

**Has hip hop and rap become more offensive?**

by

Heather Rothmann

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Sponsor: Dr. Melissa Forstrom

Second Reader: Professor Laura Ricciardi

It is probable that hip hop is a genre that has grown exponentially in popularity since its emergence in the late 1970's. It has traversed the boundaries of class, race, and wealth, and has made its way into the mainstream culture, becoming one of the most popular genres of music in the USA (Nielson 6). Curiously though, one may observe that this style of music, which is unique for its predominance of the spoken (as opposed to sung) word, has an abundance of misogynistic and sexually-explicit language. Driving the research in study is the question, how is it, in a society like today's, where feminism is a national topic of discussion and the "Me Too" movement is in full force, does a seemingly degrading genre towards women become the most popular? (Gibson 1).

One of the arguments to this question, which (of course), has been asked by many scholars, is that hip hop/rap is not attempting to degrade or oppress women, but rather express the woes of the artist (Morgan, Jeffries). The common argument is that the rapper feels like he must use his masculinity to cover up the pain and oppression he experiences day-to-day; and furthermore, expose and condemn the nature of women who "take advantage" of these rappers by offering their bodies and pretentious allegiance in exchange for money and fame. However, when one looks at the nature of rap/ hip hop lyrics, it is hard to believe that these artists are really trying to express the oppression or pain they are experiencing from this pimp-like lifestyle that they so nonchalantly boast about. It seems, rather, that these artists are boasting about how many women they sleep with, how willingly these women are ready to please their every desire, and how willing and able they are to use women to do exactly that.

With these notions considered, this paper asks the question, has hip hop/rap become more misogynistic and sexually explicit in nature since the early 2010's? I suggest that the answer is yes, it has, and not as a function of expressing oppression or underlying issues in the artists. I

argue that the use of misogyny and sexual explicitness in rap/hip hop is used to degrade and oppress women. If this idea can be demonstrated, it can show why hip hop and rap are not to be revered and adored by its listeners, but disdained, and possibly evolved in a way to ultimately become less misogynistic.

The method conducted to address the research question employs a content analysis of three hip hop/rap songs that were most popular in the year that each was released respectively. These songs are “Love Me” by Lil Wayne featuring Drake and Future (2013), “Low Life” by Future featuring The Weeknd (2016), and “Suge” by DaBaby (2018). These songs were selected from Billboard’s “Hot Rap Songs Year-End” Charts. Billboard bases its data from sales compiled from the systems Nielson Music and Media Rating Council Data (sales tracking systems) – representing over 90% of the U.S. music market (Billboard). Each of the songs was located in the Top 10 songs of these charts, and therefore indicate what the country was listening to at the time. Furthermore, these songs display significant amounts misogyny and sexual explicitness, sufficient enough to address the research question.

To understand how the content in this paper will be analyzed, it is important to review the previous literature that discusses misogyny in rap and hip hop. In particular, it is important to understand how this author identifies what misogyny is when looking at lyrical content. In 2006, professors Terri Adams and Douglas Fuller of Howard University published an article that explored misogynistic ideology in rap, as well as the connection between its prevalence in rap and the larger cultural picture of how African American women have been characterized. The authors define misogyny as the hatred or disdain of women. In this article, Adams and Fuller also identify six major themes found in misogynistic rap:

- 1) derogatory statements about women in relation to sex,
- 2) statements involving violent actions towards women, particularly in relation to sex,
- 3) references of women causing “trouble” for men,
- 4) characterization of women as “users” of men,
- 5) references of women being “beneath” men, and
- 6) references of women as usable and discardable beings (940).

Adams and Fuller also explain how images of the “Sapphire” and the “Jezebel”, created decades ago to oppress the African-American woman, are still used to characterize the subjects of these misogynistic lyrics. To be clear, the “Sapphire” is said to be “[...] an African American woman who dominates her entire household [...] a socially aggressive woman who tries through manipulation to control her man.” This image can be transferred to the use of the term “bitch” in today’s society (944). The “Jezebel” is a sexually aggressive woman, who “[...] wants and accepts sexual activity in any form from men, and [...] uses sex as a means to get what she wants from men” (Adams and Fuller 944). The Jezebel, today, can be referred to as, “the ho.”

While the terms Jezebel and Sapphire are dated, Adams and Fuller use them as a lens for the ways in which they analyze the lyrical content of various rap songs, and furthermore make the argument that these artists talk about women in this way as a means of oppressing them. It is important to define these themes and terms as they will be used throughout this paper to analyze misogynistic content.

The method that is used to develop this content analysis focuses on the ideas presented by Adams and Fuller. In order to address the research question, which analyzes three songs to determine if rap/hip hop has become more or less misogynistic in the past decade, it must be established how misogyny is measured for each song. The method I employ for each song is quite simple: I review each line of lyric, identify which lines contain one of Adams and Fuller’s six themes of misogyny; I count how many times the themes were presented in the entire song

and then use that number to measure the total amount of misogyny. Furthermore, my analysis articulates each line that contains one of the six themes, and provides an explanation as to why that particular line depicts the theme I had identified it with.

Another aspect of my method of measuring misogyny is the existence of the word's "bitch" and "ho" in each song. The words "bitch" and "ho" are automatically categorized as a depictions of Theme 1 (derogatory statements about women in relation to sex) and therefore are included in the final sum of total themes presented in the song. However, I do not analyze every line of lyric that contains these words, as they do not require much explanation, and space is limited for this paper.

The third and final aspect of my content analysis is the measurement of sexually explicit language. Sexually explicit language is measured to prove the point that these songs are bold and boastful – not expressive of the despairs that the artists may be experiencing. The method employed here is the identification of any language in the lyrics that refers to a sexual act so obviously, that the listener cannot interpret the lyrics as being anything else *but* sexual. I do not identify and discuss each line with sexually explicit language as it would take up too much space in this paper; but I do a total count of how many lyrics contained sexually explicit language. That number is added to the number of times Adams and Fuller's themes are presented, giving the ultimate measurement as to how offensive each song is – allowing us to see if hip hop/rap has become more or less misogynistic and offensive.

Before we analyze the content for the content analysis, it is important to be educated on how hip hop and rap have been observed and spoken about (in terms of misogyny) in the past decade. Through review of academic literature, one is able to see the prevalence of misogyny in hip hop/rap, the amount of explicit sexuality there is, and why it is important to address this topic

as it is a possible issue at hand for today's generation. While research exists to show how misogynistic this genre is, it has only become more popular (Nielson 6). It is important that this is brought to the world's attention because research shows that listening to this music actually affects the attitudes of the listener. This paper also reviews some of the literature that argues *against* the idea that hip-hop/rap is solely misogynistic in nature, and rather self-expressive and self-revealing of the oppressive conditions in which these rappers/artists live in.

While scholars attribute the misogyny to different reasons, it is no question that hip hop and rap have been the genres in which misogyny is used the most. In a 2005 study by Brian Primack, Melanie Gold, Eleanor Schwarz, and Madeline Dalton, doctors of various medical and academic disciplines throughout Pennsylvania and New Hampshire, Billboards top popular songs for that year were analyzed for the presence of degrading, and non-degrading sexual content (594). Degrading sex was defined as having all three of the following qualities: (1) one person has a large sexual appetite, (2) the other person is objectified, and (3) sexual value is placed solely on physical characteristics (595). Out of a large number of 279 songs, 64% of the songs that contained degrading sex were Rap songs – being the most popular genre for the degrading sexual content to live in. The second highest percentage (22.4%) of sexual degrading songs lived in the genre of R&B and hip hop (Primack et al. 597).

Another similar study conducted in 2009 by Ronald Weitzer and Charis Kubrin - researchers at the George Washington University - analyzed 403 songs, taken from rap albums from 1992 through 2000 that had attained platinum status (selling at least 1 million copies) (10). These records were analyzed to find instances of misogyny, and other similar themes (such as violence towards women, and sexual objectification.) In this study, misogyny refers to “lyrics that encourage, condone, or glorify the objectification, exploitation, or victimization of women.”

(Kubrin and Weitzer 10). The results that came from this study speak for themselves: misogyny was present in 22% of the rap songs (almost 1 in 4 songs). Sixty-seven percent of these songs contained sexual objectification of women, with sexual objectification being defined as “[...]the idea that women are good only for sex” (Kubrin and Weitzer 13). In 49% of the songs, women were shamed with derogatory names. Another 47% of songs showed a serious distrust of women. And 20% of the songs also presented a pimp/ho theme (Kubrin and Weitzer 12).

Aside from this overt display of misogyny towards women partners, hip hop and rap also contain content that shows a distrust and disdain for the very women who birthed the artists’ own children into the world. This suggests that rappers are not just misogynistic towards random sexual partners per say, but to the mothers of their children as well. In a study conducted in 2011, by Matthew Oware, a researcher from the Sociology and Anthropology Department at DePauw University, lyrics by top selling Black male rap artists were analyzed to see how they spoke about:

(a) fatherhood, the types of relationships they had or have with their fathers and biological children; (b) motherhood, the types of relationships they have with their mothers and the mothers of their biological children; and (c) parenthood, how they view fathering or the fatherhood role in general (333).

Oware found several things. Unsurprisingly he stated that at least one of the following topics: sexism, misogyny, violence, or hypermasculinity, appeared in each song (a total of 391 songs) (334). In all the songs in which the mothers of the rappers’ children (otherwise known as “baby mommas”), were mentioned, they were mentioned in a negative light (337). He goes on to cite songs from several rappers including Rick Ross, Nas, T.I., Young Jeezy, and The Game that show a negative depiction of the baby mommas they mention in their lyrics (337-339).

It is worth acknowledging that there were songs that Oware cited which did have a more positive connotation towards the baby mommas than the other songs; but, as he states, these lyrics, “[...]are only footnotes to their broader more belittling depictions and portrayals of these women[...]” (338). He states this because these lyrics usually expressed gratitude to the mothers *only* for birthing their children, or they expressed the father’s willingness to buy the baby mommas whatever they wanted (Oware 338).

A lot of the literature regarding the prevalence of misogyny in hip hop and rap also paid attention to the content of the music videos associated with these genres. It is important to acknowledge the content of these videos as they are reflective of the content of hip hop/rap music itself. Naturally, there was a lot of research that found that above all other genres, music videos for hip hop and rap music contained high amounts of sexuality, with women portrayed as sexualized objects rather than individualistic beings. In 2011, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey and Cynthia M. Frisby, researchers from the University of Missouri and Missouri School of Journalism respectively, looked at the music videos for songs in the top 10 of the "Hot 100" Billboard charts for the genres Pop, Hip hop/R&B, and Country. For all the videos they compared sexualization, provocativeness, and sexualized dance for each. The researchers used many criteria to measure this data including “gaze”, which here was defined as “[...]an explicit instance of "checking out" another's body with a sense of sexual longing or lust” (Aubrey and Frisby 480). A total of 147 music videos were analyzed. The results showed that 44% of R&B/hip hop music videos showed the artists as the targets of the “gaze”, (compare that to pop music videos, of which only 12% showed this.) On the reverse side, 62% of R&B/ hip hop videos showed the artists as the *perpetrators* of the gaze. Other data collected showed that only 56% of hip hop/R&B videos did not portray women as decorative, as compared to pop and



country in which 80% and 87.2%, respectively, did not portray women as such. Sexually suggestive dance was also most popular in the R&B/hip hop videos at 52%, whereas sexually suggestive dance only appeared in 20% of pop videos, and 8.5% of country videos (Aubrey and Frisby 490). Clearly, hip hop videos showed a higher inclination towards the sexualization and objectification of women than the any other genre. They also had a tendency to portray the artist as desired and lusted after by the women in these videos (targets of the “gaze”).

More evidence exists on music videos for rap and hip hop that exemplifies the genre’s sexually objective and pornographic nature. In a content analysis of female body images portrayed in rap music videos, done by Yuanyuan Zhang, Travis L. Dixon, and Kate Conrad, researchers from the University of Illinois, it showed that main characters in music videos for songs that were high in sexual content, were more likely to have smaller body sizes, compared to main characters in videos for songs low in sexual content (792). This enforces the idea that the sexualized woman in misogynistic rap is merely a body, meant to exist for the man’s pleasure alone. Furthermore, in a paper by Gwendolyn D. Pough, a writer from Syracuse University who examined hip hop feminist thought in the twenty-first century, she quotes Ayanah Moor, a visual artist who created a series of artworks intended to represent the ways in which women are depicted in the contemporary music video (97). After reviewing her own work, Moor had this comment to make,

Images of women surrounding male rap stars in music videos is as common as the jewel encrusted subject matter of today’s rap lyrics. Females are seen in packs hovering around male rap stars, playing the part of enthusiastic cheerleader or die-hard groupie. Rap music videos sell not only hip- hop culture, but also the very image of its women. They serve as eye candy designed to satisfy an assumed male video audience[...] (2).

It is clear by just analyzing the hip hop/rap music video what the function of women are to these artists.

What is more even more alarming than the amount of sexual content presented in these videos and songs is the way it is so generally accepted by both men and women. In a 2007 study by Elaine Richardson, a researcher of The Ohio State University, in which she interviews three students she recruited from an afterschool program she advises in, she explores “[...]how young black women make meaning of these images, in short, how they read rap texts in relation to their experiences of the world as black women” (789). The women participants are aged 17,19, and 19, respectively, and are referred to in the text as ET, ED, and BE. In response to seeing a misogynistic rap video featuring women performing exotic dancing for the rapper, the three interviewees only had positive things to say about the video:

ED: Quite frankly, I like the video.

ER: What you like about it? [...]

ED: Yeah, I mean, I like it. If you wanna look at it in a sense, like, yeah, it is degrading to women. If you really think about it, but then the women had their little part in there too, and showed what we do to guys. It’s just a nice video” (Richardson 797).

While ED is able to acknowledge that the video is degrading, she still admits she likes the video for the apparent empowerment it gives women. Yet both the girls later on agree that the women portrayed in the video are not very respectable, contradicting this former empowerment claim:

BE:[...] I think Nelly wouldn’t really approach a girl he really like like that [...] One who he thought was class, a girl who he really wanted to talk to, he wouldn’t say, ‘It ain’t no fun if the homies can’t have none (Richardson 798).

It is obvious here that BE is trying to express that a woman such as the one in the video (a stripper), is not deserving of the same respectful approach, or the same monogamous desire, as a woman with “class.” ET also enforces this same idea by saying, “Certain girls is jump offs, and certain girls is wifeys” (Richardson 802). Again, the idea presented here is that only certain women who do not present themselves as sexually vivacious are worthy of being treated in a respectful manner, or in the manner that one would treat a potential wife. It is almost ironic that these interviewees can acknowledge that this video portrays a woman that is, to them, of a lesser degree of respect than another woman, but they can also say that they still enjoyed the video and almost feel that the strippers in the video were in a place of power. It is a confusing paradigm, but it is representative indeed of the attitude that most women have towards misogyny in hip hop and rap.

Another piece of literature that shows how this genre is so popular among both the sexes, despite its outright misogyny, was written in 2008 in a doctoral dissertation by Bettina Love, a student from the Georgia State University. She recounts her discovery that while young women in her study critiqued and recognized that rappers made music that was sexually explicit and misogynistic, they still listened and danced to the music. Furthermore, she found that both boys and girls in her study celebrated the lyrics and considered it “typical Black male behavior.”

Despite all of this overwhelming evidence, there are, of course, counter-arguments to the idea that rap is solely misogynistic in nature. Plenty of scholarly work has been done to argue otherwise, and based on the popularity of the genre, people accept this. In an article by Joan Morgan, a writer from Duke University, she expresses how the content of hip hop and rap is really just the expression of an oppressive society that men (particularly black men) live in. She

refers to not only the condemning of women in lyrics, but the usage of drugs, and the murderous attitude taken on by these artists.

What passes for '40 and a blunt' good times in most of hip hop is really alcoholism, substance abuse, and chemical dependency. When brothers can talk to cavalierly about killing each other and then reveal that they have no expectation to see their twenty-first birthday, that is straight-up depression masquerading as machismo (Morgan 153).

Morgan of course address the misogynistic lyrics, also saying, “[...] the “bitch hoe bullshit” isn’t personal but part of the illness,” suggesting that we as audience not take these things seriously, but as something we should maybe feel sorry for (155). She goes on to write other things on the topic, such as the idea that these rappers really are met with women who are trying to exploit them for their money every day. One may think this to be true, but one thing she says that is undeniable is, “Men’s exploitation of our images and sexuality in hip hop is, in many ways, done with the permission and cooperation of our sisters” (Morgan 156). Remember the studies by Tobias and Richardson? Women’s support of the genre contributes to its success and flagrant misogyny.

Rappers and hip hop artists are again defended for the misogynistic nature of their lyrics in a 2009 article by Michael Jeffries, an Assistant Professor of American Studies at Wellesley College, which looks at references to thug-life and sexual relationships in performances by Tupac Shakur, Jay-Z, Lil Wayne, and R. Kelly. In reference to some of Tupac Shakur’s work, Jeffries states, “At his most cynical, he interprets women's attention and willingness to grant him sexual pleasure as hatred, rather than adoration” (Jeffries 36). Jeffries justifies most of the misogynistic content he analyzes as a simple expression of the exploitation that these “thugs” receive every day. Again, we are made to feel sorry for these men instead of criticizing them for their hateful words.

If we are to take on this lens of hip hop being an expression of an oppressive society, what is to account for the explicit sexuality that exists in this genre? Hip hop and rap have literally become pornographic in nature, so much so that it has become extremely attractive to the pornography industry. Even Tupac Shakur's video for "How Do You Want it" featured porn stars Heather Hunter, Angel Kelley, Jeanine Pepper and Nina Hartley (Miller-Young 272). It is also shown through studies that sexualization in popular music has significantly increased from 1959 to 2009 (Christenson, Haan-Rietdijk, Roberts, and Ter Bogt 196). One can see for himself how explicit lyrics have become by looking at music from the past and looking at it now. So if one argues that hip hop and rap are not meant to be misogynistic, how are they arguing for the explicit sexuality? Is it really necessary to give so much detail? Any logical mind would argue that no, it is not necessary, and lyrics like these are functional only to objectify women as sex objects.

If the overwhelming amount of sexism and misogyny was not already concerning, it is worth noting the immediate effect hip hop/rap has on its listeners. In a study by doctors Michelle E. Kistler and Moon J. Lee of Washington State University and University of Florida respectively, the effects of sexual images in hip hop music videos on viewers' gender attitudes were studied. Categories like the acceptance of female objectification, and the acceptance of rape myths were measured in female and male participants, after being exposed to either highly-sexual videos or low-sexual videos (Kistler and Lee 67). Those who watched the highly-sexual hip hop videos exhibited a higher level of acceptance of female objectification than those who watched the low sexual hip hop videos. And although the results were not as significant for the women participants, those in the highly sexual condition did have higher levels of the approval for men's objectification of women than those who were in the low-sexual condition. Other

results concluded that, for men, those who watched the highly-sexual hip hop videos exhibited a higher level of rape acceptance than those in the low-sexual condition (Kistler and Lee 76-78). In conclusion, hip hop and rap's misogyny does have the power to lean its listeners/viewers towards a more misogynistic direction – even its female audience. Yet this genre is still defended and well-liked in this country. Clearly, we need to look at what we are encouraging people to listen to, as it could promote rape culture or sexual permissiveness – which could lead to negative outcomes such as unwanted pregnancy, or sexually transmitted diseases.

The evidence is clear – hip hop and rap are two of the most misogynistic genres in America, and two of the most popular (Burns, Durr, Lafrance, and Scheibling 529-535). The days of defending this music as a mere form of expression- not to be taken seriously, need to come to an end. It is time to account for the message we are sending to our youth about what is okay and what is not. There is no room to debate whether artists should be praised for this type of content. They should not. Freedom of expression will allow artists to sing or rap whatever they want; so banning this type of content from reaching our radios or playlists is impossible – but raising a generation that sees how wrong it is to be fond of music that objectifies and condemns women *is* possible. If we can raise awareness on how hip hop/rap has potentially gone from expressive to completely misogynistic, it could aid in this effort to diminish its popularity.

Despite all of the research done on the misogyny that exists in hip hop/rap, and how that misogyny may have an effect on its listener, this genre has only grown more popular over the years. In this analysis, “Love Me” by Lil Wayne featuring Drake and Future (2013), “Low Life” by Future featuring The Weeknd (2016), and “Suge” by Da Baby (2018) will be analyzed in the lens of Adams and Fuller’s definition of misogynistic rap, to see how much misogyny each song contains and if it has increased over the years. These songs were selected because they were

among the most popular in the years that they were released, and therefore best represent what Americans were listening to at the time. They were also selected for being what was thought to be the most misogynistic songs in the Top 10 of their year's "Hot Rap Songs Year-end" Chart by Billboard.

As a reminder, the themes used to give content analysis to these songs are:

- [Theme 1:] derogatory statements about women in relation to sex,
- [Theme 2:] statements involving violent actions towards women, particularly in relation to sex,
- [Theme 3:] references of women causing "trouble" for men,
- [Theme 4:] characterization of women as "users" of men,
- [Theme 5:] references of women being "beneath" men, and
- [Theme 6:] references of women as usable and discardable beings (Adams and Fuller 940).

The first song to be reviewed, "Love Me" by Lil Wayne, featuring rap artists Drake and Future, was produced by Mike WiLL Made It and released January 13, 2013 by Cash Money Records (Songfacts and Apple Music). The song became a big hit and landed on Billboard's "Hot Rap Songs Year-End Chart" at number seven. Unsurprisingly, this rap hit is rich in misogynistic and sexually explicit language. The song is about the artist(s)'s satisfaction with the idea that he has multiple women partners he can call upon at any time – and furthermore that he does not care about anything else, so long as these women are available to him. If one looks at the lyrics, the message is clear that these women are merely possessions to Lil Wayne, and not anything deserving of respect or love (Appendix A). Many of the aforementioned themes of misogyny, as well as explicitly stated sexual acts, exist within the text of this song.

The chorus sets the attitude for the rest of the song. When Future and Drake sing "I can give a fuck 'bout no hater/ Long as my bitches love me [...] I can give a fuck 'bout no nigga/ Long as these bitches love," they send the message that no type of adversity competes with the

good feeling of having women partners at their disposal. The lyrics also address these partners as “bitches”, which is the modern-day term for “Sapphire”, serving as a function to oppress women. This use of the word ‘bitch’ in this content falls under Theme 1 of Adams and Fuller’s analysis of misogyny: derogatory statement about women in relation to sex. This theme as well as themes 2, 4, 5, and 6 can be found throughout the lyrics.

Theme 1 of the misogyny-in-rap definition is found in multiple other areas of the song as well. In the first verse Lil Wayne states “[...] hoes love me like Satan, man./ And all she eat is dick/ She’s on a strict diet,” is the next line that follows this theme. The use of the word ho is derogatory towards woman. Also implied here is the idea that this woman whom he is referring to only performs oral sex and does not “eat” anything else. This is clearly derogatory, and also explicitly sexual. Lastly in the first verse, Lil Wayne states “She said ‘I never want to make you mad/ I just want to make you proud’/ I said ‘Baby, just make me cum/ Then don’t make a sound””(Theme 1). Wayne not only limits the subject of the lyrics to only being a sexual object, but he presents her as a usable and disposable being (Theme 6). By Lil Wayne stating that he wants the subject to “not make a sound” after pleasing him sexually, he is implying that he is only using her for sex – despite her wishes to make the relationship something more meaningful. It is worth noting that these lyrics are again, very sexually-explicit.

Of course this was not the only time women were presented as usable and disposable beings in this song (Theme 6). In verse one, the lyrics, “She said, ‘Cause I really need somebody/ So tell me you’re that somebody’/ Girl I fuck who I want, and I fuck who I don’t,” are a clear demonstration of the way Lil Wayne expresses how he only wants to use his partners for sex, and not for anything else. Despite the subject’s clear desire to have a relationship with Lil Wayne, he dismisses her request with the idea that she is just someone to have sex with. In Verse 2, when



Lil Wayne states “These hoes got pussies like craters”. Here, one can decipher through his, again, explicit use of language in reference to the woman’s vagina, that he is expressing the idea that the women whom he is referring to has been used for sex a great deal of times. This enforces the idea that he thinks of women as bodies to be used for sexual acts (Theme 6). Lastly in Verse 2, in the line “...all my bitches love me, and I love all my bitches/ But it’s like as soon as I cum, I come to my senses,” Lil Wayne is using explicit language to again, suggest that his partners are only useful for his sex, as he denies loving any of them once he has been satisfied (Theme 6).

Themes 4 and 5 are seen in the song as well, particularly in Verses 1 and 2. As a reminder, Theme 4 is the characterization of women as “users of men, and Theme 5 are references of women being inferior to men. In Verse 1 Lil Wayne states, “She don’t want money/ She want the time we could spend” (Theme 4). While Wayne is not actually accusing the subject of being a user of men, his very mention of the idea that she does *not* want to use him for money is suggestive that he thinks most women *are* like that – otherwise he would have no need to mention this at all. Furthermore in Verse 2 in the line, “Can’t treat these hoes like ladies, man,” Lil Wayne suggests men are above the women he is referring to (Theme 5). By Lil Wayne stating that his partners cannot be treated like ladies, or rather, with any respect, reveals his misogynistic nature and his belief that he, and other men, are “above” these women.

Violent actions towards women, particularly in relation to sex is another theme of misogyny (Theme 2). When Wayne raps, “Now turn around, face down; I’m arrestin’ this bitch.” Wayne is very obviously referring to his positioning during sex with the subject, and compares this particular positioning to the act of arresting. It is common knowledge that the act of arresting someone can become very violent – a cop forcing someone into submission while he/she

handcuffs the culprit is not exactly a smooth maneuver. Therefore, it is safe to assume that this sexual act that Wayne is referring to is potentially violent towards his partner (Theme 2).

Overall, this song is a threshold of misogyny and sexual explicitness. When totaled, the word ‘bitch’ or ‘bitches’ is used 36 times. The word ‘ho(s)’ is used 4 times, and the amount of times a sexual act was explicitly stated was ten. If we count the words ‘ho’ and ‘bitch’ as expressions of Theme 1, then Theme 1 is presented a total of forty times. Theme 2 is presented once. Theme 4 and 5 are presented once each. And Theme 6 is presented four different times. That leaves a total of 47 times that one of Adams and Fuller’s themes are presented throughout the entire song –and ten times that a sexual act was explicitly referred to.

Our second song for review is “Low Life” by Future featuring The Weeknd. This song was produced by Metro Boomin, DaHeala and Ben Billions, and co-produced by The Weeknd. It was released by Epic Records on February 6, 2016 and made its way to spot number 8 on Billboard’s “Hot Rap Songs Year-end” Chart for 2011 (Apple Music and Billboard). It was certified Triple Platinum (having sold at least three million copies) by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), and had made Billboard’s “Hot 100” just a few weeks after its release (RIAA). One can see that despite its misogynistic references, the song was a commercial success in the U.S. However, its lyrics are insulting to its female audience (Appendix B).

The chorus of this song, unlike the previously mentioned Lil Wayne song, contains no misogyny. It is a repetition of Future and The Weeknd stating “I’m reppin’ for that low life[...]”. This gives the idea that the artists are deep into things that society would not be proud of (heavy partying, drugs, philandering, etc.) but they represent this lifestyle with pride. While this chorus does not blatantly oppress women, there is a subtle hint in it that suggests the artists could be misogynistic and proud of it. After all, being a “low life” sometimes includes the notion of being

a womanizer. This is not an obvious idea in the chorus, but one may observe by looking at the rest of the lyrics that womanizing is, indeed, part of the activities that the artists are partaking in and are “reppin”.

The themes of misogyny found in this song are only derogatory references to women, characterizing women as beneath men, and characterizing woman as usable beings (Themes 1, 5 and 6 respectively by Adams and Fuller). This is already introduced within the first stanza of the song: in the Intro, Future states, “Got some bitch from Follies with us/ She gon’ fuck the squad, what else?/ I’m a fuck her broads, what else?”) Not only is Lil Wayne being offensive and derogatory by referring to a woman as a bitch, but by suggesting that she is *obviously* going to partake in sex with Future and his friends (Theme 1). Additionally, by Future using the expression, “...what else?”, he is implying that just because he has been able to pick up a woman from Follies, a strip club in Atlanta, she is automatically going to make herself available for the pleasure of Future and his friends. He also implies that he plans on partaking in intercourse with *her* friends. This gives these women no voice, and regards them as usable beings (Theme 6). It is also worth noting that this is the first instance of explicit language being used in regard to sex in this song. Aside from this line there is “Never waste a ho’s time/ Bitch, I’m on my own time,” from Verse 1. By use of the derogatory terms ‘ho’ and ‘bitch’, The Weeknd oppresses the females he refers too (Theme 1). He also conveys the idea that he does not have time for an actual relationship with these women who are assumingly his sexual partners, giving the indication that he only regards them as useful for sex, but not useful for his time (Theme 6)

Another theme of misogyny existing in this song is Theme 5 which is the idea of women being beneath men. In Verse 2, Future repeats the line, “If she catch me cheating, I will never tell her sorry.” Unsurprisingly, Future indicates here that he is a cheater. This is not necessarily

misogynistic, but his lack of remorse is. Him stating that he will *never* apologize for something that any guilty man would apologize for, is suggestive that he does not find his girlfriend (if we may refer to her as such) worthy of an apology. For that reason, one can assume that Future regards his girlfriend as being “beneath” him – both undeserving of loyalty and undeserving of compassion/sympathy (Theme 5).

This record is not necessarily a threshold of misogyny and explicit language, but it does glorify misogyny in a way that most rap songs do. In total, the number of times that the word ‘bitch’ was used was eight times. The number of times the word ‘ho’ was used was once. Sexually explicit language was used in six different lines when counted. If we count the words ‘ho’ and ‘bitch’ as expressions of Theme 1, then Theme 1 is expressed nine times. Theme 5 is presented once. And Theme 6 is presented three times. This leaves a total of 13 times that Adams and Fuller’s themes of misogyny are presented in this song, and a total of six times that sexually explicit language is used. This is relatively small in offensive content in comparison to “Love Me”. The next song to be analyzed is even less offensive.

“Suge” by DaBaby was released March 1, 2019 by Interscope Records and produced by Jetsonmade (Apple Music and Songfacts). It made Billboard’s “Hot 100” list and appeared in the top ten of Billboard’s “Hot R&B/Hip hop Songs” (Billboard). The song also was also certified platinum by June 2019 by the RIAA. On Billboard’s “Year-End Hot Rap Charts”, “Suge” placed at number 9 for 2019, which is where I was able to locate the song (as previously mentioned.) This commercially successful song also embodies a lot of misogyny in its lyrics (Appendix C).

As usual, it is important to review the chorus of the song, as choruses usually embody the main message of any song. This chorus is not misogynistic in nature. It has a braggart nature as DaBaby references to the money he comes in contact with, and the freedom that he has to do

what he pleases with it. There is one line in the chorus that may be interpreted as misogynistic: “She like how I smell, cologne,” if one interprets this as a brag of him having a woman admirer – therefore categorizing her as a possession. But this is a vague interpretation so for the sake of this paper it will not be counted as a misogynistic line.

Multiple themes of misogyny can be found throughout the rest of this song. Among them are themes 1, 3, 5, and 6. Theme 1 is found every time DaBaby uses the word ‘bitch’ or ‘ho’ in a derogatory light against women. This is found in both verses at least once. However Theme 1 does not appear in any other respect other than the uses of the words “bitch” and ho.” The idea of women being trouble for men is shown in Verse 2 when DaBaby says “Her boyfriend be hatin’ and callin’ her groupie/ Just cause she like all my music” (Theme 3). Here, the rapper is implicitly stating that the woman whom he is referring to is causing trouble for the men in question: clearly the woman is spending time with the rapper (hence the use of the term ‘groupie’), and this is causing strife between DaBaby and the woman’s boyfriend. This line is followed up by, “She’ll send me a text and then delete the message/ He tryna find out, it’s confusin’.” This suggests that because the woman is sending a text that her boyfriend would not want to see – possibly for disloyal reasons –she is causing confusion in the relationship as the said boyfriend suspects her infidelity. Again, the woman here is presented as the cause of the issues that these men are facing (Theme 3).

Themes 5 and 6 also appear in DaBaby’s lyrics. In Verse 1 they almost occur simultaneously: “I’m out with your bitch and I only want knowledge/ She got a lil’ mileage, I’m chillin’.” The first part of that line ultimately translates to DaBaby saying he is with the subject’s girlfriend only to receive oral sex from her (the word ‘knowledge’ is code for ‘brain’-which is a slang way of referring to oral sex.) In this way DaBaby implies he is using this woman is a

usable and discardable being to him (Theme 6). The second part of this verse is the explanation as to *why* DaBaby does not want anything more than oral sex with this girl – by referring to her “mileage” he is referring to her sexual history. Apparently, hers is too extensive for the rappers liking, so he rather just receive pleasure from her than go so far as to have actual sexual intercourse. This blatantly states that because this woman has an extensive list of sexual partners, she is not “deserving” of anything else from the rapper. This is ironic because one can infer that DaBaby’s list of sexual partners is probably a lot longer than hers – yet he still seems to look down on her for it (Theme 5). At the end of Verse 1, in the lyric, “I don’t follow no bitches on IG/ But all of your bitches they follow a nigga,” there is again the implication that the women whom DaBaby refers to are “beneath” him (Theme 5). He claims that in spite of all these women following him on the social media app, Instagram, he still does not find them worth a follow-back: a clear indication that these women think more highly of him than he does of them – so much so that not even their alleged support for him would make him want to support them back. Furthermore in Verse 2, DaBaby implies he is smarter than the female subject when he states, “I’ll pull up after school and I’ll teach her some shit” (Theme 5). Lastly, Verse 2 shows that DaBaby referring to a woman as a usable presence with the line, “Member I used to cheat off a pretty bitch test.” Here, DaBaby is recalling using a woman by cheating off of her test in class, and therefore using her (Theme 6).

“Suge” by DaBaby certainly contains some amount of misogynistic language. However misogyny is not the predominating theme to be found here. The word bitch is used four times; the word ho is used two times, and explicit language in reference to sex is only used once. In total, the content analysis shows that Theme 1 is presented six times, Theme 3 is presented two times, Theme 5 is presented three times, and Theme 6 is presented two times. This adds up to a

total 13 times that Adams and Fuller’s themes of misogyny are depicted in the lyrics, and one instance of sexually explicit language.

**CONCLUSION:**

Looking at the three songs side-by-side show an actual decrease in misogyny over time. The first song contained the words ‘bitch’ and ho’ 36 and four times respectively. The second song contained these words eight times and one time respectively, and the third song contained them four and two times respectively. This is an obvious decline in each category (except for the use of the word ‘ho’ as it increases from one to two times from the second to the third song.) Furthermore the use of sexually explicit language goes down from being used 10 times in the first song, to one time in the third song. The prevalence of themes was also very important for determining the amount of misogyny in each of these songs, and it is shown that the first song contained the themes 47 different times, whereas the second and third song only contained the themes 13 times. All of these numbers show a huge difference in levels of misogynistic content, and therefore suggest the answer to the research question as being *no*, misogyny and sexually explicit language has *not* increased over the years.

	“Love Me” (2013)	“Low Life” (2016)	“DaBaby” (2018)
# of times “bitch” was used	36	8	4
# of times “ho” was used	4	1	2
Total # of themes presented	47	13	13
Total explicit sexual language	10	6	1

Where this may be a surprise, this is surely good news. Reasons for the discrepancy between what I had assumed, and what the evidence showed to be true, may be one of the following: the songs chosen did not accurately represent the genre as a whole for its given year, Billboard has not accurately tracked what songs are truly popular, underground music that is not easily tracked by Billboard could be more misogynistic and more popular than what is recognized in the charts. It is certainly worth more research to decide what America is *truly* listening to. In the meantime, it is important that we as a nation continue to frown upon misogynistic lyrics, and not continuously reward the artists for them. Whatever the argument may be for this type of language to exist in music, there is no denying the effect it could have on the attitudes of its listeners towards women. If this nation wants to promote feminism and equality, addressing the music it listens to would be a strong step in that direction.



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APPENDIX A: Love Me by Lil Wayne, Future, and Drake

[Pre-Chorus: Future]

I'm on that good kush and alcohol (Mike WiLL Made-It)

I got some down bitches I can call (What's happenin'?)

I don't know what I would do without y'all

I'ma ball 'til the day I fall (I'ma ball, ball, ball)

[Chorus: Drake & Future]

Yeah, long as my bitches love me (Yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah)

I can give a fuck 'bout no hater

Long as my bitches love me (Yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah) Yeah, I can give a fuck 'bout no nigga

Long as these bitches love me

[Verse 1: Lil Wayne]

Uh, pussy-ass nigga, stop hatin'

Lil Tunechi got that fire

And these hoes love me like Satan, man

Yeah, fuck with me and get bodied

And all she eat is dick

She's on a strict diet, that's my baby

With no makeup, she a ten

And she the best with that head

Even better than Karrine

She don't want money

She want the time that we could spend

She said, "'Cause I really need somebody

So tell me you're that somebody"

Girl, I fuck who I want, and fuck who I don't Got that A1 credit, that's that filet mignon She said,  
"I never want to make you mad



I just want to make you proud"

I said, "Baby, just make me cum

Then don't make a sound"

Slick Tunechi

[Pre-Chorus: Future & Lil Wayne]

I'm on that good kush and alcohol (Yeah)

I got some down bitches I can call (What's happenin'?)

I don't know what I would do without y'all

I'ma ball 'til the day I fall (I'ma ball, ball, ball)

[Chorus: Drake, Future, & Lil Wayne]

Yeah, long as my bitches love me (My bitches love me) (Yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah)

I can give a fuck 'bout no hater

Long as my bitches love me (My bitches love me, my bitches love me, my bitches love me)  
(Yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah)

Yeah, I can give a fuck 'bout no nigga

Long as these bitches love me

[Verse 2: Lil Wayne]

Uh, real nigga, fuck these haters

These hoes got pussies like craters

Can't treat these hoes like ladies, man

Pussy, money, weed, codeine

She said my dick feel like morphine

I hope my name taste like sardines to these niggas

She wake up, eat this dick

Call that breakfast in bed, 69, 96

I feel her heartbeat, I chest-to-chest with this bitch Now turn around, face down; I'm arrestin' this  
bitch Yeah, all my bitches love me, and I love all my bitches But it's like as soon as I cum, I  
come to my senses

And I would say these hoes' names

But then I would be snitchin'

And these haters try to knock me

But they can't knock me off the hinges

Lil Tunechi

[Pre-Chorus: Future & Lil Wayne]

I'm on that good kush and alcohol (Yeah)

I got some down bitches I can call (What's happenin'?)

I don't know what I would do without y'all (I don't know what I would do without y'all) I'ma ball  
'til the day I fall (I'ma ball, ball, ball) (I'ma ball)

[Chorus: Drake, Future, & Lil Wayne]

Yeah, long as my bitches love me (My bitches love me) (Yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah)

I can give a fuck 'bout no hater

Long as my bitches love me (My bitches love me, my bitches love me, my bitches love me)  
(Yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah)

Yeah, I can give a fuck 'bout

[Bridge: Lil Wayne]

I lost a few good bitches, met some more bad bitches

And I be schooling them niggas, pose for your class picture

Now kiss my ass if you hatin', I'm getting ass, or I'm skatin'

I lost a few good bitches, met some more bad bitches

And I be schooling them niggas, pose for your class picture

Now kiss my ass if you hatin', I'm getting ass, or I'm skatin'

Bitch

[Pre-Chorus: Future, Lil Wayne, & Both]

I'm on that good kush and alcohol (Tunech)

I got some down bitches I can call (What's happenin'?)

I don't know what I would do without y'all (I don't know what I would do without y'all) I'ma ball  
'til the day I fall (I'ma ball, ball, ball) (I'ma ball)

[Chorus: Drake, Future, & Lil Wayne]

Yeah, long as my bitches love me (My bitches love) (Yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah) I can give a fuck 'bout no hater

Long as my bitches love me (My bitches love me, my bitches love me, my bitches love me) (Yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah; yeah, yeah)

Yeah, I can give a fuck 'bout no nigga (Yeah)

Long as these bitches love me

APPENDIX B: Low Life by Future and The Weeknd

[Intro: Future]

High, high, get, get, gettin' high, everybody gettin' high

Get, get, get, gettin' high, you're unbelievably high

I just took some molly, what else? (Hey)

Got some bitch from Follies with us ('scuse me, 'scuse me)

She gon' fuck the squad, what else? (I swear)

I'ma fuck her broads, what else? (Get, get!)

Bitch from Pakistan, what up? (Foreign!)

Ferraris and them Lambs, what else? (skrrrt)

'Bout to fuck this club up, what else? (Get, get!)

Metro Boomin want some more, nigga!

[Verse 1: The Weeknd]

I turn the Ritz into a poor house

It's like eviction number four now

Go 'head and ash it on the floor now

Girl go 'head and show me how you go down

And I feel my whole body peakin'

And I'm fuckin' anybody with they legs wide

Gettin' faded with some bitches from the West Side

East coast, nigga reppin' North Side

Never waste a ho's time (Freebands)

Bitch, I'm on my own time

Fuck a nigga co-sign

Always change my number and my phone line

Baby girl, I don't lie

Used to have no money for a crib

Now my room service bill cost your whole life

If they try to stunt me, I go all out military

I'm camo'ed all out, like I'm in the military  
I free up all my niggas locked up in the penitentiary

[Chorus: The Weeknd & Future]

'Cause I'm always reppin' for that low life  
Reppin' for that low life (Turn up)  
Low life, low life, low life  
Know I'm reppin' for that low, low life (Representin', I'm representin', representin')  
Said I'm reppin' for that low life  
Low life, low life, low life, low life (I'm representin' for that low life)  
Said I'm repping for that low life (I'm reppin', that's reppin', I'm reppin')  
Low life, low life, low life (Rep, rep, rep, rep, rep, rep, rep, woo, woo, woo, woo)  
Yeah

[Verse 2: Future]

Wake up take a sip of Ace of Spade like it's water  
I been on the molly and them Xans with your daughter  
If she catch me cheating, I will never tell her sorry  
If she catch me cheating, I will never tell her sorry  
Porsches in the valet, I got Bentleys, I got 'Raris  
Taking pain pills on the plane, gettin' chartered  
Poppin' tags on tags, I was starvin'  
Bitch, I got the juice and the carbine  
Turn a five star hotel to a traphouse  
Roaches everywhere, like we forgot to take the trash out  
Flood my cross with ice, gettin' money my religion  
Got my baby momma and my side bitch kissin'  
I turn the Ritz into a lean house  
This the sixth time gettin' kicked out

I can't feel my face, I'm on Adderall, nauseous  
Niggas tryna ride my fuckin' wave, now they salty  
Runnin' with the wave, get you killed quick  
Shoot you in your back like you Ricky  
Lil Mexico, from no life to afterlife  
My whole life, my whole life

[Chorus: The Weeknd & Future]

'Cause I'm always reppin' for that low life  
Low life, low life, low life  
Know I'm reppin' for that low, low life (Representin', I'm representin', representin')  
Said I'm reppin' for that low life  
Low life, low life, low life, low life (I'm representin' that low life)  
Said I'm reppin' for that low life (Low life, I'm reppin' for that low life)  
Low life, low life, low life (Rep, rep, rep, rep, rep, rep, rep, woo)  
Yeah

[Verse 3: Future]

Yeah, they stereotypin'  
'Cause they know a nigga keep ten rifles  
And they know a nigga keep ten snipers  
Keep a baby bottle like we wearin' diapers  
Yeah, they stereotypin'  
'Cause they know a nigga keep twenty rifles  
And they know a nigga keep twenty snipers  
And they know a nigga keep ten wifey's  
Sniper, sniper, sniper, sniper, sniper  
Wifey, wifey, wifey, wifey, wifey  
That's your wifey, wifey, wifey, wifey, wifey?

I think I like her, like her, like her, like her  
That's your wifey, wifey, wifey, wifey, wifey?  
I think I like her, like her, like her, like her  
Oh, that's your wifey, wifey, wifey, wifey, wifey?  
I think I like her, like her, like her, like her

[Outro: Future]

Getting high, getting high, getting high  
Everybody getting high  
Getting high, getting high, getting high  
Everybody getting high  
Getting high, getting high, getting high  
Everybody getting high  
Getting high, getting high, getting high  
And I'm the reason why  
Getting high, getting high, getting high  
Everybody getting high  
Getting high, getting high, getting high  
Everybody getting high  
Getting high, getting high, getting high  
Everybody getting high  
Getting high, getting high, getting high  
And I'm the reason why  
I just took some molly, what else?  
Got some bitch from Follies with us  
She gon' fuck the squad, what else?  
I'ma fuck her broads, what else?  
Bitch from Pakistan, what up?  
Ferraris and them Lambs, what else?

'Bout to fuck this club up, what else?

'Bout to fuck this club up, what else?



APPENDIX C: Suge by DaBaby

[Intro]

Pooh, you a fool for this one

Ha

Oh Lord, Jetson made another one

[Chorus]

Hah

Pack in the mail, it's gone (Uh)

She like how I smell, cologne (Yeah)

I just signed a deal, I'm on

Yeah, yeah

I go where I want, I'm good (Good)

Play if you want, let's do it (Ha)

I'm a young CEO, Suge (Yeah)

Yeah, yeah

[Verse 1]

The first nigga play, I'ma body a nigga (Ha)

I just checked my balance

I'll probably pull up to your hood

And come buy me a nigga (No cap)

You know that your ho told you that nigga crazy

Don't think that she lied to you, nigga (Bitch)

Get caught with your ho when I'm poppin' 'em both

Now they high just like Bobby and Whitney (Haa)

Say I'm the goat, act like I don't know

But fuck it, I'm obviously winnin'

Don't make me go hit the bank and take out a hundred

To show you our pockets are different (Ha)

I'm out with your bitch and I only want knowledge  
She got a lil' mileage, I'm chillin' (Uh)  
You disrespect me and I'll beat your ass up  
All in front of your partners and children (Ahh, ahh)  
I'm the type to let a nigga think that I'm broke  
Until I pop out with a million (I pop)  
Take 20K and put that on your head  
And make one of your partners come kill you (Yeah)  
Say he fuckin' with me then he gotta grow up  
'Cause this nigga gotta be kiddin' (Kiddin')  
This shit, it can't fit in my pocket  
I got it, like I hit the lottery, nigga (Hot, hot, hot)  
Opp, I'll slap the shit out a nigga  
No talkin', I don't like to argue with niggas (I don't)  
Ain't gon' be no more laughin'  
You see me whip out 'cause I'm gon' be done shot me a nigga (No cap)  
I don't follow no bitches on IG  
But all of your bitches, they follow a nigga (Ha)  
And that lil' nigga ain't gon' shoot shit with that gun  
He just pull it out in his pictures (Bitch, uh)

[Chorus]

Hah  
Pack in the mail, it's gone (Uh)  
She like how I smell, cologne (Yeah)  
I just signed a deal, I'm on  
Yeah, yeah  
I go where I want, I'm good (Good)  
Play if you want, let's do it (Ha)  
I'm a young CEO, Suge (Yeah)

Yeah, yeah

Hah

Pack in the mail, it's gone (Uh)

She like how I smell, cologne (Yeah)

I just signed a deal, I'm on

Yeah, yeah

I go where I want

I'm good (Good)

Play if you want, let's do it (Ha)

I'm a young CEO, Suge (Yeah)

Yeah, yeah

[Verse 2]

Talkin' my shit, I'ma pop that (Pop)

Got like thirty-two thousand in one of my pockets

The other one, that's where the Glock at (Glock)

You little niggas wanna be internet gangster

Man, tell all these little niggas stop that (Ha)

Been done burnt me a nigga in front of the store

Where your mammy and grandmama shop at (Bitch)

Hopped out on a whole other wave from these niggas

Let's see one of you little niggas top that

I will turn a nigga into a convertible

Push me a lil' nigga top back (Vroom)

Her boyfriend be hatin' and callin' her groupie

Just 'cause she like all my music (Ha)

She'll send me a text and then delete the message

He tryna find out, it's confusin'

I don't know what these niggas is thinkin' about

Use the brain in your head 'fore you lose it (Bitch)

I'll pull up after school and I'll teach her some shit  
Tell your bro I'm a motherfuckin' tutor  
'Member I used to cheat off a pretty bitch test  
All the teachers, they thought I was stupid (Uh huh)  
Was expectin' the box to pull up on a truck  
Man, this nigga pulled up on a scooter (The fuck?)

[Chorus]

Hah

Pack in the mail, it's gone (Uh)  
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I just signed a deal, I'm on  
Yeah, yeah

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Play if you want, let's do it (Ha)

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I'm good (Good)

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I'm a young CEO, Suge (Yeah)

Yeah, yeah