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CONSTRUCTING GENDER IDENTITY THROUGH METAPHOR IN AMERICAN TRAP MUSIC

Abstract

American trap, as a contemporary, popular musical genre which depicts a society full of vice, drugs, sexual promiscuity and immorality, seems to have nothing in common with any type of tradition or norms and moral values, let alone patriarchal society. However, a closer look at the choice of metaphors and the way gender identity is constructed through metaphor in the lyrics offers a different perspective. The aim of this paper is to examine the construction of gender identity through metaphor in American trap music on the sample of 75 American trap songs. The metaphors in the lyrics will be analyzed using the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory combined with critical metaphor analysis and the theoretical background of gender studies and patriarchal ideology. The purpose is to draw attention to the values and ideals promoted to young people in the form of catchy beats and harmless entertainment.

Keywords: American trap; lyrics; gender identity; metaphor; CMA

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KONSTRUKCIJA RODNOGA IDENTITETA KROZ METAFORU U AMERIČKOJ *TRAP* GLAZBI

Sažetak

Američki *trap* kao moderan, populavan glazbeni žanr u kojemu se opisuje društvo puno poroka, narkotika, promiskuiteta i nemoralnosti naizgled se teško može povezati s bilo kakvom tradicijom, normama ili moralnim vrijednostima, a posebice s patrijarhalnim društvom. No, ako se stihovi, izbor metafora u njima i način na koji je rodni identitet konstruiran kroz njih, malo pobliže prouče, stječe se drugačiji dojam. Cilj je ovoga rada istražiti konstrukciju rodnoga identiteta kroz metafore u američkoj *trap* glazbi na uzorku od 75 američkih *trap* pjesama. Metafore u stihovima analizirat će se koristeći postavke teorije konceptualne metafore u kombinaciji s kritičkom analizom metafora i teoretskom podlogom rodnih studija i patrijarhalne ideologije. Svrha je ovoga rada privući pažnju na vrijednosti i ideale koji se mladim ljudima promoviraju pod krinkom zaraznih ritmova i bezazlene zabave.

Ključne riječi: američki *trap*; stihovi; rodni identitet; metafora; CMA

Introduction

Music is a very useful way of disseminating different messages and influencing the audience's opinions and attitudes, especially if young people are in question. Even though popular genres and performers are subject to change, music continues to reflect society's norms, customs and values in different periods. The primary motivation of this research is the popularity of American trap music among younger audiences. When it comes to the lyrics and the videos, there are certain patterns that American trap performers seem to follow and those include: the beat; flashy videos full of expensive cars, locations, and nudity; as well as sex, drugs and various criminal deeds as the main subjects of these songs. American trap seems to have become a significant success over the past years, at least if song views and overall popularity among the younger audiences are anything to go by. This type of popularity does not just come from nowhere: there needs to be something either in the lyrics or the music itself that attracts younger audiences, which might additionally point to certain changes in social norms, values and rules which enabled the popularity of this genre. American trap caters to a young audience, which may prove to be an important factor in the presentation of male and female gender in the lyrics.

This study explores the construction of gender identity through metaphor in American trap lyrics. The aim is to analyze the way gender identity is created and constructed through the choice of metaphors in the lyrics of American trap songs. The research corpus consists of 75 American trap songs. The metaphors in the lyrics will be analyzed using the framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory combined with Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA). The metaphors will be analyzed further paying attention to the concepts of gender studies, gender stereotypes, and the basic tenets of patriarchal ideology. The hypothesis that will be tested in this research is that the construction of gender identity through metaphor in American trap lyrics relies heavily on the traditional and stereotypical patriarchal tenets of masculinity and femininity. The secondary motivation for this research was the fact that

American trap is a relatively unexplored phenomenon as there are no scientific publications on the genre.

1. American Trap Music - Idealistic Lifestyle of Cultural and Economic Disparities

When thinking about popular trap videos, probably one of the first things that comes to mind is luxury – both in the sense of clothes, cars, the lifestyle presented and the amount of money invested in the making of these videos. The roots of this music genre seem to belong to a somewhat different setting, less luxurious and definitely more dangerous.

Trap music originates from underground clubs and house parties in the American West, and it is something perceived as kitsch, bad party music. Brooke Bray (2019) describes it as an EDM[1] beat with subtle or sporadic rapping over the top of said beat. Originally, the term "trap" referred to a place where one could buy drugs in major cities. Some of the biggest Western trap stars of today are Snakehips, Lil Pump, Lil Yachty and $uicide Boy$.

Pointer (2021) describes the genre as characterized by "busy hi-hats, heavy sub-bass, gritty, and super rhythmic snares, and deep 808 kick drums. It employs several layers of monophonic ideas and a melodic accompaniment expressed with synthesizers." Shawty Redd, an influential producer, is credited as having a vital role in creating and cultivating the sound of trap music by developing "booty-shakin' hi-hats, the busy hi-hat sound combined with bass and heavy beats that would take over the world of hip-hop and what would later be named trap" (Pointer, 2021).

The birthplace of trap is Atlanta and its rise in popularity began in the early 2000s, in what became known as the "Dirty South". Traces of this term and sound can be found as early as 1995, when an Atlanta-based hip-hop group *Goodie Mob* was first to use the term *trap* on record (Pointer, 2021).

Similarly to rap music, trap music can be perceived as a way for people, who would not otherwise get a chance to speak, to express their

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[1]   Electronic dance music

problems and the burdens of their reality. Thus, despite the flashy and expensive videos nowadays, its roots are inevitably connected to the poor, underprivileged, living at the edge of society and trying to make their way up, to escape the life of poverty, drugs, racism, and different kinds of criminal activities. This is reflected in the choice of topics, too. As an article on trap music written by Torres (2022) explains, "Popular themes include violence, street life, challenging life experiences, vehicles and the sentimental bond between the artist and their neighborhood. Trap is not a simple mixed salad of dissonant noises; it is a piece of complex, multidimensional music filled with urban references." Violence and drugs are not uncommon in rap lyrics in general, but there are a few differences between the two genres, both music-wise and lyrics-wise. The article further mentions the difference in the way experiences with violence and drugs are portrayed: in trap music, they are presented as a forced circumstance of being trapped in the industry because there are no other choices, instead of glorifying the lifestyle. Two main music elements that differentiate trap from hip hop and rap in general are the tempo which is usually between 115-170 BPM and busy hi-hats. The most important difference seems to be the lyrical theme: tempo and other music elements do not make a track trap "if the lyrics are not telling stories of trap culture, it cannot be considered trap music". Torres (2022) further emphasizes the importance of the combination of slow beats and fast-paced hi-hats "making people feel as if they were listening to two tunes simultaneously".

There seem to be many disputes among the trap artists and fans alike on who started trap music and who was the biggest influence on the sound that it has today. As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to make any definite claims or conclusions as there are no academic articles or books on American trap music that could be used as completely reliable and objective sources. However, several websites dealing with the topic of American trap music, its roots, different time periods and most famous representatives can provide some valuable insight. On one of them, Bohlool Music, Tavakoli (2022) talks about three different eras of trap music: the formation and beginnings (from the early 1990s to 2003), the

growth period in the mainstream (from 2003 to 2015), and the period of spreading trap music and being seen everywhere (from 2015 until now).

Besora (2020) recognizes two possible reasons for the popularity of trap music: technology and social networks and lyrics aimed at "social classes disadvantaged by the economic crisis and unemployment, independently of their place of origin". Technology enabled people who would not otherwise be able to pay for a demo to make and produce music at home, using their computers. Social networks enabled the wide and easy spread of this new music. Young people all over the world might not have necessarily identified with selling drugs, but they could identify with social inequalities and the growing divide between the rich and the poor.

With new artists and music spreading around the world, it was highly unlikely that there would be no changes to the genre. The overall focus of trap music shifted from "the true lifestyle of those who are trapped to more or less the aesthetic that encompasses it", Pointer (2021) explains. It seems that the spread of trap music, both across different genres and worldwide has influenced its quality, too. Pointer claims that the "newer generation of trap artists are often criticized for making music that lacks authenticity, individuality, and storytelling". The lifestyle along with flashy brands, cars and (often) nudity in music videos seems to be the prevailing combination at the moment.

2. Metaphors in Discourse

From the cognitive linguistics point of view, metaphor is defined as "understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain" (Kövecses, 2002, p. 4). For example, if the concept of love is discussed and defined in terms of war, two domains are involved. As Kövecses (2002) explains, the first one is called *the source domain* from which metaphorical expressions used to understand another conceptual domain are drawn, and the second is called *the target domain* - the conceptual domain that is understood through the source domain (p. 4). In the case of love and war, love is the target domain, the domain

that is explained and defined through the characteristics and features of the source domain - war. Metaphor is not just a play on words, as metaphors "play a central role in the construction of social and political reality" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 159). Through the use of metaphors, ideas can be presented in different ways and the audience may be presented with a new point of view on familiar things and concepts. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) put it "metaphor thus may be a guide for future action" (p. 156). Another important question that needs to be answered is how metaphors should be identified in language/discourse, and which words and phrases precisely have metaphorical meaning. According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), "underlying conceptual metaphors motivate different conventional metaphorical expressions in language" and that is the reason "the theory must, as a first step, precisely identify what words or phrases actually express metaphorical meanings in discourse" (Gibbs, 2017, p. 58). As CMT is not limited to a specific procedure presently, researchers notice and recognize that words or expressions carry metaphorical meaning, "usually by noting the cross-domain mappings between a discourse topic and the source domain used to speak of that idea" (Gibbs, 2017, p. 58). There are procedures for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse such as Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) developed by Pragglejaz Group (2007) and MIPVU (Steen et al., 2010). Even though both provide criteria for metaphorical identification and are empirical, they do not aspire to be conceptual in their nature. Rather, "the procedure concentrates on linguistic metaphors, but not really on their conceptual structures" (Kopeć, 2012, p. 127). Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) integrates Critical Discourse Analysis, corpus linguistics, pragmatics and cognitive linguistics and "aims to explore the implicit speaker intentions and the covert power relations within the social and cultural context" (Li, 2016, p. 93). This type of approach to discourse "can help the readers figure out the hidden intentions of language users and further develop the readers' awareness of social relations that are loaded in metaphoric expressions" (Li, 2016, p. 96).

There are three stages in the methodology of metaphor analysis: (1) collecting examples of linguistic metaphors used to talk about the topic, (2) generalizing from them to the conceptual metaphors they exemplify, and (3) using the results to suggest understanding or thought patterns which construct or constrain people's beliefs and actions (Cameron & Low, 1999, p. 80). Charteris-Black (2004) also uses these three steps in his research of conceptual metaphors. Metaphor identification requires a close reading of the corpus, and "the presence of incongruity or semantic tension—either at linguistic, pragmatic or cognitive levels—resulting from a shift in domain use" is the criterion to determine whether linguistic expressions are metaphors for analysis or not (p. 35). Potential metaphors are further analyzed in detail in the qualitative phase and interpreted in the context of the relationship between metaphors and the cognitive and pragmatic elements these metaphors are determined by. Following these stages, discourse analysis delves deeper into potential reasons why these particular metaphors were chosen and used, and what influence they may have in shaping social reality. The specific combination of disciplines that CMA includes in the analysis and interpretation of metaphors in discourse can also be connected to Blommaert's (2005) five main principles for the analysis of discourse in the modern world: (1) the focus should be on what language means to its users and how language matters to people, (2) language needs to be contextualized properly because it operates differently in different environments, (3) a unit of analysis is not an abstract language but the actual and densely contextualized forms in which language occurs in society, (4) language users have repertoires containing different sets of varieties, and these repertoires are the material with which they engage in communication, and (5) communication events have to be conceived as ultimately influenced by the structure of the world system (pp. 14-15). Once the metaphors are identified, analyzed and interpreted, CDA can offer a deeper insight into the power relations and social phenomena behind the metaphors in question.

3. Gendered Discourses and Patriarchal Ideology

Discourse is a part of almost every aspect of our lives; it is just that we are not aware of it most of the time. As new topics, new situations, new discussions and new problems emerge on a daily basis, both locally and globally, new discourses emerge too, and old ones become expanded or re-contextualized. Since there are many types and purposes of discourse, there are also many definitions of it. For the purpose of this paper, Sunderland's perspective on discourse and its role in society will be used. Sunderland (2004) looks at discourse from a post-structuralist perspective and explains that "Discourses are not themselves visible. However, as a 'way of seeing the world' a given discourse may be recognizable to analysts and other language users through its manifestation in characteristic linguistic 'traces' in talk or written text, i.e. speakers' and writers' own words" (p. 7). Gender stereotypes, or expected and accepted gender roles, are present not only in real life, but also in the use of language. It could be said that language is "both a medium for expressing gender identity and a reflection of it" (Weatherall and Gallois, 2003, p. 489). Social identity theory, which recognizes the importance of social identities and their impact on language use and interaction, explains that "people's sense of who they are comprises aspects deriving both from them as individuals and from their membership of social groups" (Weatherall and Gallois, 2003, p. 491). Thus, being a man or a woman implies belonging to a certain social group whose membership includes a set of rules and norms. The act of stereotyping reduces social groups to a certain set of characteristics and further emphasizes the difference between groups. Stereotypes do not exist in some imagined space, but they are "reproduced in a wide range of practices of representation, including scholarship, literature, television situation comedy, and both 'high' and 'low' art" (Talbot, 2003, p. 471). Gender stereotypes, in particular, are closely linked to gender ideologies. They can be seen as "ideological prescriptions for behavior", and individuals "have to respond to the stereotypical roles expected of them" (Talbot, 2003, p. 472).

An important factor that needs to be mentioned when talking about gender roles and stereotypes in popular music is patriarchal ideology since it has had a great influence on the way men and women are perceived and portrayed in the lyrics. There have been different definitions of patriarchy over the years, but Mitchell (1975) as cited in Murray (1995) defines patriarchy simply as "the law of the father" (p. 8). There are numerous other definitions, of course, created in different time periods and relying on different social, psychological, political and other theories, but what they all have in common is the dominant position of men in relation to women, male centeredness and the power relationship between men and women. The dominant position and centeredness are visible on various levels in society, but what is of special interest here is the culture part, or to be more specific, the gender roles prescribed, encouraged and accepted in patriarchal society. According to Walby (1991), masculinity is associated with assertiveness, being active, lively and quick to take the initiative, while femininity "entails cooperativeness, passivity, gentleness and emotionality" (p. 91). Lerner (1987) mentions various roles stereotypically assigned to men and women, such as the roles of mother and wife in the case of women, which entails offering sexual and reproductive services to men and gaining access to class through sexual behavior. On the other hand, the role of warrior is stereotypically assigned to men, as is the role of provider, the one who owns the means of production and grants women access to class (pp. 214-215). Bem's (1974) *Sex Role Inventory* measures masculinity and femininity based on masculine and feminine items. Masculine items would be: acts as a leader, aggressive, ambitious, analytical, assertive, athletic, competitive, defends own self, dominant, forceful, has leadership abilities, independent, individualistic, makes decisions easily, masculine, self-reliant, self sufficient, willing to take a stand, and willing to take risks. Feminine items would be: affectionable, cheerful, childlike, compassionate, does not use harsh language, eager to soothe hurt feelings, feminine, flatterable, gentle, gullible, loves children, loyal, sensitive to the needs of others, shy, soft spoken, sympathetic, tender, understanding, warm, and yielding. These traits correspond to desirable gender

roles within patriarchy to a great extent, and result in stereotypical gender roles.

The described gender roles, gender stereotypes and traits associated with masculinity and femininity may seem outdated at a first glance but that does not mean that they have disappeared completely and have no influence on popular culture and music as its product.

4. Methodology

The focus of this research is the construction of gender identity through metaphor in American trap lyrics. The hypothesis is that the construction of gender identity through metaphor in American trap lyrics heavily relies on the traditional and stereotypical patriarchal tenets of masculinity and femininity. It needs to be pointed out that the analysis will focus on the lyrics exclusively; music and videos are not included in this research.

The research corpus consists 75 American trap songs performed by the following artists: Gucci Mane, Future, Travis Scott, 21 Savage, Cardi B, Migos, and Young Thug. The artists and the songs were chosen according to two criteria: the number of followers on Instagram and the number of views on YouTube. The minimum of followers was set at 250,000 and the minimum of views at 20 million. The choice of songs was additionally limited to those published from 2015 onward (song titles can be found in the Appendix). The metaphors in the lyrics will be analyzed using the framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory combined with Critical Metaphor Analysis as described and explained in Chapter 1. Identifying the metaphorical expressions in this particular discourse (i.e. song lyrics) will be done using a bottom-up method of discourse analysis. The procedure consists of the following stages: (1) selecting relevant sources of data for research, (2) procedure of metaphor identification, (3) conceptual analysis and categorization of metaphorical models. Not all metaphors found in the lyrics were taken into account: only those that relate to men and women were used, and under the condition that they recurred in the corpus. The metaphors were

further analyzed paying attention to gender studies' concepts, gender stereotypes, and the basic tenets of patriarchal ideology, all of which are important in analyzing how gender identity in the lyrics is constructed. For the purpose of this research, metaphorical models are divided into two categories: metaphors used to describe women and metaphors used to describe men, and further classified by their source domains.

5. Results and Discussion

5. 1. Metaphors used to describe women

The metaphors used to describe women, their behavior, and different characteristics in American trap lyrics can be divided into seven categories:

5. 1. 1. Women as Objects and Commodities

Through this metaphor women in the lyrics are presented as various objects and commodities that can be bought (and have a price tag), owned, or dealt with in various ways:

- *20 percent of my dames, I shipped 'em right out to Vegas* (Future, 'Never Stop')
- *I got a main thing at the house* (Future ft. Chris Brown, 'Pie')
- *put that bitch inside a Benz, she was in a Acura* (21 Savage, 'Whole Lot')

This type of metaphor was commonly used in lyrics performed by male artists. There were some examples in the lyrics performed by female artists in the context of a woman presenting herself as an object (*bitch, I'm the greatest, I'm the iPhone, you the Nokia* [Gucci Mane and Nicki Minaj, 'Make Love']; *I want you to park that big Mack truck right in this little garage* [Cardi B ft. Megan Thee Stallion, 'Wap']). There is a combination of metaphor and metonymy in the first example of woman presenting herself as an object, scalar metonymy model to be exact, where *iPhone* and *Nokia* represent a higher and a lower point on the same scale, i.e. one woman is better than the other. The objectification

of women has long been present in various media, so it is not surprising that it is present in popular music, too. Men are the ones who use these objects, buy them with their money and social status, and deal with them in any way they want, usually sexually.

5. 1. 2. Women as Symbols of Luxury and Status

This metaphor presents women as luxurious, expensive, and valuable items that also represent the power of their owner (a man) and indicate his status in society:

- *her one night show, a human bank roll* (Gucci Mane, Bruno Mars and Kodak Black, 'Wake up in the Sky')
- *baby, you a human Jacuzzi* (Gucci Mane ft. Lil Pump, 'Kept Back')
- *she's a walking bag of money* (Gucci Mane ft. Megan Thee Stallion, 'Big Booty')

These women are considered a luxury exclusively because of their physical appearance, and being connected to or involved with this type of woman indicates and benefits a man's status in society and among his peers. This implies that a woman's main asset is her physical appearance—femininity is closely connected to the way a woman looks, or, to be more precise, the way men perceive her looks. If men deem her appearance attractive enough, she will become their luxurious item.

5. 1. 3. Women as Food and Drink

The third category presents women as food and drink, something that men can consume and enjoy:

- *eatin' up a queen, eatin' up a bean like vegetables* (Future, 'Too Comfortable')
- *I eat her flesh, you know the rest* (Travis Scott ft. Gunna and NAV, 'Yosemite')
- *they call me Cardi Bardi, banging body, spicy mami, hot tamale* (Cardi B, Bad Bunny and J Balvin, 'I Like It')

The women in question serve as a source of pleasure for men. They are represented as food and drink almost exclusively in the context of sexual intercourse. This is another example of sexualization and sexual objectification of women. In this case, they are being consumed by men just like food, implying that their purpose is to benefit men in a way, that women are there to satiate the hunger of men. The hunger being referred to is sexual hunger.

5. 1. 4. Women as Explosive Devices

The fourth category presents women as various explosive devices and weapons, thus indicating that women are dangerous or, to be more precise, that their good looks are dangerous to men:

- *been in this bitch so long, I'm going up a dose, pussy got more murders than new Mexico* (Future ft. Nicki Minaj, 'You Da Baddest')
- *certified, you know I'm gang, gang, drop the top and blow the brains, wouh* (Cardi B, Bad Bunny and J Balvin, 'I Like It')
- *I said my face bomb, ass tight, racks stack up Shaq height* (Cardi B, 'Up')

Comparing women to explosive devices is done in the context of their physical appearance—the more attractive a woman is, the more likely it is that she will be compared to an explosive device. This also puts emphasis on physical appearance as the main characteristic of femininity, and the main factor that makes women desirable and even dangerous to men.

5. 1. 5. Women as a Source of Life-Threatening Danger

The fifth category of metaphor represents women as various sources of danger, potentially harmful and lethal to the men who express interest in these women:

- *my head game is fire, punani Dasani, it's going in dry, and it's coming out soggy* (Cardi B ft. Megan Thee Stallion, 'Wap')

- *Y'all give her capital murder, her swagger killer, shawty got more bags than a drug dealeer* (Future, '31 Days')
- *cold ass bitch, I give broads chills, ten different looks and my looks all kill* (Cardi B, 'Money')

These women are lethal to men because of their good looks and their sexual prowess. Even though they are compared to sources of danger, the lyrics actually praise their physical appearance which is as tempting as it is dangerous to a man's heart. Men in the lyrics continue to pursue these women despite the potential danger.

5. 1. 6. Women as Animals

The sixth category describes and portrays women in terms of various animals, including exotic and wild animals:
- *keep her on the chain, that ain't like me, Scotts with no strings, you can't tie me* (Travis Scott ft. Young Thug, M.I.A., 'Franchise')
- *girl, put a muzzle on it, all that barking over dinner, I was fucking with you when you had the tiny Presidential* (Future ft. Drake, Tems, 'Wait for U')
- *boy got wisdom, fuckin' on vixens, hoe game itchin', fuckin' with the wrong one, trippin'* (Migos, 'Get Right Witcha')

If used as a slang term, vixen refers to a sexy and flirtatious woman, the one who is physically attractive and desirable.

Men are the ones who try to control, tame and use these animals to their own advantage, which is different from the way men in the lyrics are compared to animals. Here, the focus is not on the strength or the power of the animals in question but on the control that men exercise over these animals and the exotic factor which makes these animals appealing. Also, women are compared to animals in terms of their attractive physical appearance.

5. 1. 7. Women as Games and Prizes

The seventh category presents women as various games men can play and prizes that they get for playing the game:

- *I had hoes when I was broke, I'm rich, I'm still a player* (Gucci Mane, 'Black Beatles')
- *we beat 'em in hoes, we beat 'em in clothes, we beat 'em in Lambos on the road* (Migos, 'Modern Day')
- *she was talkin' bout forever, got a whole week, plus she know my baby mama is a trophy* (Travis Scott, 'Stargazing')

Women are thus presented as something that can be won and conquered, and the said conquests usually benefit men and, in a way, prove their worth and capability. This type of metaphor seems to imply that women as prizes are once more an object that can be won in a contest and later owned, and reinforces the stereotypical gender role of men as conquerors.

These particular choices of metaphors did not appear out of nowhere or accidentally. They are closely connected to traditional and stereotypical representations of women as various objects that men own, win and deal with, toys and games that men can play with, something men can consume just like food or drink, trophies and luxurious items men can brag about, and animals, usually wild and exotic animals, that peak male interest so that in turn they want to be the ones who control and handle these animals. Femininity is thus closely connected to being pretty and desirable to men. Physical appearance seems to be the center of femininity—if a woman is attractive enough, she is likely to get a man, at least for a period of time, during which she will play the role of a sexual object, or an ornament of sorts. The choices of metaphors also point to the potential danger and threat that women represent: if a man becomes too attached, the woman he is emotionally attached to could be the end of him. The use of metaphors points to the fact that female gender identity is shaped according to the needs, desires and fears of men.

5. 2. Metaphors used to describe men

Metaphors used to describe men, their behavior, characteristics and values fall into five categories:

5. 2. 1. Men as Animals

The first category describes men as various animals, usually those perceived as strong and dangerous, and animals which are a part of rap/ African American slang such as dog, or animals which are commonly used in criminal slang metaphors such as fish and rat:

- *bitch, I'm a dog, eat my treat* (Gucci Mane ft. Migos, 'I Get the Bag')
- *small world, all her friends know me, young bull livin' like an old geezer* (Gucci Mane, 'Black Beatles')
- *big scales, fish scale, big weight fish* (Migos ft. Gucci Mane, 'Slippery')
- *but I'll pull up on you, shoot your ass in the back, Stuart Little, heard these niggas some rats* (21 Savage and Metro Boomin, 'No Heart')

Although the same type of animal metaphor is used for women in the lyrics, the men are presented in a completely different light when being compared to animals. Through the comparison men are usually presented as strong, capable and dangerous, and the women do not aim to tame these animals. Masculinity is thus connected to the qualities of strength, capability and danger (if necessary), in line with the traditional patriarchal notions of masculinity.

5. 2. 2. Men as Food

The second category presents men as food, something that women will eat and consume:

- *be real with me, just be real with me, eat it up like it's a feast* (Gucci Mane ft. Migos, 'I Get the Bag')

- *shake that shit like jelly, put me on your plate and slurp that shit like spaghetti* (Gucci Mane ft. Megan Thee Stallion, 'Big Booty')
- *just to fuck her and show her, I just went, got my dough up, pullin' off and I'm gone* (Travis Scott and Young Thug ft. Quavo, 'Pick up the Phone'*)*

These metaphors were usually combined with the imperative mood in the lyrics, meaning that men order women to consume them. This suggests that even though the men are put in the position of an object (sexual object, to be more precise), something that is to be consumed by women, they still control the situation. Women continue to be there for the pleasure of men, and men are still the ones who dominate.

5. 2. 3. Men as Objects

The third category presents men as objects, usually sexual. Women take advantage of them sexually or they urge women to take advantage of them:

- *bite me, ride me, strike me, indict me, snipe it, swipe it* (Travis Scott ft. NAV, 'Beibs in the Trap')
- *I take your man and I won't give him back* (Cardi B, 'Money Bag')
- *I ride on his dick, in some big tall heels, big fat checks, big large bills* (Cardi B, 'Money')

The men described in these metaphors are usually sexual objects; women use them for their own pleasure or they order women to use them, which further adds an element of power and submissiveness. Men submit to women, but on their own terms, ordering them what to do with their bodies. They are not usually presented as objects that can be owned or bought, as was the case with the women in the lyrics, but exclusively as sexual objects. In these examples of metaphor men in question can be *ridden* or *taken* but in the context of sexual interco-urse exclusively. This type of metaphor can be considered an exception and a deviation from the standard rules and norms of patriarchy to an extent, as there are female performers who sing about having men as their possessions.

5. 2. 4. Men as Royalty

The fourth category presents men as royalty. They rule over their kingdoms; their enemies should bow before them, and women should admire them:

- *and when these suckas see me, they should bow to my feet, and kiss the ground underneath* (Gucci Mane and Nicki Minaj, 'Make Love')

- *Oh, I took the crown off the king, like Mike did Elvis* (Offset ft. Cardi B, 'Clout')

- *Castle on the hill (heh), wake up in the sky (you won't), you can't tell me I ain't fly* (Gucci Mane, Bruno Mars and Kodak Black, 'Wake up in the Sky')

These metaphors are in accordance with the way the men in the lyrics want to be seen by their enemies and their women—as powerful and in control. They exercise control and exert dominance over their women and their enemies. This is in line with the traditional patriarchal notions of masculinity, which put men in a position of control over their surroundings and in a position of power in society. The world of American trap is extremely harsh on men who do not manage to fight their own way to the top.

5. 2. 5. Men as Explosive Devices

The fifth category presents men as explosive devices, usually very powerful:

- *my pockets blew up, Monique, ooh, she got that perfect physique* (Gucci Mane ft. Offset, 'Met Gala')

- *Air 29, got her lookin' like space, Houston it's a problem when we bust in her face and shit* (Young Thug ft. Drake and Travis Scott, 'Bubbly')

- *I take your heart out and shoot your bladder up, get to the top and we blew the ladder up* (Gucci Mane ft. Offset, 'Met Gala')

As opposed to the same metaphor used for women, which relates to their physical appearance, comparing men to explosive devices is usually done in the context of their sexual arousal and prowess, which also emphasizes their virility and masculinity. The metaphors imply that they are able to satisfy women sexually and have a high sex-drive, which are traditional, stereotypical characteristics connected to men.

Being presented as strong animals, royalty, and explosive devices is in line with traditional patriarchal notions of masculinity. Notions of respect, control, strength, danger, dominance and stamina are all considered masculine. Even when the men in the lyrics are being objectified, as in the examples of metaphors in which men are food and objects, they are almost always in control, using the imperative and ordering women how to treat them. It needs to be pointed out that the construction of gender identity through metaphor in the lyrics is also influenced by the fact that the majority of performers of songs chosen for this corpus are male. This musical genre is still dominated by male performers, so male and female gender identity might have been presented and constructed differently if songs performed by female performers had been chosen.

Conclusion

The hypothesis tested in the research was proven correct. In American trap lyrics the construction of gender identity through metaphor heavily relies on the traditional and stereotypical patriarchal tenets of masculinity and femininity. Through the choice of metaphors, female gender identity is predominantly constructed based on their physical appearance, attractiveness and their submission to men who can conquer, use, win, and have sexual intercourse with these women. Male gender identity is primarily constructed based on their physical strength, capability, sexual prowess, virility, and the ability to control the situation and/or women. These traits are in line with the stereotypical gender roles and traditional notions of masculinity and femininity that are prescribed by patriarchal ideology and considered desirable and socially acceptable. There are also some modern twists: namely, dominant

women objectifying men, which is visible from the metaphors which present men as *objects*, sexual objects to be more precise, that the women use and discard.

This study offers insight into the construction of gender identity, power relations among sexes, and behavior perceived as desirable. This popular musical genre, characterized by a catchy beat and flashy videos with various trends and modern gadgets included, still promotes traditional values to a certain extent together with stereotypical and patriarchal notions of femininity and masculinity. Old rules and norms seem to be placed in a contemporary environment.

One of the limitations of this research is that some of the song lyrics used (from 2015) can be considered outdated as American trap is a musical genre which seems to be evolving on a daily basis. This makes it difficult to keep track of new performers and new songs. Another limitation is the number of songs used for the research corpus. The number is limited due to the fact that qualitative analysis was chosen for this research. Research on a larger corpus could offer a more detailed insight into the construction of gender identity through metaphor in this genre.

Despite its limitations, the research opens up space for further research on American trap from a more quantitative perspective, as well as research on other popular musical genres and the role that the metaphors used in the lyrics have in the construction of gender identity.

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Appendix

1) *BLACK BEATLES GUCCI MANE*
2) *I GET THE BAG GUCCI MANE ft. MIGOS*
3) *WAKE UP IN THE SKY GUCCI MANE, BRUNO MARS AND KODAK BLACK*
4) *KEPT BACK GUCCI MANE ft. LIL PUMP*
5) *BOTH GUCCI MANE ft. DRAKE*
6) *SLIPPERY MIGOS ft. GUCCI MANE*
7) *BIG BOOTY GUCCI MANE ft. MEGHAN THEE STALLION*
8) *MAKE LOVE GUCCI MANE AND NICKI MINAJ*
9) *MET GALA GUCCI MANE ft. OFFSET*
10) *BUCKET LIST GUCCI MANE*
11) *WAIT FOR U FUTURE ft. DRAKE, TEMS*
12) *TOO COMFORTABLE FUTURE*
13) *NEVER STOP FUTURE*
14) *REALER N REALER FUTURE AND JUICE WRLD*
15) *FINE CHINA FUTURE AND JUICE WRLD*
16) *31 DAYS FUTURE*
17) *ALL DA SMOKE FUTURE AND YOUNG THUG*
18) *YOU DA BADDEST FUTURE ft. NICKI MINAJ*
19) *EXTRA LUV FUTURE ft. YG*
20) *PIE FUTURE ft. CHRIS BROWN*
21) *BEIBS IN DA TRAP TRAVIS SCOTT ft. NAV*
22) *FRANCHISE TRAVIS SCOTT ft. YOUNG THUG, M.I.A.*
23) *GATTI TRAVIS SCOTT AND JACKBOYS, POP SMOKE*
24) *CAN'T SAY TRAVIS SCOTT*
25) *STARGAZING TRAVIS SCOTT*
26) *ESCAPE PLAN TRAVIS SCOTT*
27) *THE SCOTTS TRAVIS SCOTT AND KID CUDI*
28) *PICK UP THE PHONE TRAVIS SCOTT AND YOUNG THUG ft. QUAVO*
29) *BUTTERFLY EFFECT TRAVIS SCOTT*
30) *YOSEMITE TRAVIS SCOTT ft. GUNNA AND NAV*

31) MODERN DAY MIGOS

32) NEED IT MIGOS ft. YOUNG BOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN

33) RACKS 2 SKINNY MIGOS

34) GIVE NO FXK MIGOS ft. TRAVIS SCOTT, YOUNG THUG

35) CLOUT OFFSET ft. CARDI B

36) CASPER TAKEOFF (MIGOS)

37) BUBBLE GUM QUAVO (MIGOS)

38) LAST MEMORY TAKEOFF (MIGOS)

39) WALK IT, TALK IT MIGOS ft. DRAKE

40) GET RIGHT WITCHA MIGOS

41) BODAK YELLOW CARDI B

42) WAP CARDI B ft. MEGHAN THEE STALLION

43) I LIKE IT CARDI B, BAD BUNNY AND J BALVIN

44) UP CARDI B

45) MONEY CARDI B

46) PRESS CARDI B

47) BARTIER CARDI CARDI B ft. 21 SAVAGE

48) SHE BAD CARDI B AND YG

49) DRIP CARDI B ft. MIGOS

50) MONEY BAG CARDI B

51) RIC FLAIR DRIP 21 SAVAGE (METRO BOOMIN AND OFFSET)

52) BANK ACCOUNT 21 SAVAGE

53) X 21 SAVAGE AND METRO BOOMIN ft. FUTURE

54) RUNNIN 21 SAVAGE AND METRO BOOMIN

55) NO HEART 21 SAVAGE AND METRO BOOMIN

56) BALL W/O YOU 21 SAVAGE

57) CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT 21 SAVAGE

58) WHOLE LOT 21 SAVAGE

59) ALL THE SMOKE 21 SAVAGE

60) DIP DIP 21 SAVAGE

61) HOT YOUNG THUG ft. GUNNA AND TRAVIS SCOTT

62) CHECK YOUNG THUG

63) RELATIONSHIP YOUNG THUG ft. FUTURE

64) THE LONDON YOUNG THUG ft. J COLE AND TRAVIS SCOTT

65) *BUBBLY YOUNG THUG ft. DRAKE AND TRAVIS SCOTT*
66) *BAD BAD BAD YOUNG THUG ft. LIL BABY*
67) *CHANEL YOUNG THUG ft. GUNNA AND LIL BABY*
68) *ANYBODY YOUNG THUG ft. NICKI MINAJ*
69) *AGAIN YOUNG THUG ft. GUCCI MANE*
70) *HALFTIME YOUNG THUG*
71) *ANTIDOTE TRAVIS SCOTT*
72) *GOOD DRANK 2 CHAINZ ft. GUCCI MANE AND QUAVO*
73) *STILL REMEMBER GUCCI MANE ft. POOH SHIESTY*
74) *HIGHEST IN THE ROOM TRAVIS SCOTT*
75) *SICKO MODE TRAVIS SCOTT FT. DRAKE*