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**Research Questions**

Music has always been a massive part of my life. It has always been something I felt like I could count on and it would never let me down I knew from a very young age that music was something I wanted a part of my life forever. Music is subjective, meaning that there aren’t really any specific reasons why one person may like another genre more than another and why some people don't like certain genres. As authors Scott Appelrouth and Crystal Kelly say, music is “a symbolic force for creating shared identity (Frith, 1996)...” (Appelrouth & Kelly, 2013, p. 301). Music has power and allows us to confront public issues “something that is open to dispute, and we take a stand and support what we think and feel with what we believe are good reasons.” (Greene, n.d.). As I grew older and am now a nineteen-year-old sophomore in college, I have discovered a career path I will enjoy for the rest of my life. This career path is music journalism. Music journalism can come in all forms, including music critics, music bloggers, music historians, and music photographers, although various names are also used for these titles. The career path I would like for my future is a music journalist (Which can also include critique), which will be the main focus of this paper. My research question is, “Is there a relationship between genre and underreporting?”, and if so, what are the reasons for this? I have used 9 sources and will be basing my research and approach on the information I have read and analyzed. I will also be discussing a few other factors that play into the underreporting of specific genres which include; Gender, race, and lyrics. I will also be discussing ethical issues within journalism and the further problems this causes within the music industry and society.

**Analysis And Synthesis**

The first concept I will be talking about is the role of gender in the music industry and the reporting of women in journalism and critiques. In an article written by Kelsey Whipple and Renita Coleman, *Facing the music: Stereotyping of and by women in US music journalism*, they explain the extensive stereotyping and socialization of music journalism specifically, what role women play in the field. The article discusses multiple different articles that helped the two authors come to the conclusion that women are just as likely to stereotype women musicians as men are. The field of journalism is a male-dominated field causing the world of music and journalism to become less inclusive. They explain that eight stories from the top U. S. publications were mostly about male artists and written by male journalists. When they did write about female artists, they were more likely to talk about their appearance and relationships and use more emotional and sexual language. In the very first paragraph of the article, the authors talk about Barbadian and world-renowned singer, Rihanna. They explain the accomplishments Rihanna has made in her career and then go into an article written by a journalist for the New York Times who was reviewing Rihanna’s 2016 album ‘ANTI’. He described Rihanna as “a star of fashion, social media, and tabloids who sometimes, y’know, makes music or whatever” ([Caramanica, 2016](https://journals.sagepub.com/reader/content/1838e583402/10.1177/14648849211028770/format/epub/EPUB/xhtml/index.xhtml#bibr8-14648849211028770)). Although you could look at this sentence from a different perspective, possibly as if he was making a snarky remark, it does not help the already prominent sexism of women in the music industry. As Whipple and Coleman describe it, this type of description of a female artist who was ranked the fifth highest-paid musician in the world by Forbes at the time the article was written, “devalues her artistry and focuses on her appearance and public persona.” (Whipple & Coleman, 2021, p. 2061). Although this is an issue that needs to be addressed, according to the authors there has not been a lot of research done on journalistic stories or the criticism of musicians and music, however, lots of research has been done on examining the lyrics of music or videos. Findings show that women are less likely to stereotype, nevertheless, this does not mean that it does not happen. Other findings show that women adopt the attitude of a man in order to do well in a mostly male-dominated field of work (Whipple & Coleman, 2021). Another source I analyzed called *Women Rock! How a North-East Music Blogger Redefines Women’s Role in Rock Music: A Critical Discourse Analysis*, author Sarah Mengede focuses on the genre of Rock music. She takes a look at the blog North East Women in Music (NEWM) and highlights the stereotypes that women musicians face in the North East underground music scene. Her findings explore how “feminist media producers challenge depictions of women musicians in British rock music discourse.” (Mengede, 2020, p. 1). She explains that Rock music has been seen as a man's world for many years (Mengede, 2022), “which means that roles in production and control are particularly in the hands of men…” (Mengede, 2022, p. 3). This causes problems for women trying to make it in the music industry because it causes an unfair advantage catered toward male musicians. In an article written by the BBC the idea of “introducing a quota for music festivals in the UK, to increase the number of women performing on festival stages and to reduce the “gender gap” in rock music” (Mengede, 2020, p. 1). This shows that there is a gender problem in the music space, in regards to women not getting an equal chance at showing off their talents and skills as musicians. The author then goes on to explain that the stereotypes women face make it even harder for them to acquire entry into the music world, “as it has developed “concepts of credibility and authenticity that work to exclude women, particularly feminist women, from the world of serious music” (Davies 302).” (Mengede, 2020, p. 1). Something I noticed between the two articles discussed so far is that they both mention the idea that women change their attitudes and style of writing in order to fit in with male co-workers. Unfortunately, this type of behavior is not uncommon and after comparing both articles I have found it is actually more of the norm than something out of the ordinary. As Wardle (n.d.) explains it, “Authority is bestowed by institutions, can be just as easily withdrawn by those same institutions or those members, and must be maintained through appropriate expressions of authority (Bourdieu).” (Wardle, n.d.). One of the sources that Mengede cited talks about a study done on Rock stars with a variety of mental illnesses. Leonard’s investigation showed that male Rock stars with mental illness were represented as “sensitive geniuses whose illnesses originate in wrong cultural structures (Leonard 70-87)” (Mengede, 2020, p. 4), and female Rock stars were represented as “weak and their problems were related to personal struggles originating in broken love relationships or family issues…” (Mengede, 2020, p. 4), showing that there is a disproportionate judgment style within the journalism field surrounding gender. One of the reasons why stereotyping women in journalism is a problem, as Whipple and Coleman describe it, “Stereotypes can impact the thoughts and behaviors of the people who consume them, especially women and girls.” (Whipple & Coleman, 2021). Another reason this is a major concern is because, “News media portrayals of people and communities have the power both to contribute to and reinforce stereotyped depictions of groups of people, as well as to fight against pervasive cultural stereotypes. These stereotypes are harmful to audiences because they over-simplify an entire category of human being into a negative shorthand through gross generalization.” (Whipple & Coleman, 2021, p. 2062). When women are stereotyped, essentially they are being stripped of their humanity by objectification, since they are being treated like objects and not like people. In certain music genres, the objectification of women is more dominant than in others. The music industry has always been a mainly masculine environment, especially in genres like Rock, Hip Hop, Metal, Pop, R&B, and Country (Kruse, 2002). Although women are more likely to be objectified than men, it is not uncommon for women to objectify themselves in their own songs and are more likely to do so compared to their male counterparts. This can be seen as a negative or a positive thing. On the positive side, you could take a step back and look at it as a “women’s empowerment to make conscious decisions to embrace their sexuality (Gill, 2007; Shugart et al., 2001)” (Whipple & Coleman, 2021, p. 2064). On the negative side, you could look at it as an “undoing of feminism (McRobbie, 2004).” (Whipple & Coleman, 2021, p. 2064). To talk about the journalism side of things more, it has been put forward that one of the main reasons why all of this stereotyping occurs within the field of journalism and in the music industry is because most of the time, the ones portraying the women are not women, it is men. As stated by Whipple and Coleman, normally, women have been excluded from music criticism, “a close-knit boys’ club” (Whipple & Coleman, 2021, p. 2066). Similar to Mengede’s article, Whipple and Coleman explain how even though women bring different attitudes and values to the workplace, there is always a need for them to act the same way as men in order to get a promotion or be accepted in the workplace. In an article that I spoke about earlier, an American music critic for The New York Times talks about Rihanna’s 2016 album ‘ANTI’. This article shows the amount of disrespect that was directed toward her musical abilities and highlights her ‘aesthetic’ rather than the quality of the music she produced. Even when he was commenting on the quality of content, there was nothing positive he had to say, and was consistently throwing out snarky remarks, for example, ““Anti” is a chaotic and scattershot album, not the product of a committed artistic vision, or even an appealingly freeform aesthetic, but rather an amalgam of approaches, tones, styles and moods.” (Caramanica, 2016), showing that the focus is not even on her music, but rather her appearance and even criticizes how committed she is to her music which is a problem in itself because it creates an unfair bias towards men being taken more seriously with their music than women.

The next concept I will be discussing is the factor that race and lyrics have to play in the music journalism industry and their debatably unethical practices. In an article I spoke about earlier called *Rap, Race and the (Re)Production of Boundaries*, Kelly and Appelrouth talk about what made the meanings behind Rap music and how it entered mainstream music. Rap and Hip Hop music have had a bad name attached to them for decades, for reasons that are super surface based. Some of these reasons include bad language and talk about drugs, alcohol, and sex. Although this is true in a lot of cases, Rap music provides an insight into a different way of life, a way of life that many of us are fortunate enough to not have ever experienced. Unlike other music genres, a lot of the meaning behind the Rap genre is extremely racialized. This is well explained by the authors, explaining that even though Rap music is enjoyed and made by people of all types of races, an “authentic ‘blackness’” (Appelrouth & Kelly, 2013, p. 302) has caused the genre to be aligned with race. In another article called *Is Hip-Hop Violent? Analyzing the Relationship Between Live Music Performances and Violence*, written by multiple authors, explores the general belief that Hip Hop music is more violent than other genres. They used data from the Madison Police Department and analyzed almost 5000 police calls that were made from bars, clubs, and other venues that were allowed to host live performances. One main theme they covered was the idea that Rap music affects the behaviors of its listeners due to violent content. One study by Wingwood, Bernhardt, and DiClemente (2003) found that “exposure to Rap music videos was positively associated with aggressive behaviors and negative health outcomes at a 12-month follow-up for Black girls aged 14 to 18.” (Fearing et al, 2018, p. 236). Another thing that was mentioned was that “listening preferences could reflect personal predispositions or lifestyle preferences.” (Fearing et al, 2018, p. 236). The conclusion came to a general hypothesis which was “that HipHop is a music genre more associated with violence.” (Fearing et al., 2018, p. 251) and that “there is generally little difference in indicators of violence across a wide range of music genres.” (Fearing et al., 2018, p. 251). After reading the research they made it does seem as though violence is more prevalent in Hip Hop music than any other genre, but this does not mean that Hip Hop music is any less than any other genre of music.

This brings me to the topic of lyrics and how they affect the perspective someone may have of a specific genre. Although Rap music started out as a movement by African-Americans, that in no way means this genre is a “Black genre”. Hip Hop, especially nowadays because of new-age digital streaming, etc, Rap has made its way around the globe, with many different cultures and countries producing rappers every day. Having said that, the country that gets the most media attention when it comes to Hip Hop is the United States. Due to where the genre started, The Bronx, New York, there is a relation between the type of people making the music and where they come from or grew up, etc. Lyrics of violence, gangs, drugs, and sex are highly prominent in Rap music, yes, but this is only because the artist's lyrics mimic all that they know or grew up around. People have a racial view of Rap music and it is controversial, some laid back-marketing people have been able to recognize the opportunity Rap music has for teenagers by saying “parents now find their teenagers listening to the rhythms of the black ghetto” (*Los Angeles Times* June 17, 1990)” (Appelrouth & Kelly, 2013). Although this is a kind of offensive way of explaining it, there is some truth to this statement. If you take a look at the level of lyricism and storytelling ability a lot of rappers have, the genre of Rap gives off a storytelling feel, therefore, rappers are only giving a straightforward narrative of their surroundings using “rapid, street-smart vocals” (Appelrouth & Kelly, 2013, p. 321) that appeal to the youth. Blau explains that social bonds are “fostered by lullabies, national anthems, social protest songs, military marches, and spirituals.” (Blau, 1988, p. 884) and that music is a shared expression of a community (Blau, 1988). These ideas help show that race does in fact play a part in the discrimination and possible underreporting of genre within the music journalism field.

**Advancing The Conversation**

So far, I have spoken about the effects that race and gender alongside lyrics play in the journalism field and the ways it contributes to underreporting. One of the reasons I believe that this research will contribute to the conversation is that I have highlighted some of the main ethical issues that contribute to why people do not trust journalists. Journalism is supposed to be about spreading the truth and the current news the public wants to hear about, not about discriminating against people based on things that do not even matter when it comes to getting the job done or producing art that millions of people worldwide appreciate and love. The goal is to hopefully inspire other researchers on digging deeper into gender issues in the workplace and not just journalism. It can also encourage people to research some other factors that influence the underreporting of genres. It is important for scholars to continue and contribute to this conversation because these are not just issues that have to do with music or journalism, but rather issues with the world. Race and gender are still topics of conversation today, with lots of various opinions and beliefs, but with further education and investigation, I believe that there would be ways for people to become more accepting of people's backgrounds and show that everyone has a different life experience, and some people are able to have a platform to express so.

**Next Steps**

The next steps I believe need to be made are for researchers and scholars alike to look further into the rapid digitization of the journalism industry as a whole. Over the course of my research, there was a theme that kept coming up which was the rapid digitization of journalism and how that affected reporting and the promotion of music. One article that stood out to me discussed how the music industry was one of “the first creative sectors to be dramatically transformed by the digital revolution (Järvekülg & Wikström, 2021, p. 1358), which caused a major shift in how music was being made and how it was sent out to the public, including who made profits. Further research on this topic would help contribute to the conversation about genre underreporting and the groups of people being affected.

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