

# Gender inequality in the music industry

---

Glück Radičević, Laura

Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2018

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:142:275138>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#) / [Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-03-10**



**FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET**  
SVEUČILIŠTE JOSIPA JURJA STROSSMAYERA U OSIJEKU

Repository / Repozitorij:

[FFOS-repository - Repository of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek](#)



Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni prediplomski studij mađarskog jezika i  
književnosti i engleskog jezika i književnosti

Laura Glück-Radičević

**Rodna nejednakost u glazbenoj industriji**

Završni rad

Mentor: Goran Milić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2018.

Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost

Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij mađarskog jezika i književnosti i engleskog jezika i književnosti

Laura Glück-Radičević

## **Rodna nejednakost u glazbenoj industriji**

Završni rad

Znanstveno područje: humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: filologija

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Goran Milić

Osijek, 2018.

.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Study Programme: Double Major BA Study Programme in English Language and  
Literature and Hungarian

---

Laura Glück-Radičević

**Gender inequality in the music industry**

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Goran Milić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2018

J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Study Programme: Double Major BA Study Programme in English Language and  
Literature and Hungarian

---

Laura Glück-Radičević

**Gender inequality in the music industry**

Bachelor's Thesis

Scientific area: humanities

Scientific field: philology

Scientific branch: English studies

Supervisor: Goran Milić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2018.

## **Abstract**

Gender inequality in the music industry still imposes a great problem for today's society. The industry is mostly male biased in every possible area whether we think of singers, bands, classical musicians, producers, record owners, or simply journalists or a worker in a music shop. This inequality goes back to the time when humans realised they are biologically different as it was represented in the Bible with Adam and Eve. The ideology says that males should be the ones who make all the decisions, provide for their families and hold the power over women, children and animals, while women have the subordinate role where they take care of the children and household. Furthermore, females do not make any decisions, own a property or have a say in anything, they are also not allowed to attend universities. Consequently, there are not many famous classical musicians from the past because they were not allowed to publish their works. The only ones who managed to do something were the ones whose husbands and fathers were well known musicians. The shift occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century with suffragette movement, civil rights, First World War. All of these events allowed women to slowly gain their voice and rights. At first women could only be singers or bass players, but slowly through alternative genres like punk they managed to infiltrate into the music industry. Major break-through was when women discovered they can get famous by exploitation of their sexuality which is still today's best tool for a break through. Some women, who become very famous, use their fame to address today's biggest problems in society. Through her music, Beyoncé fights for women and African American society. She has the power to influence people by inspiring and encouraging women all over the world. By doing that she is a voice for the voiceless. Although today's society has made a major leap forward when it comes to human rights and equality, still both men and women need to learn and adjust to the new society if we hope that one day gender inequality will be a part of the human history.

Keywords: inequality, gender, music, male, female

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2. History</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2.1. Women’s place in history</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2.2. Women in music throughout history</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Genres</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>4. Beyoncé</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>4.1. Feminism</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>4.2. Beyoncé’s exploit of sexuality</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>4.3. Relations between men and women in Beyoncé’s love songs</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>5. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>6. References</b> .....	<b>18</b>

## 1. Introduction

When we look at the music industry at the moment, we will not immediately notice the ubiquitous discrimination between men and women. Whenever we try to think of a successful female musician a lot of them come to our mind; Beyoncé, Adele, Taylor Swift, Madonna, Aretha Franklin, Lady Gaga... Although it may not seem so, gender inequality is a big problem in music industry nowadays. “Although ideological beliefs about women’s roles hindered their success more in the past than today, women are still severely underrepresented in the music industry (Schmutz and Faupel 2010).” (Adria Ryan McLaughlin, 11) Female musicians, unlike male, have to give up a lot more and endure a great deal of humiliation, discrimination, and sexual harassment on daily basis. Most of all, women are not encouraged to speak up about it. If they stand for themselves or say something, their voice is silenced by big corporations and they probably will not succeed in the music industry.

For a female musician it is almost impossible to have both family and a successful job, mostly because of long working hours, frequent travels, and long rehearsals. The root of the problem is argued to come from our society where females are taught from an early age how to be good wives, and one day mothers. “Normative expectations for women to be primary caregivers of families and children, internalization of criticism, and high personal expectations may push some women to censor, or end, their musical careers.” (Adria Ryan McLaughlin, 9) While growing up women are not encouraged to be equal to men, but to be fragile and dependent on men’s wisdom and strength. “gender inequality and bias, sexism, misogyny and other intertwined issues aren’t just confined to the music industry – they are still ingrained in our society and our culture at an implicit, subconscious level...” (L.Blair) Even in the classical music there is a lot of discrimination. There are still very few female conductors, composers, bassoon players. “Historically, women’s primary role in music was that of vocalist in part because it did not challenge masculinity (Bayton 1998).” (Adria Ryan McLaughlin, 11) Even in the famous and large orchestras men are prior to be hired because women cannot endure long classical pieces like Wagner’s operas which last up to 6 hours, or they go on a maternity leave and have to find a suitable replacement, which can be challenging. Due to women raising their voices, there are more and more female DJs, rock singers, drummers, music producers, composers, but still they are a lot more underpaid than their male colleagues. In the last few



years a lot of new encouraging campaigns have been established to help women overcome all the obstacles and challenges in the music industry. For example, inspired by “Time’s up” movement, women in the music industry decided to create their own called “Voices in Entertainment”. They decided to wear white roses at the 2018 Grammy Awards to support equality in the workplace and a workplace which is free of sexual harassment.

The aim of this thesis is to draw the attention to the inequality of the sexes in the music industry which is still largely visible in every genre, salary, sexism, and discrimination when it comes to ability to play an instrument. Playing various instruments was unimaginable for women a century ago because at that time females could enter the music industry only by singing because it was the only thing that could not intimidate the men. “Singing was seen as a natural physical ability that required no special talent, and was thus an acceptable way for women to participate in the male-dominated realm of music (Davies 2001).” (Adria Ryan McLaughlin, 11) Only a century ago, the music industry was biased in favour of men, but then women started to gain voice through suffragette movement. Women explored and realised they can be independent, strong, and fearless. They explored femininity and sexuality in a way that has never happened before and through it they gained their voice. The thesis is structured as follows; the first chapter illustrates women’s place and role in history and the music industry. It is followed by chapter two where it is discussed how hard it is for women to have a break-through in various music genres and by which means do they gain entrance in the music industry. The analysis is carried out in the third chapter. In the paper, Beyoncé shall serve as the representative of how far along we have come since the suffragette movement. The analysis of her songs shall serve to illustrate the ideas she promotes, such as feminism, women power, unity, sexuality, beauty, femininity, and African American people and culture. She serves as an inspiration to women all around the world no matter what colour they are and that is the reason her songs and her are part of the discussion in this thesis.

## **2. History**

### **2.1. Women's place in history**

Throughout the centuries it was unimaginable for a woman to do anything or be anything else than a housewife and to raise children. Women were thought to be unqualified to think, have an idea or opinion of anything. Because they were ought to be concerned with family, they were not allowed to attend universities or study anything and another reason was biological:

“Because education diverts a woman's energy from the development of her reproductive organs to the development of her brain, it is harmful to a woman's health. Education is especially harmful during menstruation, because a woman's reproductive organs normally require the most energy at that time.” (Sandra Lipsitz Bem, 10).

Up until the beginning of the twentieth century, women were considered as a possession of men. They had no right to think for themselves, earn money, own property, decide who they are going to marry or love. They were not educated unless they were a member of aristocracy, even then there were some restrictions. As Lipsitz Bem claims, it was unimaginable for a woman to be a doctor or a scientist, their primary role was to bear and take care of children and the household. Raping, humiliation and violence over women was not uncommon. ” It is thus not that man is treated as superior and woman as inferior but that man is treated as human and woman as “other”.” (Sandra Lipsitz Bem, 2) The worst part was that men did not have to answer for anything because once they married a woman she was their property. Male power “the power historically held by rich, white, heterosexual men, for it is they who originally set up and now primarily sustain the cultural discourse and social institutions of this nation.” (Sandra Lipsitz Bem, 3) dominated the earth, up until the women's movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. Women were not the only ones in the disadvantage but also the poor, sexual minorities and of course African Americans along with other coloured people in America.

Post-Freudians defined gender as “the consciousness of being male or female, that is, as a sense of masculine of feminine identity acquired through the processes of socialization or internalization.”(Mari Jo Buhle, 245) Western culture analysed all issues concerned with gender inequality in terms of biological difference. According to Bem, biological theorists tend to overemphasize biology (the obvious differences between genders or their specific characteristics) and underemphasize the historical and contemporary social context. As an example, Bem pointed out the claim by the United States that “Africans were particularly well

suited for slavery because of their “intrinsic race character””(Sandra.L.Bem, 6). Abolition of slavery and the right to vote sparked up the women’s rights movement whose primary demands were; the right to vote, to speak freely, right to proper education, to own property and practice law and also to wear pants.

Because of those brave women we have female musicians in the music industry and there are still a lot of areas that need to be improved when it comes to gender inequality in the music industry. The problem is also in the upbringing of children. When it comes to gender, children are thought how to behave from an early age. Boys are encouraged to wear darker colours and to love some specific toys like cars, while girls are supposed to love dolls, makeup, and wear brighter colours like pink. “we do a great deal to inculcate gender identity among our children. Girls are more likely to be given dolls to play with, and boys... airplanes.” (Sandra L. Bem, 19) According to Bem, the reason why boys and girls are thought to love different things is because of human evolutionary prehistory. The males who were dominant, sexually promiscuous and aggressive were able to leave more copies of themselves than those males who were less dominant. Same goes with females who had more sexually selective and maternal genes.

Women are still viewed more as sexual beings rather than talented, professional musicians. For now, if a woman wants to get a break-through and be very famous, she needs to look the part which means she has to be very good-looking, and beautiful. In other words, industry does not care how they sing or how talented they are unless they can sell them, and the best way to do that is to be good-looking. On the other hand, men can have greasy hair and long beard, be shirtless despite their chubby figure and still be famous. Many researchers claimed “that being a male or female greatly influenced the opportunities, responsibilities, and behaviour considered socially “appropriate” for each sex.” (Tracy L. Steele, 3) Furthermore, it is not unusual for women to be the victims of sexual harassment in the music industry. That usually occurs with producers, managers, or owners of the record company. Most of the time, women do not talk about it because otherwise the men in power will end their careers. The next big problem is salary which is a lot lower than that of men. It is assumed that women cannot do as much work as men but it is also assumed they are less capable and less talented. The risk of maternity leave plays a crucial part when it comes to salary and getting a job for example in an orchestra or any other performance genre. The final problem for women in the music industry is whether to sacrifice their career to be a mother or pursue it and possibly not have children. “Ellis and Carpenter assumed that for woman the desire to bear children is nothing less than essential to her being.” (Mari Jo Buhle, 38) Most of women quit their careers because they are judged by society

if they decide to do both. Musicians need to travel a lot in order to promote their music and to earn money, and very often they cannot take their children because they are not vastly rich superstars who can afford it like Beyoncé for example.

## **2.2. Women in music throughout history**

When it comes to music, we can find the root of the problem if we go 400 years back in the past to the renaissance, later followed by baroque, classical and romantic period. There were no female composers or compositions. Early music industry was closely related to the church where men were better and more suitable to be composers because according to ideology in the Bible, women are supposed to be man's helper and bear children. During baroque, some composers like Bach taught his wife music so she can copy compositions for the musicians while Bach composed other pieces of music or had rehearsals. During classical period, female aristocracy usually played the piano or violin but still men were their teachers and their superiors. Until romantic period, women had the only connection to music through their husbands, brothers or fathers. The only well-known female musician from the romantic period is Clara Schumann. She was the first famous classical composer and pianist of the romantic period, and she wouldn't be that successful if it were not for her husband who supported her in the pursuit of her dream and made it all happen. Her husband was Robert Schumann who was one of the representatives of the romantic period and one of the most famous musician at that time. Only because of him she managed to have a career and eight children. She was a true representation of a modern woman for that age. Not only did she play piano but she also composed music and raised eight children.

“I once believed that I had creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not wish to compose — there never was one able to do it. Am I to be the one? It would be arrogant to believe that.” (C.Schumann)

Even though she was well-known and had a support of her loved ones, she still did not believe in herself to call herself a composer which shows us how deep the discrimination against women went. Some musician say that Clara was an even better musician than her husband, but it was embedded into her being that she can never be as good as her male colleagues.

We can see similar examples today; from an early age, females are not encouraged enough to believe in themselves. During the twentieth century, women received less attention than men when it came to composing and playing music. When jazz appeared, things slightly

changed, but still women had to fight a lot to even be able to sing on stage. For example Lil Hardin Armstrong, who wrote “Just for a Thrill” did not gain any recognition until Ray Charles covered the song. The only reason for it was because she was a woman. In the 1980’s a major shift occurred, particularly for women in the music industry. The formal image of industry which was male biased, evolved into a sexual one. It was a time of “innovation that women used to empower themselves.” (A. Philips). Still men made all the important decisions in the industry. “Music critics, journalists, and historians—mostly men over the years—have focused the bulk of their stories on male musicians and their exploits (O’Meara 2003)” (Adria Ryan McLaughlin,12) Madonna embodied the idea “of the mainstream female musical icon by overtly incorporating sexuality into her image.”( A. Philips ) Madonna used her sexuality to gain publicity and promote her music. Although Madonna managed to slightly open the doors to the music industry for women, it was still very hard for them to succeed keeping their shirts on.

“Female pop performers often claim empowerment as an excuse for their sexual performances despite that they are ultimately “getting naked to get heard”; however, this sexualized distortion of empowerment contributes to women being devalued as artists (Levande 2008: 305)” (Adria Ryan McLaughlin, 13) It was not about the music anymore, the important thing was how to sell something and sex sells which was one of the main features of the rock ‘n’ roll area. After Madonna’s appearance a lot of new women singers emerged in the coming years. Today, almost all of the world’s most famous female musicians use their sexuality as a means to sell their music and themselves. The only exception concerning world superstars is Adele, who managed to stay the same. She is one of the rare musicians who sells her music instead of her appearance. “Women will continue to challenge the normality of expected gender roles while also using the power of femininity to gain equitability not just as women, but also people.” (A. Philips) Concerts and performing acts are still heavily biased towards men. According to a study by The Guardian, sixty nine percent of the acts are made up entirely of men, while just nine percent are female-only. Furthermore during the summer festivals in the UK, eight out of ten headliners were male, and on the business side thirty percent of senior executive roles were occupied by women. The artist Laura Marling realised that all the people she performed with while touring on her own, were men. On the other hand hip hop artist Shay D says that promoters book females saying that they need some female energy while in reality they are just trying to fill the quota or to look fair. One of the first places musician go when they want to buy an instrument is a music store. In most of the stores men are the majority which often rejects women for pursuing the instrument because they feel intimidated by their lack of knowledge or

men's attitude towards them and their talent or abilities to be a musician. Laura Marling says she never felt intimidated in a music store called Fanny's music shop whose owners are women. "It must be what it feels like for men," she adds. "Women are completely readjusting our idea of what our futures will be – and men are also readjusting. But it's hard, and it takes time." (Laura Marling) The same goes with music labels. Like women, men are also adjusting to the new order and with time, men will embrace women in the industry as their equals.

### 3. Genres

Women had two options to enter the music industry, it was either by being singers or bass players. “Even when the electric bass became an acceptable entry for women into the alternative rock music genre, playing the instrument failed to challenge the gender order” (Adria Ryan McLaughlin,13-14) According to McLaughlin the reason for that was because women were associated with nature because the bass holds the rhythm. Women emerged to music industry by infiltrating in rock subgenres like punk. ”During the 1970s more women entered the music scene via punk rock (Bayton1998). This is due, in part, to punk’s focus on amateurism and a do-it-yourself ethic that women found appealing” (Adria Ryan McLaughlin, 11-12)

During the 70’s, rock ‘n’ roll was almost exclusively performed by male musicians. “Rock is, among other things, a potent means of expressing the active emotions—anger, aggression, lust, the joy of physical exertion—that feed all freedom movements, and it is no accident that women musicians have been denied access to this powerful musical language.” (Ellen Willis). Although this statement was made during the 70’s, it still holds the ground when it comes to rock ‘n’ roll. In order to play rock ‘n’ roll, you need to have that male strength, endurance and aggression that females in general do not possess. Female voice is higher than men’s which does not appeal to the genre. Furthermore, in rock ‘n’ roll women are supposed to have a subordinate role of adoring fans, wives, girlfriends.

“The ideal male rock star and the women who support him create a gender binary that pervades rock’s many subgenres. This dynamic reinforces both sexism and heterosexism by reserving musician roles for men and limiting women to roles as girls, girlfriends, groupies, adoring fans, merch or wives” (Adria Ryan McLaughlin, 21)

Often the role of the wives of rock ‘n’ roll musicians is to stay at home and take care of children while they tour the world and enjoy their life. These wives are often invisible and not well-known. On the contrary, we rarely see a female rock musician leaving her husband and children at home while she tours the world. For most of people it is unimaginable and intolerable for a woman to leave her family in order to be a superstar. Rap follows that tone for being tough in order to be a rapper, but is a bit extreme. Only now in the twenty-first century have some female rappers emerged like Nicky Minaj and Cardi B. Rappers consider men to be better than women. While there are very good rappers almost like poets, there are also others who promote poor-

gender related message. The lyrics often detail sexual exploits, relationships, money, politics, and death. Some extreme lyrics promote violence against women as an acceptable action.

Concerning pop genre it is probably the genre with most female musicians in it. A lot of artists gained their fame through exploitation of their sexuality. Their songs send some troubling messages to its listeners who are generally 10-year-old girls. Not only lyrics but music videos became very explicit and they encourage girls to wear less, do drugs, and be wild in order to find a boyfriend. Lyrics like “he cold, he dope, he might sell coke” teach girls they should be an object of sexual desire. Nevertheless, most of the pop industry is covered with love songs and ballads which are harmless. Most of female musicians feel the need to prove their abilities and talent to men all the time. If a female musician is not good enough for men while playing an instrument or singing they usually quit so they do not make other female musicians look bad. They do it to prevent labelling women as not good enough for playing an instrument or singing some specific genre like rap. While all of these genres were mostly oriented towards white people, RnB’s representatives were always coloured people with specific voice that takes its roots from Jazz music. Some of the representatives are Whitney Houston, Rihanna, Aretha Franklin, Alicia Keys, Chaka Khan, Mariah Carey... But one of the most famous musicians of all time is Beyoncé.



## 4. Beyoncé

### 4.1. Feminism

Beyoncé is one of the most popular RnB female musician of all time. In her songs, she continually promotes feminism, female power, femininity, along with African American society and culture. Most of her songs are about love, relationships, and heartbreaks, but her last two albums openly criticize the way society treats women and black people especially in America. Beyoncé embraces the ever growing feminism which has been growing during the last decade. In her lyrics for the song “*Flawless*” she gives us the definition of feminism and describes what society teaches girls to become. “Feminist: the person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes.” (Beyoncé) she is not promoting hate, because feminism is not about hating men, it is about equality on a work place, at home, in the street, and in every possible aspect of life. “I took some time to live my life but don't think I'm just his little wife.”(Beyoncé) In these lines she clearly states that for a year she paused her career to have a child, but that does not mean her life is now just about being a mother, a wife, and staying at home. She still wants to give so much more concerning her job. In the video for the song “*Flawless*” she says:

“We say to girls, “You can have ambition but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful otherwise you will threaten the man.” Because I am female I am expected to aspire to marriage, I am expected to make my life choices always keeping in mind that marriage is the most important...” (Beyoncé)

This part is crucial when it comes to gender inequality, because we see the sole problem of the inequality which goes way back into the past where it laid its roots. Women’s primary role until the twentieth century was to bear children, make men happy and do as they are told, and now for the first time, things are completely different. The definition of a woman as a “sexual temptress” was even introduced in the Bible in the story of Adam and Eve. Adam was made in God’s image and was superior being on Earth. He named the animals and ruled over them and Eve was not made in God’s image but in Adam’s image; God took Adam’s rib and made Eve out of it. ”Eve, in contrast, is an inferior departure from this godly standard, a secondary being created merely to be a helper to Adam; she is not a namer herself:” (Sandra L. Bem, 46) The sole source of women as a lesser sex comes from ideologies like the one written in the Bible:

“And why is she the weaker? Because she is “a less than perfect approximation of her Creator; inferior not only to him, but to Adam as well...a dilution in power, rational faculties, self-control, piety, and moral strength” (1984, p.57) The serpent’s choice thus emphasizes the definition of woman as an inferior departure from the male standard. “(Sandra L. Bem, 47)

Furthermore biological differences also play an important role “Women would be primarily responsible for childcare – and for whatever else they could do simultaneously because they would always have children either in them or on them” “(Sandra L. Bem, 31) Men feel threatened, because if women are becoming as independent as men are. The purpose of their existence comes down to prolongation of the human race. “Men would be primarily responsible for the defence and for hunting both because they were bigger and stronger and also because they did not have their mobility limited by the continuous presence of children.” (Sandra L. Bem, 31) The protection, and safety they were supposed to provide for the family is no longer needed and their presence becomes less important. Nowadays women choose men and not the other way around. Men continuously try to limit women’s freedom by encouraging females to achieve something but not more than them. Most of them still have the desire to be above women, at least when it comes to strength and salary.

The general opinion is that women should put marriage and men first, and the career in the second place. “Motherhood is a key expectation for women; some female musicians feel they must choose between the role of musician or mother which negatively impacts their opportunities to lead full lives.” (Adria Ryan McLaughlin, 43) Beyoncé later states that marriage can fulfil you but that it should not be your only occupation and that your world does not stop when you decide to start a family.

“We raise girls to see each other as competitors not for jobs or for accomplishments which I think can be a good thing but for the attention of men. We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way that boys are” (Beyoncé)

Unfortunately girls are raised to compete over men’s affection rather than competing in business or for success. Furthermore boys and girls are taught differently from the day they are born. Why boys cannot be seen as sexual beings like girls are? Male nudity is accepted but female is vulgar. On the other hand, Beyoncé is in a way a pure product of the music industry that sells very well. She too has some vulgar nudity in her videos that does not send a good message. Whereas in some songs she uses the influence she has on people to promote some good points concerning gender inequality in today’s society. For example, she promotes African American people

through her lyrics and videos. Her whole band and dancers are African Americans. In the video for the song “*Formation*” it is especially vivid in the sense that she brought her daughter, along with some other famous African American women to stand together in a formation, to fight for their rights, to be equal.



Picture 1. Beyoncé with some African American women in the “*Formation*” music video



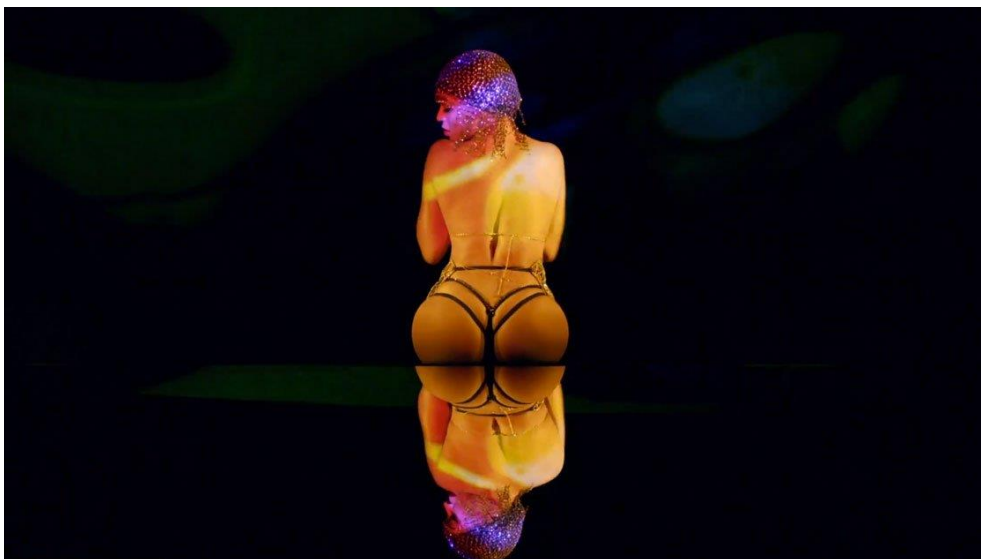
Picture 2. Beyoncé standing in formation with her coloured dancers in the “*Formation*” music video

A lot of girls in America still have problems fitting in the society because of their skin colour and someone like Beyoncé, who can greatly influence masses, can probably make a difference. “My persuasion can build a nation Endless power, with our love we can devour” (Beyoncé) “*Run the world*” is a song about women and unity of women. In a way she wants to address the issue that women are here and present and that man cannot mess with them so easily anymore. “Some of them men think they freak this like we do, but no they don't. Make your check, come at they

neck disrespect us, no they won't" (Beyoncé) Beyoncé grew along with her songs and her self-awareness, female power, and feminism grew along with it.

#### 4.2. Beyoncé's exploitation of sexuality

It is not unusual for Beyoncé to express her sexuality frequently in her videos and performances. In the end it is what got her famous in the first place and singled her out while she was still a member of The Destiny's Child. "Sexism is highly normalized in American culture, especially in music entertainment, and women are expected to spend a great deal of time and money on their appearance in order to be attractive to men." (Adria Ryan McLaughlin, 29) In the videos she always wears very short dresses, high heels, and a lot of makeup. It was especially vivid in her audio-visual album "Beyoncé" after the birth of her first child when she had to get back in form for performances and shootings. Again she was proving society that she can be both a mother, a wife and to lead a professional career." I just wanna be the girl you like, girl you like. The kind of girl you like" (Beyoncé) In the song "*Partition*" where she wears corsets and bikinis which cover very little, both lyrics, rhythm and visual appearance are extremely provocative and the same goes for the rest of the album. "Oh he so horny, yeah he want to fuck. He popped all my buttons, and he ripped my blouse. He Monica Lewinsky-ed all on my gown." (Beyoncé)



Picture 3. Beyoncé wearing explicit clothes in "*Partition*" music video

While the explicit lyrics are most vivid in the song "*Blow*" she was not as naked as in "*Partition*". "*Partition*" and "*Blow*" blend together in "*Drunk in love*" which primarily talks about her love for JayZ with some explicit lyrics "Baby, I want you, now-now. Can't keep your eyes off my fatty daddy, I want you, now-now" (Beyoncé). In the video, she dances on the beach with JayZ where she tries to seduce him. "Feminists, like Freud, were coming to understand

sexuality as the leading indicator of selfhood...” (Mari Jo Buhle, 28) A lot of philosophers think of sex as “the chief and central function of life” (Mari Jo Buhle, 36), in the end it is not so unusual to sing about sex but it unusual if a woman does it the way that men usually do. Beyoncé’s lyrics about sex are fierce because she broke out of the idea that women should only write sweet lyrics about heartbreaks and wanting the wrong guy. She uses harsh language to illustrate her desire and need. “It became legitimate to pursue sex for carnal pleasure to the extent that eroticism acquired a higher meaning as a symbol or vehicle of love.” (Steven Seidman, 105)

#### **4.3.Relations between men and women in Beyoncé’s love songs**

Most of Beyoncé’s songs are love songs, especially at the beginning of her solo career. In most of the songs, the man in the song hurt her or tricked her, also the man does not care at all about her feelings which makes her miserable. On the contrary, she is faithful, good and most of the times heartbroken, crying. She cannot understand why he cheated on her or why he does not love her anymore because she has everything a man could want while in other songs she is completely in love with the man and would do anything for him, as if she willingly gave herself to him in a way that he owns her. For example on the album “4” nine songs are love songs and in five out of nine she is the one that is hurt. Man is always superior to her at least in some way, because in the end she is always the one who got hurt or acts like she does not care even if she wants to go back to him if only he said he loved her.

“*Why don’t you love me*” talks about how she is perfect in every way “I got beauty, I got class, I got style, and I got ass” but he does not care at all. She is even independent “I even put money in the bank account. Don't have to ask no one to help me out. You don't even notice that”. She cannot understand why he is the way he is, but the reason for this is probably because men want to be the only providers and protectors for women and in this song she is probably too independent for him. By the end of the song, she tells herself “Maybe you're just not the one or maybe you're just plain dumb” in order to feel better. While “*Single ladies*” and “*The best thing I never had*” talk about how she is happy because she is not with the boyfriend anymore, and how karma will do the rest once he realizes what he lost, “*Resentment*” and “*Crazy in love*” tell a different story. In “*Resentment*” she sings about how hurt she was because the guy cheated on her and lied to her; “Just can't seem to get over the way you hurt me. Don't know how you gave another who didn't mean a thing. The very thing you gave to me.” She wants to give him a hard

time although she still loves him but will never be able to forgive him. Here we see a subordinate role of a woman when it comes to relationships; she used to be strong but now after that break up she feels like she is no good. “*Crazy in love*” give us the feeling of an early stage during a relationship, the first few months while everything is blissful and perfect. Beyoncé sings how she is out of control because she is madly in love and how she wants him badly. “Got me looking so crazy right now. Your touch got me looking so crazy right now.”

Furthermore, the twist happens in the “*Irreplaceable*” and “*If I were a boy*” songs. In the previous songs she was the one who was left by the man, while in “*Irreplaceable*” she tells the man to move out and take his stuff without touching hers “To the left, to the left. Everything you own in the box to the left. In the closet that's my stuff. Yes, if I bought it, nigga please don't touch” She does not care about his feelings or whether he will find another girl in a minute because she can do the same. Beyoncé assumed the role of a man in this song, at least she acted the way men would usually act when they break up with someone. This role of a man is even more vivid in “*If I were a boy*” song. She imagined a typical day in man’s life which starts by picking out anything to wear, meaning she does not have to get up earlier to dress up for work, and put the make up on. “I'd roll outta bed in the morning and throw on what I wanted and go” if only men could understand what girls feel, she thinks they would treat them better. “If I were a boy, I think I could understand how it feels to love a girl. I swear I'd be a better man” this song talks about unequal view of the sexes when it comes to relationships and love, but it is also primarily a story about how a girl cannot understand why men act the way they do and she imagined how it would be if the roles were reversed.

Beyoncé is a true embodiment of how far can woman go even if they have to use their sexuality as a means of achieving their goal. She realized it is hard to make it as a female musician so she embraced her sexuality and became one of the most famous and best musicians in the whole world and now she can be an inspiration to girls and women all around the world. She grew as a musician from singing love songs to a strong independent woman who fights for women rights and African American society.

## 5. Conclusion

"The music business doesn't give a shit about you," "They will prostitute you for all you are worth." (S. O'Connor). Gender inequality is very real and present in music industry. The way women are treated, underpaid, insulted and used is unbelievable for a modern society. During last few years, women have finally joined together to fight this injustice imposed on them due to centuries of oppression. Men controlled everything in their lives up until twentieth century when things started to change in society as well as in music. Women were finally able to have an opinion, job, to express themselves, and their primary role was not just to be a mother and a housewife.

Today's society is still in the process of accepting that women are not the servants of men and a tool to procreate." Male allies are imperative in effecting change for women since they are the group in power. Men's awareness is the first step for them becoming allies for women both in music and in other areas of their lives" (Adria Ryan McLaughlin, 45) Slowly through all the movements like Suffragettes and other associations where women fight every day, women finally gained some voice that is not an echo anymore. "Woman's mission was not "to enhance the masculine spirit, but to express the feminine; hers is not to preserve a man-made world, but to create a human world by the infusion of the feminine element into all of its activities." (Mari Jo Buhle, 43) Musicians like Beyoncé, who has an enormous influence on today's youth and society, can make a differences. She uses her fame to promote the notion of what it means to be a woman in today's world, but most of all what it means to be an African American woman. She made history recently by being the first African American woman to headline Coachella. Her songs constantly remind us that women still need to fight on a daily basis against gender inequality and men power.

Many years will still have to pass until our society reaches the point where genders are equal. This will require the evolution of both male and female state of mind. Our history is biased towards men, beginning with obvious biological differences that shaped the state of mind of both genders, continuing with ideologies like the one written in the Bible where only Adam was made in God's image and Eve was made from Adam. Only to come to the twentieth century when everything started to change. Human race has made a big step towards equality in the last century and not only towards women but also with other coloured people, homosexuals and transgender people too. "New Moralists endowed women with unique powers to advance civilization and for this reason welcomed both their sexual freedom and their advancement into

civil society.” (Mari Jo Buhle, 39) Step by step and maybe one day gender inequality will be the thing human race is ashamed of, and feminism ends up in history books as a movement that gave voice to the voiceless.



## 6. References

- Buhle Mari Jo. *Feminism and its Discontents: A century of struggle with Psychoanalysis*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England. 1998.
- Bem Sandra Lipsitz. *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, cop. 1993.
- Blair Lucy. *Next Steps For Gender Equality In The Music Industry*. Hypebot.com. Posted by Guest Post on 05/03/2016. Accessed 21 June 2018.  
<http://www.hypebot.com/hypebot/2016/05/gender-equality-draft.html>
- Elements Behavioral Health. *Women and Gender in Music*. Published on November 24, 2012. Accessed 21 June 2018. <https://www.elementsbehavioralhealth.com/adolescent-issues/women-gender-music/>
- Larsson Naomi. *Live music acts are mostly male-only. What's holding women back?*. The Guardian. Published 12 October 2017. Accessed 6 September 2018.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/oct/12/tonights-live-music-acts-will-mostly-be-male-only-whats-holding-women-back>
- Latimer Jolene. *Gender Gap in Music*. USC University of Southern California. Published January 26. Accessed 21 June 2018.  
<http://www.uscannenbergmedia.com/2017/01/26/gender-gap-in-music/>
- McLaughlin Adria Ryan. *Navigating Gender Inequality in Musical Subgenres*. East Tennessee State University. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. December 2015.
- Patel Natasha. *Gender in the Music Industry*. Music Business Journal. Berklee College of Music. Published October 2015. Accessed 21 June 2018.  
<http://www.thembj.org/2015/10/gender-inequality-in-the-music-industry/>
- Philips Abbey. *Spacebomb: Truth lies somewhere in between*. Rvanews.com. Published 1 September, 2011. Accessed 21 June 2018. <https://rvanews.com/features/spacebomb-truth-lies-somewhere-in-between/49992>
- Rogers Judge. *Girls allowed? The women on top in the music industry*. The Guardian. Published 26 October 2013. Accessed 21 June 2018.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/oct/26/women-running-music-industry-feature>

Steele Tracey L. *Sex, Self, and Society: The Social Context of Sexuality*. Thomson Wadsworth, Australia: Canada: Mexico: Singapore: Spain: United Kingdom: United States cop. 2005.

Songs:

Beyoncé. *Crazy in love*. Album *Dangerously in love*. Published 2003

Beyoncé. *Drunk in love*. Album *Beyoncé*. Published 2013

Beyoncé. *If I were a boy*. Album *I am...* Sasha Fierce. Published 2008

Beyoncé. *Irreplaceable*. Album *B'Day*. Published 2006

Beyoncé. *Flawless*. Album *Beyoncé*. Published 2013

Beyoncé. *Partition*. Album *Beyoncé*. Published 2013

Beyoncé. *Resentment*. Album *B'Day*. Published 2006

Beyoncé. *Run the world*. Album *4*. Published 2011

Beyoncé. *Why don't you love me*. Album *I am...* Sasha Fierce. Published 2008