

MLK 892 Capstone:

What the Billboard Hot 100 Has to Say About the State of King's Legacy Today

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Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between popular music and King's legacy by reviewing and reflecting critically on the top five songs on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart as of September 14, 2018. The purpose of this research is to inspire scholarly debate around what popular music has to say about the trajectories of racial reconciliation, economic justice, multiculturalism, and human dignity in the U.S. The research suggests that popular music displays an expanding multiculturalism that contradicts the narrative of generalized deepening social and cultural divides in the U.S. although there is yet much work to be done toward King's legacy in the popular sense. And the research concludes with a call to future research on the relationship between consumerism and popular music.

Keywords: King's legacy, master narratives, popular music

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Introduction

Many researchers agree that the United States is more racially, politically, and economically divided today than it was twenty years ago. Consider these statistics:

- According to Pew Research Center, “More than 4 in 10 Democrats and Republicans say the other party’s policies are so misguided that they pose a threat to the nation.” (Achenbach & Clement, 2016)
- A separate Pew study “showed that 88 percent of blacks think more needs to be done to give blacks equal rights, while 53 percent of whites agreed.” (Achenbach & Clement, 2016)
- “A Gallup poll conducted just after the 2016 presidential election found 77 percent of Americans see the country as ‘greatly divided when it comes to the most important values,’ up from 66 percent in 2012.” (Gershon, 2017)
- “A Washington Post-University of Maryland poll, conducted nine months into Trump’s presidency, found that seven in 10 Americans think the nation’s political divisions are as bad as during the Vietnam War.” (Gershon, 2017)

And by some accounts, class divides are replacing racism:

Since 2000, there has been an explosion in the number of Americans living in neighbourhoods of concentrated poverty, where more than 40% of the population live on an income below the federal poverty level... Those unhappy numbers cannot be untangled from questions of race and ethnicity: 25% of the black poor live in ghetto neighbourhoods, as do 17% of poor Hispanics. Among poor whites, just 8% live in areas

of concentrated poverty (though those numbers are complicated by the difficulty of comparing rural and urban deprivation). (Economist, 2018)

In my search for hard data to counter, or at least challenge, the narrative of generalized deepening social and cultural divides in the U.S., I ran across one relatively recent study that looked at changes in a wide range of cultural values along eleven “identity cleavages,” such as race, gender, income, and education. While this detailed investigation did *not*, in fact, support “the popular commentary on the fraying social and cultural fabric of the United States,” it nonetheless indicated a lessening of cultural divisions from the early 1970s to the 1990s, and an increasing trend since then, especially as cultural values are compared across race, ethnicity, and income (Desmet & Wacziarg, 2018). This concerns me in my many roles as a social justice activist, scholar, musician, and communications professional.

First, as a social justice activist and scholar, an increasing trend of cultural divides concerns me because it portends a gradual undoing of the legacy established by Martin Luther King, Jr.—a legacy that some might say embodies the idealism of American democracy. Albeit an outgrowth of simplified and romanticized accounts of King’s life and work, his legacy is often portrayed as a call to action for Americans to pursue racial reconciliation, economic justice, multiculturalism, and human dignity. And I must admit that I, too, tend to define King’s legacy in this way. This is not to say that Americans broadly lacked a heart for racial reconciliation, economic justice, multiculturalism, and human dignity prior to King’s rise to prominence as a civil rights leader. Quite the contrary. More than 100 years before the civil rights movement, American abolitionists fought for racial reconciliation, multiculturalism, and human dignity. And the New York journeymen tailors who posed the first recorded labor strike in 1768 could well be

considered the first American activists for economic justice (History.com Editors, 2009).

However, it could be argued that the summary of King's life and work—King's legacy in the *popular* sense—has become synonymous in the American memory with what German political activist Ekkehart Krippendorff once described as “a truly revolutionary change of our society” (Sokol, 2018). Recent headlines on racism, abject political partisanship, and economic inequity have caused me to wonder whether America today has wholly disregarded King's legacy in the popular sense. And have we forgotten how our collective memory of King has helped reshape our international image as a place for all people? Those are my primary concerns as a social justice activist and scholar.

Second, as a musician and communications professional, I am concerned with how American social and cultural divides are addressed through public pedagogy, specifically through popular music, which influences most of the American public through forms of media that transcend, or at least permeate, the bounds of race, politics, and economics. Popular music is woven into our television programs. Americans watch an average of about five hours of per day (Koblin, 2017). Popular music is piped over the airwaves. More than 243 million Americans listen to the radio each month. “According to Nielsen's Music 360 2014 study, 93% of the U.S. population listens to music, spending more than 25 hours each week jamming out to their favorite tunes” (Nielsen, 2015). And digital streams of popular music are well into the hundred-billions. It is often said that music has the power to unify. But to what degree is art imitating—or perhaps exacerbating—real life divides?

This paper explores the relationship between popular music today and King's legacy by reviewing and reflecting critically on the top five songs on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart as of

September 14, 2018. (The chart is updated weekly and can be found online at <https://www.billboard.com/charts/hot-100/>.) The purpose of this paper is *not* to suggest that the entirety of American popular culture—and by extension, all public pedagogy—is represented by a handful of well-known songs. It is merely meant to inspire scholarly debate around what popular music could teach us about the trajectories of racial reconciliation, economic justice, multiculturalism, and human dignity. Because popular music today goes hand-in-hand with visual imagery, this paper is not limited to a review of song lyrics alone. It includes a look at the official music videos being used to promote the songs. The paper also discusses public perceptions surrounding the various artists of the Hot 100 songs. My hope is that readers will consider how each messenger’s reputation may affect listeners’ interpretations of their messages. Finally, this paper makes a case for future study into popular music. My hope is that creators of popular music—and by extension, creators of other forms of public pedagogy—might recognize their power to transform the social field that surrounds us and embrace *with intentionality* their role as leaders of positive social change.

King’s Legacy: A Working Definition

Before I discuss the relationship between popular music and King’s legacy, I would like to unpack what I mean by the phrase “King’s legacy”—at least within the very limited scope of this paper. There are many different views on King’s legacy—and when I use the word “legacy,” I mean the intangible assets one leaves behind in the form of a moral framework on which future generations can build. One scholar remarks that “the great legislative victory for the civil rights movement in 1968 is the last of the victories of the [civil rights] movement that King symbolizes, and it is more properly his legacy” (Chappell, 2016). Another suggests that one of

King's most significant bequests was a non-violent philosophy that aspired to be "more dynamic and dialectical" than traditional pacifism and Gandhian non-violence (Burns, 2009). And yet another credits King for "a legacy of creative protest" (Carson, 2001, p. 14). Each of these views offers a strong foundation for positive social change. However, each of these views is drastically different. And each of these views only begins to scratch the surface of the whole King, which the authors of the various views have attempted to reveal in their respective writings. So, it could be argued that how one defines King's legacy depends on the context and scope of the writing. This paper has to do with popular music, so my perspective on King's legacy, within the context and scope of this paper, stems from what I believe is an everyday people's view of King's legacy through the lens of popular culture. I see this as "a call to action for Americans to pursue racial reconciliation, economic justice, multiculturalism, and human dignity," although I recognize that this view, like all the aforementioned views, is incomplete.

Research suggests that how we examine, analyze, and interpret social issues today vis-à-vis King's life and work is shaped by three rather limited master narratives: "King as a messiah, King as the embodiment of the civil rights movement, and King as a moderate" (Alridge, 2006, p. 664). I neither wish to dispute these master narratives, nor to deny their power, but rather to point out that master narratives are largely responsible for shaping American's understanding of King's legacy in the realm of public pedagogy. What's more, America's master narratives of King have not always had such a saintly glow. For example, the majority of white Americans at the time of King's death did not view him as hero. And the idea of "King as a moderate" would likely have seemed far-fetched for so many who had witnessed the *radical* King. The heroification of King was part of a complex and dramatic sociopolitical evolution catalyzed by

his assassination and its effect on America's standing in the world. In one account of King's death and legacy, historian Jason Sokol writes:

[African American pilgrims to the Lorraine Motel] were eager to recall all of King: the interracial dreamer and the antiwar radical, the politic conciliator and the crusader for the poor, the man who consorted with kings and conservatives and even communists. Yet in order for white America to hail King as a national hero, his message would need to be shaped into something simpler and less threatening. That process began in the days after King's assassination, and it continued through the decades. (Sokol, 2018, p. 224)

The master narratives that shape our views of King today do not celebrate the whole King, nor are they *meant* to celebrate the whole King. And perhaps that's okay. The concept of the master narrative is often conflated with the concept of history. Whereas the latter refers to the assemblage of an accurate and comprehensive record of events, the former refers to the reduction of history to a dominant story. Thus, legacy as a product of the master narrative would not need scrutinize every aspect of an individual's life and work, but rather would only attempt to summarize an individual's *most enduring contributions* to history and culture. In this way, master narratives can be redemptive and can inspire reconciliation.

Master narratives can be **redemptive** by conveniently omitting a protagonist's more controversial habits in favor of his or her virtues. For example, King's extramarital indiscretions and struggles with depression are well-documented chapters of his history that are left out of the master narratives. Common sense seems to dictate that to embroil King's legacy in infidelity and mental illness would depreciate the value of greater lessons in justice and human dignity that characterized King's public life.

Master narratives can **inspire reconciliation** between otherwise contentious people by amplifying the constructive values they have in common. To this end, some people have disagreed with King's leadership style, others his brazen acts of civil disobedience, and yet others his antiwar rhetoric concerning Vietnam. But King's vision of an America redeemed through racial reconciliation, economic justice, multiculturalism, and human dignity has had a patently unifying effect on those who truly believe in these values, as well as those who have realized the social and political advantages of *adopting* these values.

Looking at legacy as the product of redemptive, conciliatory master narratives could help explain America's problematic relationship with Confederate monuments. Generations of self-proclaimed well-meaning whites have built and maintained monuments to Confederate leaders—and have, in some cases, appeared genuinely perplexed by current efforts to remove these monuments from public places. I am reminded of the words of James Baldwin (1993/1963) written more than fifty years ago: “And I submit, then, that the racial tensions that menace Americans today have little to do with real antipathy—on the contrary, indeed—and are involved only symbolically with color” (p. 95). This has been my lived experience, as well. Very few white people that I have encountered have ever displayed any real deep-seated aversion to people of color, although some have mimicked the racist behaviors of their forbears either intentionally or unintentionally, others have parroted racist rhetoric that they neither fully believe nor can substantiate with lived experience, and many more have lacked the experience in racial and cultural difference necessary to offset their ignorance. These are just some of the reasons why many whites may have very different master narratives about fallen Confederate leaders than people of color—narratives that promote the civic contributions of these controversial figures

over their historic assaults on the dignity of people of color. However, what we are witnessing today is a rewrite of those master narratives. As the racial makeup of the U.S. is becoming increasingly non-white, and Americans are evolving in their understanding of multiculturalism, the old master narrative, a vestige of white hegemony, has outlived its usefulness in the public pedagogy. Authors of the revised master narratives, white and non-white alike, have asserted that the most enduring contribution of Confederate leaders is the myth of white racial supremacy. Master narrative, however, is not the same as history.

Although master narrative and history are not the same, they are also not mutually exclusive. Creating an accurate and comprehensive record of history—and encouraging future generations to add to this body of knowledge—enables society to continually reassess its master narratives and make judgements about their adequacy. There is little doubt that the general public has access to a more complete history of King today than it did ten, twenty, or even fifty years ago. And the question of how much of King’s controversial nature and humanizing imperfections should be added to school curricula is a hotly debated topic today. But pedagogy is not limited to the classroom. To quote Henry Giroux (2004), “Culture now plays a central role in producing narratives, metaphors, and images that exercise a powerful pedagogical force over how people think of themselves and their relationship to others” (p. 62). The realization that King’s legacy can be somewhat reduced to racial reconciliation, economic justice, multiculturalism, and human dignity based on master narratives, despite the breadth of historical information available about the whole King, suggests that the master narratives, however incomplete, have a unifying, aspirational effect within American popular culture. But is this effect weakening under the weight of deepening racial and class divides? The remainder of this

paper will explore what public pedagogy, as portrayed through popular music in the U.S., might tell us about the state of King's legacy.

Research Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

My sample for this study is the top five songs on the *Billboard* Hot 100 as of September 14, 2018. This date is significant merely because it is the date that I submitted the original proposal for this project. The Hot 100, as it is colloquially known, changes weekly. As of September 14, the top five songs were:

1. "In My Feelings" by Drake
2. "Girls Like You" by Maroon 5 featuring Cardi B
3. "I Like It" by Cardi B, Bad Bunny, and J Balvin
4. "FEFE" by 6ix9ine featuring Nicki Minaj and Murda Beatz
5. "Better Now" by Post Malone

My analysis of the songs included an examination of lyrics, official music videos, publicly available reviews, statistical data on the songs' broadcast and sales activity, and biographical information on the various recording artists. Collectively, I describe these artifacts as "popular resources." I have interpreted and expounded on the popular resources using a variety of scholarly resources. My objective is to illuminate a few key takeaways from each song that bear some connection to racial reconciliation, economic justice, multiculturalism, or human dignity, and might provoke continued conversation around the relationship between King's legacy and popular music.

Why the Billboard Hot 100?

As described on the Billboard website, “The Billboard Hot 100 chart ranks the top 100 songs of the week based on sales, radio airplay, and streaming activity” (www.billboard.com/charts/hot-100). While some song publication data are notably missing from the chart formula—such as film and television usage, airplay in retail establishments, and nightclub play—the Hot 100 has been the self-proclaimed “gold standard ranking of America’s top songs each week” for the past sixty years (<https://www.billboard.com/charts/hot-100-60th-anniversary>), and it takes into account a mix of *active* and *passive* modes of exposure to popular music. For the purposes of this study, **active modes of exposure** are defined as ways of hearing music that listeners pursue with intention. For example, downloading a song would be considered an active mode of exposure because the listener invests a high degree of agency into searching for and acquiring the song. By contrast, hearing a song on the radio would be considered a **passive mode of exposure** because the listener has virtually no control over the playlist except to change stations entirely. The agency in passive modes of exposure lies with a relatively small population of individuals who represent and control the popular music domain. Examples include recording industry executives, radio program directors, and music supervisors in the film and television industries. In academic terms, such gatekeepers of a given domain are known collectively as the **field** (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009).

Because passive modes of exposure often serve as advertising vehicles for music, which in turn drive active mode behaviors, the shaping of American culture through popular music has not been a democratic process historically. It has been a predominately autocratic process led by a handful of economically powerful corporations, although this trend seems to be shifting. In the

past decade, online self-publishing has given independent artists—musicians who lack the backing of a record label—access to worldwide distribution networks. And social media has proven itself a powerful promotional ally for them. Such self-service tools, combined with “indie” artists’ innovative marketing strategies, are democratizing popular music somewhat. Chance the Rapper is certainly one example of this kind of democratization. In 2017, the activist and hop-hop artist’s mixtape, entitled “Coloring Book,” was the first album to win a Grammy based solely on streaming activity (Havens, 2017). The artist eschewed offers from major labels, instead collaborating with other label-backed artists, such as Kanye West, Lil Wayne, 2 Chainz, T-Pain and Justin Bieber, and, as reported on A&E Television networks, “the album became the first ever to chart on the Billboard 200 just from streaming, receiving 57.3 million in its first week alone” (Biography.com Editors, 2018/2017).

Even so, Chance the Rapper has been the exception, not the rule when it comes to label-less self-publishing. And it bears noting that Chance’s rapid rise to stardom without label backing owes largely to collaborations with *label-backed* artists. Typically, powerful members of the field (managers and leaders of recording industry corporations such as record labels and broadcasting companies) select the slate of artists available for the listener’s consideration. This means that powerful members of the field can dampen or even silence the voices of musicians they deem unworthy of attention. The listener then seeks out a song after hearing it on the radio, in a TV show, or through some other passive mode of exposure. The initial passive exposure may, in turn, drive consumer demand for the song. Or, the listener may reject the offering entirely. When songs succeed commercially, the field is validated in its predictions about popular

culture and its ability to provide music that resonates with how people think of themselves and their relationship to others.

This synopsis of how the domain of popular music is governed and how the field defines success provides, I hope, some insight into the forces that shape public pedagogy other than the musicians themselves. As I delve into reviews of the Hot 100 songs, I invite you to consider the significant role the field plays in establishing cultural identities and norms; constructing and dismantling racial stereotypes; and, changing the social change field in which we live.

How to Read This Report

In section to follow, I have provided a link to the official music video of each song at the beginning of each subsection. Lyrics for each song can be found in [Appendix A](#). To get the most from this paper, please watch the video and follow along with the lyrics at the beginning of each subsection before diving into the detailed analysis.

Song Analyses

“In My Feelings” by Drake

“In My Feelings” by Drake (2018) can be heard and seen on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRS_PpOrUZ4. Hailed as one the most dominant number one hits on the Hot 100 in the last 25 years (Anderson, 2018), “In My Feelings” is the latest example of the democratization of popular music. When labels Young Money, Cash Money, and Republic Records released Drake’s album *Scorpion* in June 2018, the field chose *not* to promote “In My Feelings” to pop radio at first, favoring instead a track called “Don’t Matter to Me,” which contains samples from a previously unreleased Michael Jackson recording. “But the day Drake released *Scorpion*,” *Rolling Stone* explains:

“In My Feelings” caught the ear of Shiggy, a popular social media personality, who posted a buoyant video of himself dancing to the song. #DoTheShiggy began to spread—a laundry list of celebrities, including Will Smith, Odell Beckham Jr. and Kevin Hart, posted their own versions—and to morph: While Shiggy danced facing a stationary camera, many “In My Feelings” fans started imitating him on-the-move next to a slow-rolling car. (Leight, 2018)

In response to the viral video fad—also known as #InMy Feelings, #InMyFeelingsChallenge, #kekechallenge, and #kikichallenge—the field quickly changed course, encouraging programming directors at pop radio to ride the online momentum. Additionally, Drake’s team capitalized on the quickly growing fandom by producing an official music video that featured celebrities doing the Shiggy, including Shiggy himself, as well as a cameo appearance by acting legend Phylicia Rashad and performances by rap duo City Girls.

Hip-hop music critics have largely praised both the “In My Feelings” song and video for their authentic portrayal of bounce music, which is described as an “intensely local native New Orleans rap style” connected to “the long trajectory of poor and working-class African American music-making in the city” (Hobbs, 2012). This is a noteworthy achievement for Drake, a black Canadian who has amassed a mostly African American fanbase. The “In My Feelings” video is set in New Orleans and is presented as a celebration of life for urban black people in everyday settings. The action takes place primarily on public transportation, along city streets, and on balconies in the French quarter. And most of the footage has a grainy, vintage treatment that gives the video an almost homemade feel.

So, what are some links between “In My Feelings” and racial reconciliation, economic justice, multiculturalism, and human dignity? On the surface, “In My Feelings” comes off as a celebration of multiculturalism in the bounce music tradition. But just below the surface, the song and video address deeper issues of race and class that have not escaped critics’ notice.

Journalist Patricia Hernandez observes:

As citizens of the internet, we know that everyday people play a huge role in creating a wider culture: any joke, video, or image can explode and become the talk of the town. Often, though, when black creators create culture, everyone *but* them seems to benefit. The music video for “In My Feelings” puts the focus squarely on [Shiggy] the person who popularized the trend, so nobody can forget who is behind it. (Hernandez, 2018)

Hernandez refers readers to a 2015 article in the music, style and culture magazine *the Fader*, which cites several examples of social media trends set by African-American teens that have been co-opted by celebrities and corporations alike. Two relatively recent examples include the colloquial expression “on fleek,” which has been used in everything from IHOP advertising to Ariana Grande song lyrics, but traces back to a Vine posting by South Chicago teen Kayla Newman, and the “Whip/Nae Nae” song and dance by Silento that found their way from Vine into promotional campaigns for “Dancing with the Stars” as well as presidential candidate Hillary Clinton’s appearance on the talk show “Ellen” (St. Felix, 2015)—presumably with no need for an intellectual property license.

Doreen St. Felix, the author of the 2015 *Fader* article refers readers to a 2008 article by J.K. Greene in the academic *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & The Law*, which explains how the history of the production of cultural property in the U.S. has followed the same pattern as the

history of the country's racial divide. Analyzing the issue of intellectual property (IP) rights through the lens of critical race theory, Greene posits:

While individual black artists without question have benefited from the IP system, the economic effects of IP deprivation on the black community have been devastating.

Intellectual property today is perhaps the preeminent business asset. Analysts recognize that blacks and other minorities in a market economy “cannot participate as equals unless they too can deploy the private power generated by ownership and control substantial business assets.” (Greene, 2008, p. 369)

Greene goes on to explain that until the 1950s and 1960s the work of black musicians, for example, was routinely plagiarized by white artists, and the work of black *blues* artists, specifically, was relegated to the public domain, which meant that anyone could use it without crediting the original author. Today, something similar has happened in the world of social media where IP law has been inadequate to address authorship issues concerning everyday online posts. As a result, social media users whose cultural contributions have found their way into the American mainstream have watched their work being pilfered and redistributed for others' financial gain. Hernandez offers a compelling argument that black teens have been disparately affected by this kind of IP theft. However, as class often serves as a mask for disparities deeply rooted in race, the perpetrators of cultural appropriations in the digital age have not always been white people. St. Felix mentions non-white celebrities who have stood to benefit either financially or socially and have appropriated the creativity of black teens. The subtle beauty of “In My Feelings” is that it leverages the influence of Drake and other celebrities in order to shine a spotlight on the cultural contributions of young African Americans that made

“In My Feelings” possible—from the distinct swagger of New Orleans bounce music to the candid New York spontaneity of the Shiggy dance.

“Girls Like You” by Maroon 5 featuring Cardi B

“Girls Like You” by Maroon 5 featuring Cardi B (2018a) can be heard and seen on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJOTIE1K90k>. Although the song was number two on the Billboard Hot 100 when I originally proposed this research project, it had beat out “In My Feelings” for the number one spot by September 29, 2018. If “In My Feelings” is an example of the democratization of popular music, then “Girls Like You” may be its opposite in every way, propelled not by listeners’ agency but by the field’s marketing savvy. The song has managed to achieve commercial success despite some scathing reviews from fans and critics alike. It could be argued that “Girls Like You” is a quintessential example of the field’s influence over popular culture, and by extension, public pedagogy. The song’s ascension in the Billboard Hot 100 also raises a question about the field’s self-perception concerning its role in popular music and culture—a question of whether the field exists to *curate* popular music *on the listener’s behalf* or whether it exists to *dictate* popular music *to suit its own commercial objectives*. Either way, there are significant implications on King’s legacy that I will in a moment.

In the previous section, I explained how “In My Feelings” was not the field’s choice for Drake’s latest breakout hit. “In My Feelings” was virtually ignored by pop radio until social media and streaming activity inspired a *listener-driven* strategy. By contrast, “Girls Like You” has been a field favorite and has relied on a field-driven marketing strategy. *Billboard* explains:

While "Girls Like You" only moved into the No. 1 spot on the Hot 100 for the first time this week, it's been chilling atop *Billboard's* Radio Songs chart for two months already...What's more, while "Girls" has continued to decline in both streams (31 million six weeks ago to 25.4 million this week, according to Nielsen Music) and sales (39,000 to 21,000), its number of radio audience impressions has remained almost totally static (128.9 million to 127.6 million). Radio is responsible for over half of the song's chart points this week, the primary driving force behind it finally becoming the biggest song in the country. (Unterberger, 2018)

Maroon 5 also produced a music video for "Girls Like You," which received millions of views and was praised for its positive representation of 26 culturally-diverse women, all of whom were either celebrities, social justice activists, or both. (To learn more about the women, see Parke, 2018.) However, critics also noted that the ambiguous, semi-romantic song lyrics did not match the pro-feminist visual message. Not to mention the women featured in the video seemed both physically and emotionally isolated from lead singer Adam Levine, around whom the action revolves (literally), leading one critic to complain that Maroon 5 had merely "hot-glued politics onto the back of a half-finished song" (Todd in the Shadows, 2018). Apparently, Maroon 5 got the message. The band released an updated music video in October 2018 showing the women more engaged with the song—for example, dancing as opposed to standing still—and making physical contact with Levine (Glicksman, 2018). The updated video, titled "Girls Like You (Volume 2)" can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBVG1BWQzuc> (Maroon 5, 2018b).

The fact that the song lyrics had little to do with the video was not lost on Levine, who commented:

I put more into making that video with [director] David Dobkin than pretty much any other one we've made. We sat and listened to the song, like, 150 times and tried to work out what it was for – how to enhance the song's meaning. Because 'Girls Like You' is this cute, quite simple song, but when you add the video it gives it it [sic] a whole other level. (O'Connor, 2018)

However, Maroon 5's lack of intentionality in the song lyrics—which they attempted to redeem through the visual presentation—dovetails into my deeper discussion around the relationship between popular music and King's legacy. As reviewer Kristin Smith noted:

...just because a diverse (and famous) group of women come together to dance in a video doesn't mean that the core message of the song has changed. Or that anyone has been empowered. In fact, you could argue that they're ironically being *further* exploited by Maroon 5 themselves, because there's nothing empowering in the song itself. (Smith, 2018)

Qualitative research into music and social movements indicates that musicians “generally have an implicit constellation of values with political implications that they're not only expressing, but often hoping others will adopt” (Rosenthal & Flacks, 2010, p. 214) and “politically minded musicians often seem to think about their social effect” (p. 215) during the composition process—as opposed to *after* the songs have been released. All of which suggests a degree of *intentionality* that is essential to popular music used in the service of social movements. Maroon 5's attempt to transfuse feminism, multiculturalism, and activism into a song that, in the words of

CNN reporter Sandra Gonzalez (2018), “is not exactly a female-empowering anthem” suggests a confluence of both male privilege and white privilege at play in the music-making process. I see male privilege in the implication that simply adding influential women to the music video might distract audiences from the song’s most objectifying moments. And I see white privilege in the notion that inserting people of color and a rapper might attract non-white listeners to a song that at least two reviewers have criticized, among other things, for its “whiteness.”

The notion of “whiteness” in the production of “Girls Like You” merits a whole new paragraph because there is much to unpack, which I will attempt to do with a measure of focus and brevity. Despite the inclusion of many women of color in the “Girls Like You” video, reviewer Shaad D’Souza (2018) called it “an intensely white version of Drake’s ‘Nice for What’ video” and later railed against the underlying track as a “bleached-white acoustic guitar-loop love song that’s going to make twenty billion fucking dollars.” Similarly, social media influencer Todd in the Shadows (2018) balked at Maroon 5’s cultural “whiteness” in comparison to Drake, specifically, and black-influenced popular music, generally. Such comparisons are problematic on two fronts. On the one hand, they perpetuate the fallacy of whiteness as an “unmarked” cultural category, as sociologist Ruth Frankenberg (1996) explains—associating things that are “white” with things that are innately bland, cultureless, corrupted by capitalism, and tainted by their relationship to power. On the other hand, indictments of “whiteness” against Maroon 5 coupled with comparisons to Drake imply that the artists’ primary musical differences are simply racial. This overlooks a substantive critique of what really separates their music, which I would argue is: (1) The authenticity of the artists’ social commentaries and (2) their respect for listeners’ agency over the field’s commercial objectives.

“I Like It” by Cardi B, Bad Bunny, and J Balvin

“I Like It” by Cardi B, Bad Bunny, and J Balvin (2018) can be heard and seen on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTINMmZKwpA>. By the time I began work on this research project, “I Like It” was seated at the number three spot on the Hot 100. Prior to that, the song had spent time in the number one position in July 2017, which marked Cardi B’s second time achieving a number one hit on the Hot 100, following her song “Bodak Yellow” last October. Cardi B is the first female rapper to ever achieve two number one hits on the Hot 100 (Zellner, 2018). A notable feature of “I Like It” is that the song is constructed around a sample of the 1967 song “I Like It Like That” performed by Pete Rodriguez who, like Cardi B, hails from the Bronx, New York. The now 86-year-old Rodriguez learned of Cardi B’s version after its release through a text message from his grandchildren who are Cardi B fans, and Rodriguez has given a positive endorsement of the revival, expressing his awe over the song’s staying power (Kinane, 2018).

According to *Billboard*, Cardi B achieved the number one spot on the Hot 100 without ever peaking at number one on the three main component charts that make up the Hot 100—digital song sales, streaming songs, and radio songs; “I Like It” was able to ascend based on its overall performance (Trust, 2018). This is significant because it suggests a strong balance of passive and active mode activity. Put another way, listeners and the field seem to be in sync on their affinity for “I Like It.” By comparison, there is no excessively high streaming activity to suggest that listeners want more of the song than the field is giving them (i.e., “In My Feelings”), and there is no excessively high radio play to suggest that the field is over-promoting a song that listeners may not want (i.e., “Girls Like You”). Many music critics have given positive reviews

to “I Like It,” including *Rolling Stone* (Spanos, 2018), *the Atlantic* (Giorgis, 2018), and even YouTube (Variety Staff, 2018) naming it their “Song of the Summer”—an appellation made official at MTV’s 2018 Video Music Awards in August (Bruner, 2018).

A strong connection between “I Like It” and King’s legacy may lie in the cultural phenomenon known as hip-hop feminism. Whitney Peoples, who currently serves as assistant director of the University of Michigan’s focus on race and diversity explains the concept:

...hip-hop feminists seek to pick up where they believe second wave black feminists left off. They offer that beyond the problematic of demeaning women via its incontestable misogyny, hip-hop provides a space for young black women to express their race and ethnic identities and to critique racism. Moreover, hip-hop feminists contend that hip-hop is also a site where young black women begin to build or further develop their own gender critique and feminist identity, which they can then turn toward the misogyny of rap music. (Peoples, 2008, p. 21)

Cardi B identifies as an Afro-Latina, as she is of mixed Dominican and Trinidadian descent, and aspects of hip-hop feminism are apparent in her style and rhetoric, much of which revolves around the percussive tension between respectability politics and a pro-sex framework. From an academic perspective, the pro-sex framework of hip-hop feminism “involves coming up with language to talk about both the pleasure and pain of sex and sexuality outside a singular heteropatriarchal lens while also looking at the nexus of hierarchal structures that shape our sexual selves” (Durham, Cooper, & Morris, 2013, p. 724). Cardi B’s adeptness in maintaining this particular percussive tension in her music may have to do with how she became a musician in the first place. The 26-year-old has talked openly about how she was part of the Bloods gang

when she was a teenager and later became a stripper to fund her escape from an abusive relationship and return to school (Biography.com editors, 2018). Although Cardi B never completed school, her social media posts about life as a stripper led to a role on VH1's reality series *Love & Hip Hop: New York* in 2015. Cardi B left the show in 2017 to pursue music full time. Her first single, "Bodak Yellow," released that same year, speaks both literally and metaphorically about her journey from a position of social and economic powerlessness to a position of power.

Although the boogaloo-inspired "I Like It" is stylistically different from "Bodak Yellow," it continues with lyrical themes introduced in Cardi B's debut single, such as her passion for material wealth and her formidable self-confidence. The male guest rappers, Bad Bunny and J Balvin, are both of Hispanic descent—Puerto Rican and Columbian, respectively—and they each add their own brand of braggadocio in Spanish. The overtly consumerist and, at times, heterosexist narrative of "I Like It" is not very different thematically from what is heard in most hip-hop music today, but as David Stovall (2006) reminds in his study of hip-hop culture in high school education, "It is important to remember the centrality of metaphor in hip-hop music" (p. 592). At one point in Stovall's study, high school students were engaged in a discussion around the material wealth that is often portrayed in rap videos. After which Stovall concluded, "The class understood that many of the grandiose visions portrayed in many popular hip-hop music videos were not reflective of the lives that many artists lived" (p. 593). However, this finding itself leads to deeper questions about the values held by these young listeners and to what degree their values are shaped by the songs they hear. I could find no academic research on the relationship between hip-hop music and personal values, in general, although some qualitative

research has been done on the values projected in *gangsta* rap, a sub-genre of hip-hop, which may offer some useful insight:

Contrary to the new “culture of poverty” theorists who claim that the lifestyles of the so-called black “underclass” constitute a significant deviation from mainstream values, most gangsta rappers insist that the characters they rap about epitomize what America has been and continues to be. (Kelley, 2009, p. 205-206).

Does the consumerism of “I Like It” in fact epitomize what America has been and continues to be? King once said, “When all is finally entered into the annals of sociology; when philosophers, politicians, and preachers have all had their say, we must return to the fact that a person participates in this society primarily as an economic entity.” (Carson, 2001, p. 295). Is that what is at play here?

“FEFE” by 6ix9ine featuring Nicki Minaj and Murda Beatz

The discussion of gangsta rap from the previous section is a fitting segue to “FEFE” by Tekashi 6ix9ine (also known as 6ix9ine) featuring Nicki Minaj and Murda Beatz (2018). The song can be found on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_MXGdSBbAI. The 22-year-old lead performer, 6ix9ine, boasts publicly about his ongoing involvement in both the Bloods and Crips, as well as his criminal record, which includes a felony charge of Use of a Child in a Sexual Performance (Breakfast Club Power 105.1 FM, 2018). “I’m a product of my society,” he says, while deflecting to stories of his charitable contributions to inner-city youth.

It is worth noting that 6ix9ine is of Mexican descent, making him an ethnic minority in a musical genre that originated in African American communities in the 1970s and is dominated by African Americans still today. There have been numerous artists of various races and

ethnicities over the past 20 years who have excelled in the hip-hop genre. Two examples include Canadian-born Drake and white American Post Malone, both of whom are in the current top 5. Not only does the racial/ethnic diversity of hip-hop appear to be expanding in the U.S., but the hip-hop community—fans and field collectively—appear genuinely accepting of today’s non-black participants. In his review of the history of hip-hop music, Michael Eric Dyson (2004) observed that “[t]he increasing social isolation, economic hardship, political demoralization, and cultural exploitation endured by most ghetto poor communities in the past few decades have given rise to a form of musical expression that captures the terms of ghetto poor existence” (p. 63). Exploitation such as that endured by most ghetto poor communities, as opposed to the experience of poor blacks, may be the most accurate way to think of the location of hip-hop today, as people of all races and ethnicities seem to have gravitated toward hip-hop as a means of communicating musically their shared experience with the depredations of classism. 6ix9ine certainly fits into this category, often speaking in interviews about the hardships of his youth. Not all successful hip-hop artists come from impoverished backgrounds though. It could be argued that, like King, hip-hop artists who are born into or have earned a measure of privilege choose to forgo their privilege in order to create art that resonates authentically with people who remain marginalized. One might even hypothesize that the growth of hip-hop music in the mainstream of popular music and its expanding multiculturalism are unconscious indicators of how class divides in the U.S. are transcending racial differences.

Regarding 6ix9ine’s admitted gang involvement, the *Washington Post* reported on November 19 that the artist had been indicted that morning on federal racketeering and firearms charges connected (Butler, 2018). As I considered how much of 6ix9ine’s life is reflected in his

style and music, I was again left questioning whether the artist and his work represented “what America has been and continues to be,” or whether his brand of hip-hop was indicative of a more sinister exploitation perpetrated by the field against individuals who have an attention-getting story and few other survival options except to sell their story as a commodity. More on this later.

The lyrical content of “FEFE,” although heavily laden with slang, is quite straightforward. The song is about sex. And 6ix9ine makes no attempt to mask its heterosexist and at times misogynistic bent, such as when he says:

Her name Keke, she eat my dick like it's free, free

I don't even know like "Why I did that?"

I don't even know like "Why I hit that?"

All I know is that I just can't wife that

The implication is that Keke is disposable, a sexual object. By performing oral sex on 6ix9ine indiscriminately to satisfy her own desire (*she eat my dick like it's free, free*), Keke fulfills the role of “Freak”—one of the eight sexual scripts that reinforce stereotypical beliefs about women in hip-hop culture (Stephens, 2007). 6ix9ine artist also refers to women as “hoe” and “bitch” even as female rapper Nicki Minaj gesticulates by his side. Minaj portrays aspects of two sexual scripts. She is part “gangster bitch,” the emotionally-hardened survivalist who uses sex to relieve stress and feel good for the moment, and part “gold digger,” the woman who uses sex to gain material and economic rewards (Stephens, 2007). Minaj brags that she tells a man to “Keep this pussy in Versace” and, after he is done performing oral sex, she says, “I be like, ‘Yo, how'd it taste?’”

Overt sexuality and sexism are reinforced in the music video as well, which has received a record 491 million YouTube views since its July 2018 debut. It is not clear whether the views are the result of listeners' affinity for the song or mere curiosity about its salaciousness. While YouTube views do not factor into the Hot 100, it is hardly speculative to think that the attention has had some influence on the field's decision to promote the song at radio, especially considering that so much of the lyrical content must be censored on public airwaves. Nevertheless, in late August, "FEFE" reached the top of Billboard's *On-Demand Streaming Songs* chart, which *does* factor into the Hot 100 and has fueled the song's rise on the preeminent chart.

Despite Minaj's own history of personal and artistic controversies, people have voiced concerns over her collaboration with 6ix9ine, partly because of his child sex abuse scandal (Dazed, 2018) and partly because of how his hypermasculine image appears to contradict Minaj's career-long message of black female self-empowerment (Corry, 2018). One reviewer commented:

I cringed when I watched "FeFe," not because of who the two polarizing rappers happened to be but because of the imagery. The visuals were childlike and reminiscent of Candyland, an ill-fitting choice for 6ix9ine, who was charged with the "use of a child in a sexual performance" in 2015. (Corry, 2018)

Some listeners have argued that Minaj has been held to a different standard than the male collaborators who have worked with 6ix9ine (Dazed, 2018), and "FEFE" offers some compelling evidence for this indictment. As of this writing, I have been unable to locate in culture publications or online forums any *criticisms* of Murda Beatz, the white male record producer

responsible for the musical arrangement and whose name appears alongside 6ix9ine and Minaj in the song's byline. On the contrary, *XXL* magazine's Peter Berry (2018) praised Beatz's creative contribution, while noting Minaj's and 6ix9ine's "playful raunchiness." Given a long history of exploitation of people of color in the music industry, the extent to which the omission of Murda Beatz from the "FEFE" controversy has to do with race also merits future research.

The ultimate question is how a song or artist whose rhetoric is built around the violation of human dignity could achieve "success" in popular culture—in this case, a top ranking on the Hot 100. Wendy Day, founder of Rap Coalition, a not-for-profit organization set up to help rap artists, has argued that "It used to be the artist that would lead the market. Now it's the market leading the artist" (Norman, 2004, p. 519). Day goes on to explain how the field defines for the listener what success means in hip-hop music. Despite the extraordinary influence of black music and black artists on the American recording industry, companies like Pandora, Live Nation, Apple, Spotify, AEG, Warner Music Group, SXSW, Clear Channel Communications, and Universal Music Group are dominated by white executives, often from privileged backgrounds and educations (Resnikoff, 2014). R&B/hip-hop today comprises over a quarter of U.S. audio consumption and 31 percent of streaming, according to Nielsen Music, "but executives of color are still relatively scarce atop major music companies—at least, those they don't own themselves" (Mitchell, 2018). This arrangement effectively puts the framing of hip-hop culture in the hands of people who are far removed it.

At this point I would like to pivot back to an issue I raised earlier in this section: Exploitation. Scholars have recognized that consumerism, heterosexism, misogyny, violence, and drug culture are persistent themes in gangsta rap (Lauger & Densley, 2018; Stovall, 2006;

Hansen, 1995). Artists and the field alike have benefitted economically through the glorification of gangsta values in popular culture. “FEFE” is one example of this phenomenon and begs the question: *What responsibility or power does the listener have to resist such attempts at negative social change?*

“Better Now” by Post Malone

“Better Now” by Post Malone (2018) can be heard and seen on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYwF-jdcVjY>. The lyrics offer two sides of a story about a break-up. Malone presents both parties’ perspectives. While both parties seem to regret the breakup, they attempt to convince themselves that they are “better now” without each other. The accompanying video is not the usual blend of flashy visuals and lip-syncing that has become synonymous with American popular music, but rather it is a black-and-white montage of concert footage featuring Malone—on stage, backstage, and traveling to the stage—captured during his recent tour. “Better Now” seems relatively tame compared to songs one through four on the Hot 100. The song has ascended the chart based primarily on streaming activity, although the record has also celebrated chart-topping success at radio.

Post Malone is classified as a rapper. His music is filed under the hip-hop genre and has maintained a high crossover appeal in the popular music mainstream since the artist’s major label debut in 2015 with the hit “White Iverson,” which was performed in a sing-rap style made famous in recent years by black artists. This is significant because Post Malone identifies as a white American with partial Native American ancestry, although his Native American ancestry has not been verified (Breakfast Club Power 105.1 FM, 2016), and he has openly expressed his desire not to be classified as a rapper, as well as his disdain for hip-hop music (Garvey, 2018),

even going so far as to say that people should listen to genres other than hip-hop if they want to hear meaningful, emotional songs (Complex, 2018). Malone has drawn both the praise and ire of other hip-hop artists, some of whom have offered their co-sign by collaborating with him, while others have accused him of “cultural appropriation verging on blackface” (DeVile, 2018). Much of the criticism against Malone owes to a *GQ* interview in which the artist asserted that it was “a struggle being a white rapper” but was unable to answer the reporter’s follow-up questions about the struggles his black counterparts face, leading the reporter to conclude, “I don’t know if [Malone’s] wrestled with what it means to be black in America, but it seems to me that nobody’s asked him to do that, or held him accountable for that” (Stephen, 2018). This drama carries over into Malone’s most recent hit, “Better Now” where it appears that Malone recognizes the hip-hop genre as lucrative—to the tune of \$14 million in the past three years—but does not connect culturally or emotionally with the hip-hop genre.

It could be argued that “Better Now” represents a complex story of cultural appropriation and self-exploitation. On the one hand, 23-year-old Malone began listening to music at a time when traditional black genres, like R&B and hip-hop, were beginning to dominate the U.S. popular music scene. And he began making music a generation after many artists of various races and ethnicities had demonstrated their own success in traditionally black genres. From this perspective, Malone might have regarded hip-hop as the only viable route to a career in popular music. On the other hand, Malone’s insinuation that hip-hop is inherently meaningless and unemotional suggests an implicit bias likely shaped by the field’s *presentation* of hip-hop over the past 20 years. Malone has realized, much to the chagrin of black hip-hop artists who take their work seriously, that the gatekeeper of the music industry—the field—has perhaps not

framed hip-hop as something to be taken seriously. And so, in what might be Malone's grandest act of self-exploitation, he has agreed to play a lucrative, albeit hypocritical, role in the proliferation of hip-hop stereotypes. "Better Now" symbolizes a profound opportunity for racial reconciliation in popular music.

Limitations to This Study

One limitation to this study is the lack of consistency in the authorship of the reviews available about each of the Hot 100 songs. Had I to do things different, for example, I might have focused my research on what a select set of authors at specific publications had to say about each of the songs rather than taking a random sampling of reviews from various online publications. This research assumes that the various reviewers are giving their honest, non-compensated opinion of each song. It does not account for the fact that some reviews may be solicited by the artist or the field for promotional purposes. Establishing controls around the publications and reviewers considered in the research could allow for more of an apples-to-apples comparison of each of the songs.

Another limitation to this study is the dearth of academic research available on the relationship between popular music and public pedagogy. Work done in the past 20 years has focused primarily on the textual analysis of popular songs (Middleton, 2000) examinations of protest music in the folk idiom (e.g., Berger, 2000; Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Haycock, 2015; Rosenthal & Flacks, 2010) and scholarly expositions on the contributions of popular musicians and their music to popular culture (e.g., Edwards, 2009; Letts 2010; McDonald, 2009; Miyakawa, 2005; Sternfield, 2006; Smolko, 2013). Henry Giroux (2003) asserts that "[s]chools are no longer considered a public good but a private good and the only form of citizenship

increasingly being offered to young people is consumerism.” One way to test the veracity of this assertion might be to examine to what degree consumerism is promoted through publicly pedagogical channels, such as popular music, and the extent to which consumerist messages in music affects listeners’ values and behaviors.

Conclusions & Future Study

The continued study of popular music could offer key insights into how mainstream culture is taught and reshaped outside of formal education institutions. This paper contributes to existing scholarship by shedding some light on how success is measured in popular music; raising relevant questions about the transactions that take place between musicians, the field, and everyday listeners in the construction of a cultural curriculum; and positing the view that popular music has something to say about America’s development in the areas of racial reconciliation, economic justice, multiculturalism, and human dignity.

When I presented my research to an audience of interdisciplinary scholars in January 2019, one of my colleagues made an inspiring observation. While my research highlights the portrayal of some negative values in chart-topping popular music—such as materialism, sexism, and misogyny—it does not explain why audiences may be attracted to negative-value messages in popular music. It is one thing to note that FEFE, for example, has generated a record 419 million YouTube views. It is another to speculate that audiences find no real value in 6ix9ine’s music and are simply crowding around to witness a train wreck, so to speak. As Michael Simanga (2019) reminds us, in addition to the attributes that I have identified as King’s legacy in this study, King was also renowned for his ability to leverage creative tension. And in the spirit of creative tension, it could be useful to hear from audiences about why they are attracted to

music that contains negative-value messages, or whether values even play a conscious role in their music choices.

This research suggests that popular music displays an expanding multiculturalism that contradicts the narrative of *generalized* deepening social and cultural divides in the U.S. although there is yet much work to be done toward what I have earlier defined as King's legacy in the popular sense. Much of the multicultural expansion in popular music owes to the rise of hip-hop as the dominant genre in recent years and the increasing involvement of people of various races and ethnicities in this traditionally black genre. However, this research has also highlighted potential incidents of implicit bias and self-exploitation in popular music, as well as certain negative racial stereotypes within popular music genres (i.e., pop music seen as "white" and over-commercialized; hip-hop music seen as unemotional and lacking meaning). An emerging theory is that the underrepresentation of people of color in the field, as gatekeepers of popular music, may have something to do with how musical genres are framed racially. Additionally, this research offers evidence that popular music is viewed as a tool for leading social change and challenges readers to look critically at both the *intention* and *authenticity* (or lack thereof) in the artist's attempt to use their music for the purposes of positive social change.

Throughout this paper, I have interjected ideas for future study, but the one I believe has the greatest practical implications has to do with the relationship between consumerism and popular music. The Hot 100 is a benchmark of success in popular music, yet the factors that go into determining the Hot 100—radio play, sales data, and streaming activity—reduce popular music to a commodity devoid of any moral or ethical obligation. The commodification of popular music does not, however, strip it of its pedagogical power. The quality of what is being

taught through popular music merits some consideration in the success formula. More rigorous attempts at the critical reviews and reflections that I have presented here could help scholars to identify the actual values that Americans aspire to cultivate through their public pedagogy and may even spark a rewrite of the master narratives by which we define ourselves today.

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Appendix A**Song Lyrics****“In My Feelings” by Drake**

Trap, TrapMoneyBenny
This shit got me in my feelings
Gotta be real with it, yup
Kiki, do you love me? Are you riding?
Say you'll never ever leave from beside me
'Cause I want ya, and I need ya
And I'm down for you always
KB, do you love me? Are you riding?
Say you'll never ever leave from beside me
'Cause I want ya, and I need ya
And I'm down for you always
Look, the new me is really still the real me
I swear you gotta feel me before they try and kill me
They gotta make some choices, they runnin' out of options
'Cause I've been goin' off and they don't know when it's stoppin'
And when you get to toppin', I see that you've been learnin'
And when I take you shoppin' you spend it like you earned it
And when you popped off on your ex he deserved it
I thought you were the one from the jump, that confirmed it
Trapmoneybenny
I buy you champagne but you love some Henny
From the block like you Jenny
I know you special, girl, 'cause I know too many
'Resha, do you love me? Are you riding?
Say you'll never ever leave from beside me
'Cause I want ya, and I need ya
And I'm down for you always
J.T., do you love me? Are you riding?
Say you'll never ever leave from beside me
'Cause I want ya, and I need ya
And I'm down for you always
Two bad bitches and we kissin' in the Wraith
Kissin'-kissin' in the Wraith, kiss-kissin' in the Wraith
I need that black card and the code to the safe
Code to the safe, code-code to the safe-safe
I show him how the neck work
Fuck that Netflix and chill, what's your net-net-net worth?
'Cause I want ya, and I need ya
And I'm down for you always

(Yeah, yeah)
 And I'm down for you always
 D-down for you always
 D-d-down for you always
 (I got a new boy, and that nigga trade)
 Kiki, do you love me? Are you riding?
 Say you'll never ever leave from beside me
 'Cause I want you, and I need you
 And I'm down for you always
 KB, do you love me? Are you riding?
 Say you'll never ever leave
 From beside me, 'cause I want ya, and I
 Bring that ass, bring that ass, bring that ass back
 B-bring that ass, bring that ass, bring that ass back
 Shawty say the nigga that she with can't hit
 But shawty, I'ma hit it, hit it like I can't miss
 (Clap that ass, you're the only one I love)
 (Clap that ass, clap, clap)
 Bring that ass back
 (Clap that ass, you're the only one I love)
 (Let's go, let's go)
 Bring that ass back
 Trap, TrapMoneyBenny
 This shit got me in my feelings
 I just gotta be real with it, yup
 "What are y'all talkin' about?"
 "I don't even care, I need a photo with Drake
 Because my Instagram is weak as fuck"
 "What are you talkin' about?"
 "I'm just being real, my shit look"

*Songwriters: Adam James Pigott / Aubrey Drake Graham / Benjamin Joseph Workman /
 Caresha Brown / Darius Harrison / Dwayne Michael Carter / James Gregory Scheffer / Jatavia
 Johnson / Noah James Shebib / Orville Erwin Hall / Phillip Glenn Price / Renetta Yemika Lowe /
 Rex Fritz Zamor / Stephen Ellis Garrett*

*In My Feelings lyrics © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc, Peermusic Publishing, Reservoir Media
 Management Inc*

“Girls Like You” by Maroon 5 featuring Cardi B

Spent 24 hours
I need more hours with you
You spent the weekend
Getting even, ooh ooh
We spent the late nights
Making things right, between us
But now it's all good baby
Roll that Backwood baby
And play me close
'Cause girls like you
Run around with guys like me
'Til sundown, when I come through
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
Girls like you
Love fun, yeah me too
What I want when I come through
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
Yeah yeah yeah
Yeah yeah yeah
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
Yeah yeah yeah
Yeah yeah yeah
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
I spent last night
On the last flight to you
Took a whole day up
Trying to get way up, ooh ooh
We spent the daylight
Trying to make things right between us
And now it's all good baby
Roll that Backwood baby
And play me close
'Cause girls like you
Run around with guys like me
'Til sundown, when I come through
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
Girls like you
Love fun, yeah me too
What I want when I come through
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah

Yeah yeah yeah
Yeah yeah yeah
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
Yeah yeah yeah
Yeah yeah yeah
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
I need a girl like you
Maybe it's 6:45
Maybe I'm barely alive
Maybe you've taken my shit for the last time, yeah
Maybe I know that I'm drunk
Maybe I know you're the one
Maybe I'm thinking it's better if you drive
'Cause girls like you
Run around with guys like me
'Til sundown, when I come through
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
'Cause girls like you
Run around with guys like me
'Til sundown, when I come through
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
Girls like you
Love fun, yeah me too
What I want when I come through
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
Yeah yeah yeah
Yeah yeah yeah
I need a girl like you, yeah yeah
Yeah yeah yeah
Yeah yeah yeah
I need a girl like you

Songwriters: Adam Noah Levine / Henry Russell Walter / Belcalis Almanzar / Brittany Talia Hazzard / Jason Gregory Evigan / Gian Stone / Kleonard Raphael

Girls Like You lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group, Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Warner/Chappell Music, Inc, BMG Rights Management, Cypmp

“I Like It” by Cardi B, Bad Bunny, and J Balvin

Yeah baby, I like it like that
 You gotta believe me when I tell you
 I said I like it like that
 You gotta believe me when I tell you
 I said I like it like
 Now I like dollars, I like diamonds
 I like stunting, I like shining
 I like million dollar deals
 Where's my pen? Bitch I'm signin'
 I like those Balenciagas, the ones that look like socks
 I like going to the jeweler, I put rocks all in my watch
 I like texts from my exes when they want a second chance
 I like proving niggas wrong, I do what they say I can't
 They call me Cardi Bardi, banging body
 Spicy mami, hot tamale
 Hotter than a Somali, fur coat, Ferrari
 Hop out the stu', jump in the coupe (the coupe)
 Big Dipper on top of the roof
 Flexing on bitches as hard as I can
 Eating halal, driving the Lam'
 Told that bitch I'm sorry though
 'Bout my coins like Mario (Mario)
 Yeah they call me Cardi B, I run this shit like cardio
 Oh, facts
 Diamond district in the Jag' (I said I like it like that)
 Certified, you know I'm gang, gang, gang, gang (I said I like it like)
 Drop the top and blow the brains (I said I like it like that)
 Oh he's so handsome, what's his name? (I said I like it)
 Oh I need the dollars (I said I like it like that) (ch-ching)
 Beat it up like piñatas (I said I like it like)
 Tell the driver, close the curtains (I said I like it like that)
 Bad bitch make him nervous (I said I like it)
 Cardi B
 Chambean, chambean, pero no jalan (¡jalan!)
 Tú compras to'a las Jordan, bobo, a mí me las regalan (jejeje)
 I spend in the club (wuh), what you have in the bank (yeh)
 This is the new religion, bang, en latino gang, gang, yeh
 Trato de hacer dieta (yeh)
 Pero es que en el closet tengo mucha grasa (wuh)
 Ya mude la Gucci pa' dentro de casa, yeh (¡wuh!)
 Cabrón, a ti no te conocen ni en Plaza (no)
 El Diablo me llama pero Jesucristo me abraza

Guerrero como Eddie, que viva la raza (yeh)
 Me gustan boricuas, me gustan cubanas (rrr)
 Me gusta el acento de las colombianas (¿qué hubo pues?)
 Cómo mueve el culo la dominicana (¿qué lo que?)
 Lo rico que me chingan las venezolanas (woo!)
 Andamos activos, Perico Pin Pin (woo)
 Billetes de cien en el maletín (ching)
 Que retumbe el bajo, Bobby Valentin, yeh (boo)
 Aquí es prohibido amar, diles Charytín
 Que pa'l picor les tengo Claritin
 Yo llego a la disco y se forma el motín (rrr)
 Diamond district in the Jag' (I said I like it like that)
 Bad Bunny, baby, be, be, be, be
 Certified, you know I'm gang, gang, gang, gang (I said I like it like—)
 Drop the top and blow the brains (I said I like it like that)
 Oh he's so handsome, what's his name? (I said I like it)
 Oh I need the dollars (I said I like it like that)
 Beat it up like piñatas (I said I like it like)
 Tell the driver, close the curtains (I said I like it like that)
 Bad bitch make him nervous (I said I like it)
 Como Celia Cruz tengo el azúcar (azúca')
 Tu jeva me vio y se fue de pecho como Jimmy Snuka (ah)
 Te vamos a tumbar la peluca
 Y arranca pa'l carajo cabrón
 Que a ti no te vo'a pasar la hookah (hookah, hookah)
 Mis tenis Balenciaga, me reciben en la entrada (woo)
 Pa-pa-pa-pa-razzi, like I'm Lady Gaga (woo)
 Y no te me hagas (ey)
 Que en cover de Billboard tú has visto mi cara (ey)
 No salgo de tu mente
 Donde quieras que viajes has escuchado "Mi Gente"
 Yo no soy high (high), soy como el Testarossa ('rossa)
 Soy el que se la vive y también el que la goza (goza, goza)
 Es la cosa, mami es la cosa (cosa, cosa)
 El que mira sufre y el que toca goza (goza, goza)
 I said I like it like that
 I said I like it like that (rrr)
 I said I like it like that (woo)
 I said I like it like that
 Diamond district in the Jag (I said I like it like that)
 Certified, you know I'm gang, gang, gang, gang (I said I like it like—)
 Drop the top and blow the brains (I said I like it like that)
 Oh he's so handsome, what's his name? (I said I like it)

Songwriters: Belcalis Almanzar / Benito Antonio Martinez Ocasio / Craig Richard Kallman / Edgar Machuca / Edgar Wilmer Semper Vargas / Jermaine White / Jose Alvaro Osorio Balvin / Luian Malave / Manny Rodriguez / Noah K Assad / Pardison Fontaine / Tony Pabon / Vincent Marcellus Watson / Xavier Alexis Semper Vargas

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“FEFE” by 6ix9ine featuring Nicki Minaj and Murda Beatz

It's fuckin' TR3YWAY!
It's King of New York, lookin' for the Queen
Uh, you got the right one, mm
L-let these-l-let these b-b-bitches know, nigga
Queens, Brooklyn, brr, ah!
Murda on the beat so it's not nice!
Pussy got that wet, wet, got that drip, drip
Got that Super Soaker, hit that, she a Fefe
Her name Keke, she eat my dick like it's free, free
I don't even know like "Why I did that?"
I don't even know like "Why I hit that?"
All I know is that I just can't wife that
Talk to her nice so she won't fight back
Turn around and hit it from the back, back, back
Bend her down then I make it clap, clap, clap
I don't really want no friends
I don't really want no friends, no
Draco got that kick-back, when I blow that, they all do track
They don't shoot back, one shot, close range, red dot
Head tight, yeah, I did that, yeah, I live that
Call a Uber with my shooter, with a Ruger, we gon' do ya
Niggas say they killin' people, but I really fuckin' do it
I don't really want no friends
I don't really want no friends, no
He-he tryna 69 like Tekashi, call him papi
Word to A\$AP, keep me Rocky, I'm from New York, so I'm cocky
Say he fuckin' with my posse, copped me Chloé like Kardashi'
Keep this pussy in Versace, said I'm pretty like Tinashe
Put-put it all up in his face, did I catch a case?
Pussy game just caught a body, but I never leave a trace
Face is pretty, ass for days, I get chips, I ask for Lay's
I just sit back and when he done, I be like, "Yo, how'd it taste?"
(Yo, how'd it taste?)
I don't really want no friends
I don't really want no friends, no
Ayo, Draco got that kick-back
When it kick-back, you can't get yo shit back
In fact this that bitch that
"I hate small talk, I don't fuck with chit-chat"
AC just stopped workin'
So they hit me, told me bring my wrist back

Come through rockin' fashions
That got all these bitches like "Yo, what's that?"
I don't really want no friends
I don't really want no friends, no
Eeny, meeny, miny, moe
I catch a hoe right by her toe
If she ain't fuckin' me and Nicki
Kick that ho right through the door (TR3YWAY)
I don't really want no friends, my old ho just bought this Benz
Nicki just hopped in this shit, now I won't see that bitch again
Eeny, meeny, miny, moe (no)
I catch a ho right by her toe (no)
If she ain't fuckin' me and Nicki (no)
Kick that ho right through the door (no, TR3YWAY)
Mmm, Young Money, Young Money bunny
Colorful hair, don't care
I don't really want no friends, I don't really want no friends, no
I don't really want no friends, I don't really want no friends, no
Scum Gang!

*Songwriters: Andrew David Green / Daniel Hernandez / Kevin Gomringer / Onika Tanya Maraj
/ Shane Lee Lindstrom / Tim Gomringer*

FEFE lyrics © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc, Universal Music Publishing Group, Create Music

“Better Now” by Post Malone

You probably think that you are better now, better now
You only say that 'cause I'm not around, not around
You know I never meant to let you down, let you down
Woulda gave you anything, woulda gave you everything
You know I say that I am better now, better now
I only say that 'cause you're not around, not around
You know I never meant to let you down, let you down
Woulda gave you anything, woulda gave you everything (oh wow)
I did not believe that it would end, no
Everything came second to the Benzo
You're not even speaking to my friends, no
You knew all my uncles and my aunts though
Twenty candles, blow 'em out and open your eyes
We were looking forward to the rest of our lives
Used to keep my picture posted by your bedside
Now it's in your dresser with the socks you don't like
And I'm rollin', rollin', rollin', rollin'
With my brothers like it's Jonas, Jonas
Drinkin' Henny and I'm tryna forget
But I can't get this shit outta my head
You probably think that you are better now, better now
You only say that 'cause I'm not around, not around
You know I never meant to let you down, let you down
Woulda gave you anything, woulda gave you everything
You know I say that I am better now, better now
I only say that 'cause you're not around, not around
You know I never meant to let you down, let you down
Woulda gave you anything, woulda gave you everything (oh wow)
I seen you with your other dude
He seemed like he was pretty cool
I was so broken over you
Life it goes on, what can you do?
I just wonder what it's gonna take
Another foreign or a bigger chain
Because no matter how my life has changed
I keep on looking back on better days
You probably think that you are better now, better now
You only say that 'cause I'm not around, not around
You know I never meant to let you down, let you down
Woulda gave you anything, woulda gave you everything
You know I say that I am better now, better now
I only say that 'cause you're not around, not around

You know I never meant to let you down, let you down
Woulda gave you anything, woulda gave you everything (oh wow)
I promise
I swear to you I'll be okay
You're only the love of my life
You probably think that you are better now, better now
You only say that 'cause I'm not around, not around
You know I never meant to let you down, let you down
Woulda gave you anything, woulda gave you everything
You know I say that I am better now, better now
I only say that 'cause you're not around, not around
You know I never meant to let you down, let you down
Woulda gave you anything, woulda gave you everything (oh wow)

Songwriters: Austin Post / William Walsh / Adam Feeney / Louis Bell

Better Now lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Universal Music Publishing Group