contain strong implications of expected gender roles from the African American communities. Men were often required to emphasize their masculinity, toughness and virility via sexual conquests. These expectations were collectively encouraged and realized among men, which in itself created its own brand of normalcy where the male dominance was achieved at the cost of women. The women would regularly be subjected to sexual joking and harassment, which reinforces the women's vulnerable and inferior position. The men's behaviour was often excused by saying that they were "just playing" – a light phrase that works to mitigate and belittle the concerns voiced by the women. This onset provided the conditions for the "playas" (men who collect sexual partners

and affairs) and the wannabe “playas” to roam free while attempting the “cool act” (avoiding feelings of emotional attachment). Much of this mentality and “playing” was visible in the R&B and hip hop songs due to their strong ties to the source community. These songs, then, pass these principles forward to the main consumers of the music, most of whom belong to the source communities. This cycle further consolidates the ideology in the source and encourages the perseverance of this mentality and treatment.

Similar to the situation in the source communities, hip hop is also considered a strongly male domain where all things feminine and womanly are often discouraged and rejected. Yet, women have been working to make a change in their status both in the communities as well as in the music business. While R&B has traditionally given more space to women, hip hop also seems to have become somewhat more welcoming to female voices, though the adjustment appears to be proceeding only slowly and tentatively. Instead of acquiescing to act as sexual collectible objects that can validate a man’s masculinity, which is the case in many songs, women can use the music to display their agency and assertiveness and take control of their own narrative to voice their own perspectives. Sexual liberation and empowerment is visible inter alia in the redefining of the strippers’ work, depictions of getting men to spend their money on the women’s whims, and rendering the formerly derogatory word *bitch* into something empowering.

The watered-down Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that while language does not strictly rule out what can or cannot be perceived, our language still influences our thoughts and perceptions to some degree. This is especially true with minor cognitive biases and subtle stereotypes. For the most part, music can foster a certain worldview and mentality quite delicately without attracting too much attention to itself. Continuous consumption of R&B and hip hop with its depicted social environment and choice phrases and appellations can certainly affect a person’s perceptions of the surrounding environment and their sense of normalcy. These songs can offer preconceptions of how to act in certain instances, what is a desirable course of action in some situations and what is a suitable thing to strive for (e.g. making much money, sexual conquests, being the “baddest bitch”, etc.), to mention a few. Awareness can act as something that can expand one’s worldview and counter naïve, one-sided presuppositions, but this wakefulness really relies on the individuals’ own attentiveness to their environment and the biases propagated around them. On a positive note, despite the stigma of hip hop as something that cultivates misogyny, the case studies on the appellations *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* and *shorty* show that the lexemes had a flexibility that enabled their usage in both negative and positive contexts with negative and positive connotations. Thus, labelling the music misogynous has proven to be an unfortunate over-simplification and apparently no

word should be labelled as straight-out derogatory or demeaning without a careful look at the surrounding context.

Regrettably, the scope of this study had to be confined to four appellations only. There would have been many other possible candidates for further studies such as the words *lady*, *chick*, *hoe* and *woman*, as many of these appellations are objects of general conjectures as well. My preliminary findings on the occurrences of these lexemes show that all of them are indeed more or less used in R&B and hip hop too, although not to the extent of *girl*, *baby*, *bitch* and *shorty*.

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9. Appendix

The R&B and hip hop songs included in this study listed according to the Billboard Year-End charts (links last accessed in 2019).

2000

1. Let's Get Married
Jagged Edge
<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/jaggededge/letsgetmarried.html>

2. I Wanna Know
Joe
<https://genius.com/Joe-i-wanna-know-lyrics>

3. Incomplete
Sisqo
<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/sisqo/incomplete.html>

4. Hot Boyz
Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott/Nas/Eve/Q-Tip
<https://genius.com/Missy-elliott-hot-boyz-remix-lyrics>

5. U Know What's Up
Donnell Jones
<https://genius.com/Donnell-jones-u-know-whats-up-original-version-lyrics>

6. Get It On Tonite
Montell Jordan
<https://genius.com/Montell-jordan-get-it-on-tonite-lyrics>

7. No More
Ruff Endz
<https://genius.com/Ruff-endz-no-more-lyrics>

8. I Wish
Carl Thomas
<https://genius.com/Carl-thomas-i-wish-lyrics>

9. Separated
Avant
<https://genius.com/Avant-separated-annotated>

10. Where I Wanna Be
Donnell Jones
<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/donelljones/whereiwannabe.html>

11. Say My Name
Destiny's Child
<https://genius.com/Destinys-child-say-my-name-lyrics>

12. Bag Lady
Erykah Badu
<https://genius.com/Erykah-badu-bag-lady-radio-edit-lyrics>

13. Thong Song
Sisqo
<https://www.letsingit.com/sisq%C3%B3-lyrics-thong-song-3khkghk#axzz4Z7qdIPN0>

14. Wifey
Next
<https://genius.com/Next-wifey-lyrics>

15. Maria Maria
Santana/The Product G&B
<http://www.metrolyrics.com/maria-maria-lyrics-santana.html>

16. He Wasn't Man Enough
Toni Braxton
<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/tonibraxton/hewasntmanenough.html>

17. He Can't Love U
Jagged Edge
<http://www.metrolyrics.com/he-cant-love-you-lyrics-jagged-edge.html>

18. Try Again
Aaliyah
http://www.lyricsfreak.com/a/aaliyah/try+again_20002252.html

19. (Hot S*T) Country Grammar
Nelly
<https://genius.com/Nelly-country-grammer-hot-st-clean-edit-with-effects-lyrics>

20. Shake Ya Ass
Mystikal
<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/mystikal/shakeyaass.html>

2001

1. Fiesta
R. Kelly featuring Jay-Z
<http://www.thelyricarchive.com/lyrics/fiesta.shtml>

2. Missing You
Case
<https://genius.com/Case-missing-you-lyrics>

3. Love
Musiq Soulchild
<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/musiqsoulchild/love.html>

4. Where The Party At
Jagged Edge featuring Nelly
<https://genius.com/Jagged-edge-where-the-party-at-lyrics>

5. Stutter
Joe featuring Mystikal
http://www.lyricsfreak.com/j/joe+feat+mystikal/stutter+remix_20815370.html

6. U Remind Me
Usher
<https://genius.com/Usher-u-remind-me-lyrics>

7. Peaches & Cream
112
<https://genius.com/112-peaches-and-cream-lyrics>

8. Promise
Jagged Edge
<https://genius.com/Jagged-edge-promise-lyrics>

9. Fallin'
Alicia Keys
<https://genius.com/Alicia-keys-fallin-lyrics>

10. Heard It All Before
Sunshine Anderson
<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/sunshineanderson/hearditalbefore.html>

11. Get Ur Freak On
Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott
<http://www.metrolyrics.com/get-ur-freak-on-lyrics-missy-misdemeanor-elliott.html>

12. Put It On Me
Ja Rule featuring Lil' Mo, Vita
http://www.lyricsfreak.com/j/ja+rule+ft+lil+mo+and+vita/put+it+on+me_20815972.html

13. Differences
Ginuwine
<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/ginuwine/differences.html>

14. Stranger In My House
Tamia
<http://www.metrolyrics.com/stranger-in-my-house-lyrics-tamia.html>

15. It's Over Now
112
<http://www.metrolyrics.com/its-over-now-lyrics-112.html>

16. Could It Be
Jaheim
<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/jaheim/coulditbe.html>

17. Family Affair
Mary J. Blige
<https://genius.com/Mary-j-blige-family-affair-lyrics>

18. Ms. Jackson
OutKast
<https://genius.com/Outkast-ms-jackson-lyrics>

19. I'm Real
Jennifer Lopez featuring Ja Rule
<https://genius.com/Jennifer-lopez-im-real-murder-remix-lyrics>

20. Superwoman Pt. II
Lil' Mo featuring Fabolous
<https://genius.com/Lil-mo-superwoman-remix-lyrics>

2002

1. Foolish
Ashanti
<https://genius.com/Ashanti-foolish-lyrics>
2. U Don't Have To Call
Usher
<https://genius.com/Usher-u-dont-have-to-call-lyrics>
3. Halfcrazy
Musiq
<http://songmeanings.com/songs/view/3458764513820544797/>
4. Hot In Herre
Nelly
<https://genius.com/Nelly-hot-in-herre-lyrics>
5. Anything
Jaheim featuring Next
<https://genius.com/Jaheim-anything-lyrics>
6. Dilemma
Nelly featuring Kelly Rowland
<https://genius.com/Nelly-dilemma-lyrics>
7. Always On Time
Ja Rule featuring Ashanti
<https://genius.com/Ja-rule-always-on-time-lyrics>
8. Oh Boy
Cam'ron featuring Juelz Santana
<https://genius.com/Camron-oh-boy-lyrics>
9. Lights, Camera, Action!
Mr. Cheeks
<https://genius.com/Mr-cheeks-lights-camera-action-lyrics>
10. Nothin'
N.O.R.E.
<https://genius.com/Nore-nothin-lyrics>
11. I Love You
Faith Evans
<https://genius.com/Faith-evans-i-love-you-lyrics>
12. Butterflies
Michael Jackson
<https://genius.com/Michael-jackson-butterflies-lyrics>
13. Addictive
Truth Hurts featuring Rakim
<http://songmeanings.com/songs/view/84207/>
14. I Need A Girl (Part Two)
P. Diddy featuring Ginuwine, Loon, Mario Winans, Tammy Ruggieri
<http://www.songlyrics.com/puff-daddy-p-diddy/i-need-a-girl-part-two-lyrics/>
15. Oops (Oh My)
Tweet
<http://www.metrolyrics.com/oops-oh-my-lyrics-tweet.html>
16. Move B***H
Ludacris featuring Mystikal, Infamous 2.0
<http://www.song-database.com/song.php?sid=16971>
17. What's Luv?
Fat Joe featuring Ashanti
<https://genius.com/Fat-joe-whats-luv-lyrics>
18. U Got It Bad
Usher
<https://genius.com/Usher-u-got-it-bad-lyrics>
19. Pass The Courvoisier Part II
Busta Rhymes featuring P. Diddy, Pharrell
<https://genius.com/Busta-rhymes-pass-the-courvoisier-part-ii-lyrics>
20. I Need A Girl (Part One)
P. Diddy featuring Usher, Loon
<https://genius.com/Puff-daddy-i-need-a-girl-pt-1-lyrics>

2003

1. In Da Club
50 Cent
<https://genius.com/50-cent-in-da-club-lyrics>
2. Ignition
R. Kelly
http://www.lyricsfreak.com/r/r+kelly/ignition_20112919.html
3. Miss You
Aaliyah
<http://www.lyricstop.com/m/missyou-aaliyah.html>
4. So Gone
Monica
<https://genius.com/Monica-so-gone-lyrics>
5. Get Low
Lil Jon & The East Side Boyz Featuring Ying Yang Twins
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/yingyangtwins/yingyangvsliljonandtheeastsideboyz.html>
6. Right Thurr
Chingy
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/chingy/rightthurr.html>
7. 21 Questions
50 Cent Featuring Nate Dogg
<http://www.metrolyrics.com/21-questions-lyrics-50-cent.html>
8. Get Busy
Sean Paul
<https://genius.com/Sean-paul-get-busy-lyrics>
9. How You Gonna Act Like That
Tyrese
<https://genius.com/Tyrese-how-you-gonna-act-like-that-lyrics>
10. Frontin'
Pharrell Featuring Jay-Z
<https://genius.com/Pharrell-williams-frontin-lyrics>
11. Can't Let You Go
Fabolous Featuring Mike Shorey & Lil' Mo
<https://genius.com/Fabolous-cant-let-you-go-lyrics>
12. P.I.M.P.
50 Cent
<https://genius.com/50-cent-pimp-lyrics>
13. I Know What You Want
Busta Rhymes & Mariah Carey Featuring The Flipmode Squad
<https://genius.com/Busta-rhymes-i-know-what-you-want-lyrics>
14. Crazy In Love
Beyonce Featuring Jay Z
<https://genius.com/Beyonce-crazy-in-love-lyrics>
15. Beautiful
Snoop Dogg Featuring Pharrell & Uncle Charlie Wilson
<https://genius.com/Snoop-dogg-beautiful-lyrics>
16. Baby Boy
Beyonce Featuring Sean Paul
<https://genius.com/Beyonce-baby-boy-lyrics>
17. Put That Woman First
Jaheim
<https://genius.com/Jaheim-put-that-woman-first-lyrics>
18. Magic Stick
Lil' Kim Featuring 50 Cent
<https://genius.com/Lil-kim-magic-stick-lyrics>
19. Love Of My Life (An Ode To Hip Hop)
Erykah Badu Featuring Common
<https://genius.com/Erykah-badu-love-of-my-life-an-ode-to-hip-hop-lyrics>
20. Damn!
YoungBloodZ Featuring Lil Jon
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/youngbloodz/damn.html>

2004

1. If I Ain't Got You
Alicia Keys
<https://genius.com/Alicia-keys-if-i-aint-got-you-lyrics>
2. Yeah!
Usher Featuring Lil Jon & Ludacris
<https://genius.com/Usher-yeah-lyrics>
3. Burn
Usher
<https://genius.com/Usher-burn-lyrics>
4. Diary
Alicia Keys Featuring Tony! Toni! Tone!
<https://genius.com/Alicia-keys-diary-feat-tony-toni-tone-lyrics>
5. Lean Back
Terror Squad
<https://genius.com/Terror-squad-lean-back-lyrics>
6. You Don't Know My Name
Alicia Keys
<https://genius.com/Alicia-keys-you-dont-know-my-name-lyrics>
7. Jesus Walks
Kanye West
<https://genius.com/Kanye-west-jesus-walks-lyrics>
8. Me, Myself And I
Beyonce
<https://genius.com/Beyonce-me-myself-and-i-lyrics>
9. Slow Jamz
Twista Featuring Kanye West & Jamie Foxx
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/kanyewest/slowjamz.html>
10. Confessions Part II
Usher
<https://genius.com/Usher-confessions-part-ii-lyrics>
11. Slow Motion
Juvenile Featuring Soulja Slim
<https://genius.com/Juvenile-slow-motion-lyrics>
12. Goodies
Ciara Featuring Petey Pablo
<https://genius.com/Ciara-goodies-feat-petey-pablo-lyrics>
13. The Way You Move
OutKast Featuring Sleepy Brown
<https://genius.com/Outkast-the-way-you-move-lyrics>
14. Dirt Off Your Shoulder
JAY-Z
<https://genius.com/Jay-z-dirt-off-your-shoulder-lyrics>
15. Sorry 2004
Ruben Studdard
<https://genius.com/Ruben-studdard-sorry-2004-lyrics>
16. Freek-A-Leek
Petey Pablo
<https://genius.com/Petey-pablo-freek-a-leek-lyrics>
17. Topsy
J-Kwon
<https://genius.com/J-kwon-topsy-lyrics>
18. Splash Waterfalls
Ludacris
<https://genius.com/Ludacris-splash-waterfalls-lyrics>
19. Overnight Celebrity
Twista
<https://genius.com/Twista-overnight-celebrity-lyrics>
20. I Don't Wanna Know
Mario Winans Featuring Enya & P. Diddy
<https://genius.com/Mario-winans-i-dont-wanna-know-feat-nya-and-p-diddy-lyrics>

2005

1. Let Me Love You
Mario
<https://genius.com/Mario-let-me-love-you-lyrics>
2. We Belong Together
Mariah Carey
<https://genius.com/Mariah-carey-we-belong-together-lyrics>
3. Lovers & Friends
Lil Jon & The East Side Boyz Featuring Usher & Ludacris
<https://genius.com/Lil-jon-and-the-east-side-boyz-lovers-and-friends-lyrics>
4. Truth Is
Fantasia
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/fantasiabarrino/truthis.html>
5. Drop It Like It's Hot
Snoop Dogg Featuring Pharrell
<https://genius.com/Snoop-dogg-drop-it-like-its-hot-lyrics>
6. Slow Down
Bobby Valentino
<https://genius.com/Bobby-v-slow-down-lyrics>
7. Free Yourself
Fantasia
<https://genius.com/Fantasia-free-yourself-lyrics>
8. How We Do
The Game Featuring 50 Cent
<https://genius.com/The-game-how-we-do-lyrics>
9. Wait (The Whisper Song)
Ying Yang Twins
<https://genius.com/Ying-yang-twins-wait-the-whisper-song-lyrics>
10. Soldier
Destiny's Child Featuring T.I. & Lil Wayne
<https://genius.com/Destinys-child-soldier-lyrics>
11. Cater 2 U
Destiny's Child
<https://genius.com/Destinys-child-cater-2-u-lyrics>
12. Ordinary People
John Legend
<https://genius.com/John-legend-ordinary-people-lyrics>
13. Must Be Nice
Lyfe Jennings
http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/l/lyfe_jennings/must_be_nice.html
14. Gold Digger
Kanye West Featuring Jamie Foxx
<https://genius.com/Kanye-west-gold-digger-lyrics>
15. 1, 2 Step
Ciara Featuring Missy Elliott
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/ciara/12step.html>
16. Oh
Ciara Featuring Ludacris
<https://genius.com/Ciara-oh-lyrics>
17. Some Cut
Trillville Featuring Cutty
<https://genius.com/Trillville-some-cut-lyrics>
18. Bring Em Out
T.I.
<https://genius.com/Ti-bring-em-out-amended-lyrics>
19. Disco Inferno
50 Cent
<https://genius.com/50-cent-disco-inferno-lyrics>
20. Like You
Bow Wow Featuring Ciara
<https://genius.com/Bow-wow-like-you-feat-ciara-album-version-lyrics>

2007:

1. Lost Without U
Robin Thicke
<http://www.metrolyrics.com/lost-without-you-lyrics-robin-thicke.html>
2. When I See You
Fantasia
<https://genius.com/Fantasia-when-i-see-u-lyrics>
3. Please Don't Go
Tank
<https://genius.com/Tank-please-dont-go-lyrics>
4. Buy U A Drank (Shawty Snappin')
T-Pain Featuring Yung Joc
<https://genius.com/T-pain-buy-u-a-drank-shawty-snappin-lyrics>
5. Teachme
MusiQ Soulchild
<https://genius.com/MusiQ-soulchild-teach-me-lyrics>
6. You
Lloyd Featuring Lil' Wayne
<https://genius.com/Lloyd-you-lyrics>
7. Irreplaceable
Beyonce
<https://genius.com/Beyonce-irreplaceable-lyrics>
8. Promise
Ciara
<https://genius.com/Ciara-promise-lyrics>
9. Buddy
MusiQ Soulchild
<https://genius.com/MusiQ-soulchild-buddy-lyrics>
10. Poppin'
Chris Brown Featuring Jay Biz
<http://www.songlyrics.com/chris-brown-feat-jay-biz/poppin-lyrics/>
11. Until The End Of Time
Justin Timberlake Duet With Beyonce
<https://genius.com/Justin-timberlake-until-the-end-of-time-feat-beyonce-lyrics>
12. Let It Go
Keyshia Cole Featuring Missy Elliott & Lil Kim
<https://genius.com/Keyshia-cole-let-it-go-lyrics>
13. Shawty
Plies Featuring T-Pain
<https://genius.com/Plies-shawty-lyrics>
14. Bed
J. Holiday
<https://genius.com/J-holiday-bed-lyrics>
15. I'm A Flirt
R. Kelly Or Bow Wow (Featuring T.I. & T-Pain)
<https://genius.com/R-kelly-im-a-flirt-remix-lyrics>
16. Make Me Better
Fabolous Featuring Ne-Yo
http://www.lyricsfreak.com/f/fabolous+feat+ne+yo/make+me+better_20823107.html
17. Do You
Ne-Yo
<https://genius.com/Ne-yo-do-you-annotated>
18. Throw Some D's
Rich Boy Featuring Polow Da Don
<https://genius.com/Rich-boy-throw-some-ds-lyrics>
19. Ice Box
Omarion
<https://genius.com/Omarion-ice-box-lyrics>
20. I Wanna Love You
Akon Featuring Snoop Dogg
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/akon/iwannaloveyou.html>

2008:

1. Like You'll Never See Me Again
Alicia Keys
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/aliciakeys/likeyoullneverseemeagain.html>
2. I Remember
Keyshia Cole
http://www.lyricsfreak.com/k/keyshia+cole/i+remember_20450223.html
3. Just Fine
Mary J. Blige
<https://genius.com/Mary-j-blige-just-fine-lyrics>
4. Heaven Sent
Keyshia Cole
<http://www.songlyrics.com/keyshia-cole/heaven-sent-lyrics/>
5. Suffocate
J. Holiday
<https://genius.com/J-holiday-suffocate-lyrics>
6. Lollipop
Lil Wayne Featuring Static Major
<https://genius.com/Lil-wayne-lollipop-lyrics>
7. Need U Bad
Jazmine Sullivan
http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/j/jazmine_sullivan/i_need_you_bad.html
8. No One
Alicia Keys
<https://genius.com/Alicia-keys-no-one-lyrics>
9. Spotlight
Jennifer Hudson
<http://songmeanings.com/songs/view/3530822107858723142/>
10. Can't Help But Wait
Trey Songz
<https://genius.com/Trey-songz-cant-help-but-wait-lyrics>
11. Never
Jaheim
<https://genius.com/Jaheim-never-lyrics>
12. Crying Out For Me
Mario
<https://genius.com/Mario-crying-out-for-me-lyrics>
13. Take You Down
Chris Brown
<https://genius.com/Chris-brown-take-you-down-lyrics>
14. A Milli
Lil Wayne
<https://genius.com/Lil-wayne-a-milli-lyrics>
15. Love In This Club
Usher Featuring Young Jeezy
<https://genius.com/Usher-love-in-this-club-lyrics>
16. Bust It Baby Part 2
Plies Featuring Ne-Yo
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/plies/bustitbabyp2.html>
17. Whatever You Like
T.I.
<https://genius.com/Ti-whatever-you-like-lyrics>
18. I Luv Your Girl
The-Dream
<https://genius.com/The-dream-i-luv-your-girl-lyrics>
19. Independent
Webbie Featuring Lil' Phat & Lil' Boosie
<https://genius.com/Webbie-independent-lyrics>
20. Teenage Love Affair
Alicia Keys
http://www.lyricsfreak.com/a/alicia+keys/teenage+love+affair_20656843.html

2009:

1. Blame It
Jamie Foxx Featuring T-Pain
<https://genius.com/Jamie-foxx-blame-it-on-the-alcohol-lyrics>
2. Pretty Wings
Maxwell
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/maxwell/prettywings.html>
3. Break Up
Mario Featuring Gucci Mane & Sean Garrett
<https://genius.com/Mario-break-up-lyrics>
4. Best I Ever Had
Drake
<https://genius.com/Drake-best-i-ever-had-lyrics>
5. Rockin' That Thang
The-Dream
<https://genius.com/The-dream-rockin-that-shit-rockin-that-thang-lyrics>
6. Single Ladies (Put A Ring On It)
Beyonce
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beyonceknowles/singleladiesputaringonit.html>
7. Turnin Me On
Keri Hilson Featuring Lil Wayne
<https://genius.com/Keri-hilson-turnin-me-on-lyrics>
8. She Got Her Own
Ne-Yo Featuring Jamie Foxx & Fabolous
<https://genius.com/Ne-yo-she-got-her-own-miss-independent-remix-lyrics>
9. Sobeautiful
Musiq Soulchild
<https://genius.com/Musiq-soulchild-sobeautiful-lyrics>
10. Last Chance
Ginuwine
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/ginuwine/lastchance.html>
11. Knock You Down
Keri Hilson Featuring Kanye West & Ne-Yo
<https://genius.com/Keri-hilson-knock-you-down-lyrics>
12. Every Girl
Young Money
<https://genius.com/Young-money-every-girl-in-the-world-lyrics>
13. God In Me
Mary Mary Featuring Kierra "KiKi" Sheard
<https://genius.com/Mary-mary-god-in-me-lyrics>
14. Ego
Beyonce
<https://genius.com/Beyonce-ego-lyrics>
15. Mad
Ne-Yo
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/neyo/mad.html>
16. If This Isn't Love
Jennifer Hudson
<https://genius.com/Jennifer-hudson-if-this-isnt-love-lyrics>
17. Live Your Life
T.I. Featuring Rihanna
<https://genius.com/Ti-live-your-life-lyrics>
18. Successful
Drake Featuring Trey Songz & Lil Wayne
<https://genius.com/Drake-successful-lyrics>
19. On The Ocean
K'Jon
<https://genius.com/Kjon-on-the-ocean-interlude-lyrics>
20. Birthday Sex
Jeremih
<https://genius.com/Jeremih-birthday-sex-lyrics>

2010:

1. Un-Thinkable (I'm Ready)
Alicia Keys
<https://genius.com/Alicia-keys-un-thinkable-im-ready-lyrics>
2. There Goes My Baby
Usher
http://www.lyricsfreak.com/u/usher/there+goes+my+baby_20866842.html
3. It Kills Me
Melanie Fiona
<https://genius.com/Melanie-fiona-if-it-kills-me-lyrics>
4. Everything To Me
Monica
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/monica/everythingtome.html>
5. Say Aah
Trey Songz Featuring Fabolous
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/treysongz/sayaah.html>
6. Neighbors Know My Name
Trey Songz
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/treysongz/neighborsknowmyname.html>
7. Hey Daddy (Daddy's Home)
Usher Featuring Plies
<https://genius.com/Usher-hey-daddy-daddys-home-remix-lyrics>
8. I Am
Mary J. Blige
http://www.lyricsfreak.com/m/mary+j+blige/i+am_20861992.html
9. Deuces
Chris Brown Featuring Tyga & Kevin McCall
<https://genius.com/Chris-brown-deuces-lyrics>
10. Sex Therapy
Robin Thicke
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/robinthicke/sextherapy.html>
11. Love All Over Me
Monica
<https://genius.com/Monica-love-all-over-me-lyrics>
12. I Invented Sex
Trey Songz Featuring Drake
<https://genius.com/Trey-songz-i-invented-sex-lyrics>
13. How Low
Ludacris
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/ludacris/howlow.html>
14. Say Something
Timbaland Featuring Drake
<http://songmeanings.com/songs/view/3530822107859385565/>
15. Find Your Love
Drake
<https://genius.com/Drake-find-your-love-lyrics>
16. Over
Drake
<https://genius.com/Drake-over-lyrics>
17. My Chick Bad
Ludacris Featuring Nicki Minaj
<https://genius.com/Ludacris-my-chick-bad-lyrics>
18. Ain't Leavin Without You
Jaheim
<https://genius.com/Jaheim-aint-leavin-without-you-lyrics>
19. Lose My Mind
Young Jeezy Featuring Plies
<https://genius.com/Jeezy-lose-my-mind-lyrics>
20. Try Sleeping With A Broken Heart
Alicia Keys
<https://genius.com/Alicia-keys-try-sleeping-with-a-broken-heart-lyrics>

2011:

1. Sure Thing
Miguel
<https://genius.com/Miguel-sure-thing-lyrics>
2. Motivation
Kelly Rowland Featuring Lil Wayne
<https://genius.com/Kelly-rowland-motivation-lyrics>
3. Look At Me Now
Chris Brown Featuring Lil Wayne & Busta Rhymes
<https://genius.com/Chris-brown-look-at-me-now-lyrics>
4. I'm On One
DJ Khaled Featuring Drake, Rick Ross & Lil Wayne
<https://genius.com/Dj-khaled-im-on-one-lyrics>
5. Far Away
Marsha Ambrosius
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/marshaambrosius/faraway.html>
6. No Hands
Waka Flocka Flame Featuring Roscoe Dash & Wale
http://www.paroles-musique.com/paroles-Waka_Flocka_Flame-No_Hands_feat_Roscoe_Dash_and_Wale-lyrics.p051092766
7. My Last
Big Sean Featuring Chris Brown
<http://www.songtexte.com/songtext/big-sean-feat-chris-brown/my-last-639b0ed7.html>
8. Can't Be Friends
Trey Songz
<https://genius.com/Trey-songz-cant-be-friends-lyrics>
9. Moment 4 Life
Nicki Minaj Featuring Drake
<https://genius.com/Nicki-minaj-moment-4-life-lyrics>
10. She Ain't You
Chris Brown
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/chrisbrown/sheaintyou.html>
11. Aston Martin Music
Rick Ross Featuring Drake & Chrisette Michele
<https://genius.com/Rick-ross-aston-martin-music-lyrics>
12. All Of The Lights
Kanye West (+Rihanna)
<http://www.metrolyrics.com/all-of-the-lights-lyrics-kanye-west.html>
13. 6 Foot 7 Foot
Lil Wayne Featuring Cory Gunz
<https://genius.com/Lil-wayne-6-foot-7-foot-lyrics>
14. Love Faces
Trey Songz
http://www.lyricsfreak.com/t/trey+songz/love+faces_20887607.html
15. How To Love
Lil Wayne
<https://genius.com/Lil-wayne-how-to-love-lyrics>
16. Fall For Your Type
Jamie Foxx Featuring Drake
<https://genius.com/Jamie-foxx-fall-for-your-type-lyrics>
17. No Bs
Chris Brown
<https://genius.com/Chris-brown-no-bullshit-lyrics>
18. What's My Name?
Rihanna Featuring Drake
<https://genius.com/Rihanna-whats-my-name-lyrics>
19. Pretty Girl Rock
Keri Hilson
http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/k/keri_hilson/pretty_girl_rock.html
20. Down On Me
Jeremih Featuring 50 Cent
<https://genius.com/Jeremih-down-on-me-lyrics>

2012:

1. Love On Top
Beyonce
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beyonceknowles/loveontop.html>
2. Climax
Usher
<http://www.directlyrics.com/usher-climax-lyrics.html>
3. Lotus Flower Bomb
Wale Featuring Miguel
<https://genius.com/Wale-lotus-flower-bomb-lyrics>
4. The Motto
Drake Featuring Lil Wayne
<https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Drake-feat-Lil-Wayne-Tyga/The-Motto>
5. Mercy
"Kanye West, Big Sean, Pusha T, 2 Chainz"
https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tryqoskssfamr4cvompcqjp7mti?lyrics=1&utm_source=google&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-lyrics
6. Adorn
Miguel
<https://genius.com/Miguel-adorn-lyrics>
7. Heart Attack
Trey Songz
<https://genius.com/Trey-songz-heart-attack-lyrics>
8. No Lie
2 Chainz Featuring Drake
<https://genius.com/2-chainz-no-lie-lyrics>
9. Strip
Chris Brown Featuring Kevin K-MAC McCall
<https://genius.com/Chris-brown-strip-lyrics>
10. Make Me Proud
Drake Featuring Nicki Minaj
<https://genius.com/Drake-make-me-proud-lyrics>
11. Ni**As In Paris
Jay Z Kanye West
<https://genius.com/Jay-z-and-kanye-west-niggas-in-paris-lyrics>
12. Nobody's Perfect
J. Cole Featuring Missy Elliott
<https://genius.com/J-cole-nobodys-perfect-lyrics>
13. Drank In My Cup
Kirko Bangz
<https://genius.com/Kirko-bangz-drank-in-my-cup-lyrics>
14. Lemme See
Usher Featuring Rick Ross
<https://genius.com/Usher-lemme-see-lyrics>
15. Birthday Cake
Rihanna Featuring Chris Brown
<https://genius.com/Rihanna-birthday-cake-remix-lyrics>
16. Cashin' Out
Ca\$h Out
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/cahout/cashinout.html>
17. Party
Beyonce Featuring Andre 3000
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beyonceknowles/party.html>
18. Up!
LoveRance Featuring IamSu & Skipper or 50 Cent
<https://genius.com/Loverance-up-original-version-lyrics>
19. Another Round
Fat Joe Featuring Chris Brown
<https://genius.com/Fat-joe-another-round-lyrics>
20. Dance (A\$\$)
Big Sean Featuring Nicki Minaj
<https://genius.com/Big-sean-dance-a-remix-lyrics>

2013:

1. Thrift Shop
Macklemore & Ryan Lewis Featuring Wanz
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/macklemore/thriftshop.html>
2. Blurred Lines
Robin Thicke Featuring T.I. + Pharrell
<https://genius.com/Robin-thicke-blurred-lines-lyrics>
3. Can't Hold Us
Macklemore & Ryan Lewis Featuring Ray Dalton
<https://genius.com/Macklemore-and-ryan-lewis-cant-hold-us-lyrics>
4. Suit & Tie
Justin Timberlake Featuring JAY Z
https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tziowmqco7awbaqufhkgb3skzam?lyrics=1&utm_source=google&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-lyrics
5. Holy Grail
Jay Z Featuring Justin Timberlake
<https://genius.com/Jay-z-holy-grail-lyrics>
6. Diamonds
Rihanna
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/rihanna/diamonds.html>
7. Started From The Bottom
Drake
<https://genius.com/Drake-started-from-the-bottom-lyrics>
8. F**Kin Problems
A\$AP Rocky Featuring Drake, 2 Chainz & Kendrick Lamar
<https://genius.com/A-ap-rocky-fuckin-problems-lyrics>
9. Hold On, We're Going Home
Drake Featuring Majid Jordan
<https://genius.com/Drake-hold-on-were-going-home-lyrics>
10. Love Me
Lil Wayne Featuring Drake & Future
<https://genius.com/Lil-wayne-love-me-lyrics>
11. POWER TRIP
J. Cole Featuring Miguel
<https://genius.com/J-cole-power-trip-lyrics>
12. Girl On Fire
Alicia Keys Featuring Nicki Minaj
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/aliciakeys/girlonfireinferoremix.html>
13. Same Love
Macklemore & Ryan Lewis Featuring Mary Lambert
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/macklemore/samelove.html>
14. Bad
Wale Featuring (Tiara Thomas Or) Rihanna
<https://genius.com/Wale-bad-remix-lyrics>
15. Adorn
Miguel
<https://genius.com/Miguel-adorn-lyrics>
16. Pour It Up
Rihanna
<https://genius.com/Rihanna-pour-it-up-lyrics>
17. Swimming Pools (Drank)
Kendrick Lamar
<https://genius.com/Kendrick-lamar-swimming-pools-drank-lyrics>
18. Berzerk
Eminem
<https://genius.com/Eminem-berzerk-lyrics>
19. Body Party
Ciara
<https://genius.com/Ciara-body-party-lyrics>
20. Bitch, Don't Kill My Vibe
Kendrick Lamar
<https://genius.com/Kendrick-lamar-bitch-dont-kill-my-vibe-lyrics>

2014:

1. Happy
Pharrell Williams
<https://genius.com/Pharrell-williams-happy-lyrics>
2. All Of Me
John Legend
http://www.lyricsfreak.com/j/john+legend/all+of+me_21065303.html
3. Fancy
Iggy Azalea Featuring Charli XCX
<https://genius.com/Iggy-azalea-fancy-lyrics>
4. Talk Dirty
Jason Derulo Featuring 2 Chainz
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/jasonderulo/talkdirty.html>
5. The Monster
Eminem Featuring Rihanna
<https://genius.com/Eminem-the-monster-lyrics>
6. Black Widow
Iggy Azalea Featuring Rita Ora
<https://genius.com/Iggy-azalea-black-widow-lyrics>
7. Drunk In Love
Beyonce Featuring Jay Z
<https://genius.com/Beyonce-drunk-in-love-lyrics>
8. Wiggle
Jason Derulo Featuring Snoop Dogg
<https://genius.com/Jason-derulo-wiggle-lyrics>
9. Anaconda
Nicki Minaj
<https://genius.com/Nicki-minaj-anaconda-lyrics>
10. Loyal
Chris Brown Featuring Lil Wayne & (French Montana Or Too Short Or) Tyga
<https://genius.com/Chris-brown-loyal-lyrics>
11. Don't Tell 'Em
Jeremih Featuring YG
<https://genius.com/Jeremih-dont-tell-em-lyrics>
12. Show Me
Kid Ink Featuring Chris Brown
<https://genius.com/Kid-ink-show-me-lyrics>
13. The Man
Aloe Blacc
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/aloeblacc/theman.html>
14. Hot Boy
Bobby Shmurda
<https://genius.com/Bobby-shmurda-hot-nigga-lyrics>
15. 2 On
Tinashe Featuring ScHoolboy Q
<https://genius.com/Tinashe-2-on-lyrics>
16. Na Na
Trey Songz
<https://genius.com/Trey-songz-na-na-lyrics>
17. My Hitta
YG Featuring Jeezy & Rich Homie Quan
<https://genius.com/Yg-my-nigga-lyrics>
18. Hold On, We're Going Home
Drake Featuring Majid Jordan
<https://genius.com/Drake-hold-on-were-going-home-lyrics>
19. Lifestyle
Rich Gang Featuring Young Thug & Rich Homie Quan
<https://genius.com/Rich-gang-lifestyle-lyrics>
20. New Flame
Chris Brown Featuring Usher & Rick Ross
<https://genius.com/Chris-brown-new-flame-lyrics>

2015:

1. See You Again
Wiz Khalifa Featuring Charlie Puth
<https://genius.com/Wiz-khalifa-see-you-again-lyrics>
2. Trap Queen
Fetty Wap
<https://genius.com/Fetty-wap-trap-queen-lyrics>
3. Watch Me
Silento
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/silento/watchmewhipnaenae.html>
4. The Hills
The Weeknd
<https://genius.com/The-weeknd-the-hills-lyrics>
5. Can't Feel My Face
The Weeknd
<http://www.metrolyrics.com/i-cant-feel-my-face-lyrics-the-weeknd.html>
6. Earned It (Fifty Shades Of Grey)
The Weeknd
<https://genius.com/The-weeknd-earned-it-lyrics>
7. 679
Fetty Wap Featuring Remy Boyz
<https://genius.com/Fetty-wap-679-lyrics>
8. Hotline Bling
Drake
<https://genius.com/Drake-hotline-bling-lyrics>
9. Post To Be
Omarion Featuring Chris Brown & Jhene Aiko
<https://genius.com/Omarion-post-to-be-lyrics>
10. G.D.F.R.
Flo Rida Featuring Sage The Gemini & Lookas
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/florida/gdfr.html>
11. Fourfiveseconds
Rihanna & Kanye West & Paul McCartney
<https://genius.com/Rihanna-fourfiveseconds-lyrics>
12. Somebody
Natalie La Rose Featuring Jeremih
<https://genius.com/Natalie-la-rose-somebody-lyrics>
13. My Way
Fetty Wap Featuring Monty
<https://genius.com/Fetty-wap-my-way-lyrics>
14. B**** Better Have My Money
Rihanna
<https://genius.com/Rihanna-bitch-better-have-my-money-lyrics>
15. Nasty Freestyle
T-Wayne
<https://genius.com/T-wayne-nasty-freestyle-lyrics>
16. Only
Nicki Minaj Featuring Drake, Lil Wayne & Chris Brown
<https://genius.com/Nicki-minaj-only-lyrics>
17. Don't Mind
Usher Featuring Juicy J
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/usher/idontmind.html>
18. I Don't F**K With You
Big Sean Featuring E-40
<https://genius.com/Big-sean-i-dont-fuck-with-you-lyrics>
19. 7/11
Beyonce
<https://genius.com/Beyonce-7-11-lyrics>
20. Flex (Ooh Ooh Ooh)
Rich Homie Quan
<https://genius.com/Rich-homie-quan-flex-oooh-oooh-oooh-lyrics>