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RAP MUSIC AS A TOOL TO BREAK GENDER NORMS: A STUDY ON THE RISE OF FEMALE RAPPERS



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Introduction

Back in 2013, when I was twelve years old, as I was looking at music videos on YouTube, I stumbled upon an artist who caught my attention instantly with her extravagant and original looks, and who is one of the world's best-known female rappers to this day; that is to say Nicki Minaj, also known as the "Queen of Rap". It is possible that most people nowadays, have already listened to one of her songs or have already watched one of her most famous music videos. In 2007, she introduced herself to the hip-hop world at a time when there were not many female rappers dominating the industry, the most famous ones being Missy Elliott, Lil Kim and Lauryn Hill from the nineties. However, throughout history, it has been noted that the world of hip-hop and rap has always been dominated by male artists such as Jay-Z, Snoop Dog or Eminem. Some women have been able to make their place in this vile industry, especially in the 90s as mentioned above, but it is only during the last decade that we have seen a real evolution in the number of women dominating the rap scene.

Why
« vile »
?

Now let's going back to the seventies, to the United States, to New York specifically, the birthplace of hip-hop culture and rap. As the population danced to the rhythm of disco and pop sounds, hip-hop was a way for the predominantly African-American community of the Bronx¹ to claim their rights in a context of racial segregation. According to an article published in Britannica Encyclopedia by Alan Light and Greg Tate in 2023: "Hip-hop originated in the predominantly African American economically depressed South Bronx section of New York City in the late 1970s." But what is the original story of hip-hop?

One fine day in 1973, when she was still a teenager, Cindy Campbell, also known as "the mother of hip-hop", and her brother, now known under the nickname of DJ Kool Herc, decided to organize a "back to school party". It was during this party that her brother drew attention to himself by his way of mixing the turntables in a new genre, and that would influence entire generations by creating a new style: hip-hop.

¹ Borough of New York City

Nevertheless, hip-hop is more than a musical genre, it is a culture of its own, through the style of clothing associated with baggy jeans and oversized tee-shirts, deejaying², breakdancing and graffiti. Meanwhile, rap music, is considered as another branch of hip-hop. In fact, although both terms are often used to refer to one another, hip-hop is a movement, a culture that encompasses several elements, whereas rap, according to the online dictionary *Encyclopedia Britannica* is a “musical style in which rhythmic and/or rhyming speech is chanted ("rapped") to musical accompaniment.”

However, it is a genre that, through its lyrics, glamorizes violence, money, drug use and that, in the majority of cases, reduces the woman to an object or an accessory, only appearing in the background of music videos, as a decorative object. Any female artists that would become popular would be ignored by most of the music industry and in order for them to get more recognition they had to comply with beauty standards and had to behave in a certain way in order to keep a good image, but what about male artists? Did they have as much pressure about their image?

Thus, it is possible to understand that women had no room in this world mainly dominated by men whose success was more recognized despite the many hateful or misogynistic messages against women and the only female rappers of the time were constantly put against each other. But this is about to change.

It's now the 21st century and a lot has changed. Indeed, over the last decade, the industry of rap music has been reshaped by the arrival of female rappers, each in their own way, claiming their rights to sing, dance and publicly open the debate about their sexuality. As BET³ Digital's Music Editor Diamond Hillyer said: “ For the first time in a long time, women are reclaiming the emancipation of our experiences, our bodies, our histories and our expectations in a way that's fun and meaningful to us”.. Several contemporary artists such as Nicki Minaj, Cardi b or Megan Thee Stallion, although being different in their own way, have established themselves

² “Hip-hop : a culture of vision and voice”, *Kennedy-center.org*, published in 2021, [retrieved on the 11th of February], link to the article : <https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/hip-hop/hip-hop-a-culture-of-vision-and-voice/>

³ “1st Annual BET Awards, *IMDB.com*, [retrieved on the 16th of February], link to the article : <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0409651/>

in the world of hip-hop despite societal constraints and have earned the respect of some of their male counterparts by proving that they are just as capable of selling records, going on tour and receiving awards.

In fact, according to a ranking of the 50 best rappers in history published by Billboard⁴ magazine on February 8, 2023, Nicki Minaj would be in tenth position ahead of rappers such as 50 Cent or Ice Cube.

who?

Since taking over the industry, **they** have shattered this image of the typical young woman who obeys men's orders and lives only for others. Henceforth, we have witnessed an emancipation of women, who will show off their bodies without any shame or embarrassment, talk about their sexual fantasies openly and assert their independence loud and clear. Moreover, competition is no longer an issue, today's female rappers want to show that they all have their own place and it is through their music that they convey a message to the upcoming generations of young women: that they are just as capable of succeeding in this industry as a man. As today's female rappers are becoming increasingly successful, we can wonder to what extent female empowerment is redefining the genre of hip-hop?

To answer this question, the first part will be dedicated to an **analysis** of the history of the female “pioneers” of rap music in order to have a better comprehension of how they impacted the current artists in terms of lyrics more specifically. Then, the second part will be an analysis of feminism in the hip-hop industry: can they go together?”**To** conclude, the third part will be dedicated to the role and impact of social media in terms of image and reputation.

⁴ “Billboard Magazine:1894 to today”, *Worldradiohistory.com*, [retrieved on the 17th of February], link to the article: <https://worldradiohistory.com/Archive-All-Music/Billboard-Magazine.htm>

PART I: HISTORY OF WOMEN IN HIP-HOP

Chapter 1: Female rappers in hip-hop: A never ending battle towards success and recognition

New York was the place where it all began, thanks to Dj Kool Herc and his sister Cindy for creating what would become later one of the best musical genre in history, that is to say: hip-hop. As mentioned in the introduction, hip-hop is a culture. As black people were facing racial discrimination, music was a way for them to speak up against what they were living. Hip-hop slowly became a political tool, artists started rapping about their struggles such as poverty, violence and racial discrimination.⁵ Rappers did not appear on the big screen until years later. At first, they were only playing music in basements and parties and at that time, Djs were more popular since the way they mixed their turntables was a turning point in the history of hip-hop.⁶

Figure 1 : Block Party in the Bronx⁷



Merriam

⁵ “Definition fo rap”, *Merrimack-webster.com*, [retrieved on the 17th of February], link to the article: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rap>

⁶ KIETZMAN, Shannon, “What is a DJ”, *Musicalexpert.org*, [retrieved on the 16th of February], link to the article: <https://www.musicalexpert.org/what-is-a-dj.htm>

⁷ WARNETT, Gary, “How the Block Party invented hip-hop”, *Mrporter.com*, published on the 13th of July 2016, [retrieved on the 5th of March], link to the article : <https://www.mrporter.com/en-se/journal/lifestyle/how-the-block-party-invented-hip-hop-665720>

When hip-hop artists started to rise, it was evident ~~to notice~~ that there were not many women. In fact, male rappers were more dominant in this industry, their songs being about violence, substance abuse and poverty which were their everyday struggles. Nevertheless, they sold millions of copies in the world and ruled the industry for years. There were famous names such as Snoop Dogg, 50 Cent or Jay-Z. Another important element about this industry was that they promoted violence and disrespect towards women. Those elements made it tougher for female artists to impose themselves since they were facing gender stereotypes. Even if some of them succeeded in the industry, for their fans, there could only be one real female rapper. Record labels and male rappers, would put them in competition as a way to make them prove that they owned their status. It is impossible to say that it worked, however, some female artists such as Foxy Brown and Lil Kim in the 90s were not on good terms because of that.

Record labels would purposely ignore any upcoming female artist stating that their success would have rather been based off their physical appearances instead of their talent. The problem was that they had to work harder in order to prove their talent but it was not enough. It nearly took 10 years for certain female artists to release their first solo album while for male rappers it could only take them a few months. One of the main reasons why it took them so long was because record labels focused all their attention on rising stars at the time such as Snoop Dogg.

While male rappers could sing openly about how they hated women and how they thought of them as their possessions, women could not argue or say a word in case it would ruin their own reputation. Rap was a way for male rappers in the beginning to address important topics. It later became a way for them to discriminate against women and to downgrade their role within our society.

Inappropriate words and expressions were often used by male rappers to publicly insult and criticize women. Misogyny in the music industry was a real issue.⁸

⁸ KENDALL, Emily, "Definition of misogyny", *Britannica.com*, [retrieved on the 17th of February], link to the article: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/misogyny>

They had to meet certain standards in order to be valuable, meanwhile male rappers would degrade them at any given opportunity. Another issue they had to deal with was the fact that they have been objectified for years by some of their male counterparts and they were severely overlooked.

According to a study written by Martha Nussbaum on the “Female’s Objectification in Music Videos” published in 2021: “Media content primarily attributes women to “physical attractiveness and fascination” by representing them as instruments, prizes that can be won (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014).” The difference between how male and female rappers were treated showed that female rappers needed to work harder to make their way into this industry. However, what they actually meant by working harder was not on the musical aspect, instead, their physical appearance. Studies have shown that people were more likely to be interested in a female artist if she was considered as “beautiful”.

It is important to note that, most of the female rappers at the time were also singing about their struggles. They discussed important topics as well in their songs but most of the people in the music industry were too focused on criticizing their appearances without acknowledging their work. It took them a long time before noticing that in terms of flow, creativity and lyrics, they were as good as certain male rappers, but people refused to acknowledge this fact.⁹ Thus, it is essential to point out that, until this day, contemporary female rappers are still dealing with those types of situations. People might think that because the 90s are gone and were the only tough periods for female rappers but until these days, some of them such as Cardi B and Nicki Minaj have stated in interviews before that people are more open minded but do not respect their work still.

⁹ “What does ‘flow’ mean?”, *Dailyrapfacts.com*, [retrieved on the 17th of February], link to the article: <https://dailyrapfacts.com/17411/what-does-flow-mean/>

Chapter 2: A few “pioneers” who have shaped the female hip-hop industry

Figure 2: Female rappers of the 90s¹⁰



It would be good to integrate this into your text, or at least give a description of what's going on here

“There would be no hip-hop without women. From the start, women scratched the vinyl, grabbed the mic, and pressed record on what would become one of the most dynamic and influential genres in African American culture.”¹¹

with

The hip-hop industry never played fair **for** its women. Back in the eighties, the number of male rappers dominating the industry was so high that it was almost impossible for female singers to properly established themselves¹².

Nevertheless, in the late 80s, while most people in the music industry did not except it, a singer who goes by the name of McLyte starts to draw all eyes on her. It is possible to wonder while reading this, what was particular about this singer? In fact, she was a woman, and she was brave enough to impose her style despite all the criticisms she received. McLyte was the

¹⁰ EDDS, Andrew, “The 90s Women who built hip-hop”, *Hummingbirdmag.com*, [retrieved on the 6th of March], link to the article: <https://hummingbirdmag.com/2020/05/19/the-90s-women-who-built-hip-hop/>

¹¹ TATE, Angela, “Fashioning power and gender in Hip-Hop”, *NMAAHC.si*, published on May 6, 2022, [retrieved on the 17th of November 2022]. Link to the article: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/women-hip-hop>

¹² “50 Greatest rappers of all time”, *Billboard.com*, published on the 8th of February 2023, [retrieved on the 11th of February], link to the article: <https://www.billboard.com/lists/best-rappers-all-time/10-nicki-minaj/>

first female MC to ever release her own solo album called: “Lyte as a rock” in 1988.¹³ Although the album did not get enough recognition, it did not discourage her from pursuing her career in this industry.

A year later after McLyte dropped her first debut album, the music scene has seen a new female singer rising who went by the name of Queen Latifah. She started becoming famous in the late 90s and was famous for being one of the first female rapper who would collaborate with other female singers without feeling competitive. However, she was not only active on the music scene but also tried to pursue a career in acting which, at the time, was not something people expected of a female rapper. Until this day, she is one of the most famous and iconic female rapper in history because she was the first female rapper who did not meet the beauty standards at the time and stayed focused on her music.

Another powerful female artist in the music industry is Lauryn Hill. She became famous in the late 90s and broke the music industry when she ^{released} realised her first debut album in 1998 called: “The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill” when she publicly talked about feminism and other issues that woman and most precisely, black women were facing at the time. She was one of the first few female rappers who was not afraid of speaking her truth through her music and therefore endanger her reputation and career. Nevertheless, thanks to her strength and her unique style, she is still and would forever be an inspiration for contemporary artists.

Missy Elliott, or as ABC magazine once called her in an article published in 2020: “A true artist who reshaped the traditional sound of R&B and hip hop.” She redefined the genre of hip-hop with her original looks and music videos which were considered at the head of their time due to their creativity.¹⁴ She first started her career in a girl group called Sista where they mostly produced R&B songs in 1991 and decided to go solo in the late 90s. She was the first female rapper to ever collaborate with another famous male rapper at that time, P. Diddy. Her success lasted for a long period of time and she kept on winning awards for her multiple albums

¹³ “Definition of a MC”, *Urbandictionary.com*, published in 2003, [retrieved on the 17th of February], link to the article: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=MC>

¹⁴ ABC Australia, [consulted on the 4th of March], link to the website: <http://www.abcaustralia.net.au>

and collaborations. It is also worth mentioning that Missy Elliot used to be one of the few female rappers of the 90s who had the most collaborations with female artists (See Appendix I).

Kimberly Denise Jones, better known as Lil Kim, is one of the most successful female rappers of the 90s. She was first discovered in 1994 by the Notorious B.I.G., a famous male rapper of the time who helped her grow in the industry. In 1996, she started her solo career after being in a group called Junior M.A.F.I.A. formed by the Notorious B.I.G. himself. Lil Kim was slightly different from her female counterparts because in contrast to them, she used her femininity and appearance as a personality trait and was one of the first few ones to promote feminist messages in her songs. Her rapping style considered as “vulgar” and “raw” gave her more credibility and made her one of the most popular female rappers ever.

Foxy Brown became popular shortly after Lil Kim at the very young age of 17. Her career took off when she was featured in a song with LL Cool J, showing the public her ability to rap. She released her debut album in 1996 called “III Na Na” and it has been a true success from the beginning. Foxy Brown was well-known for a versatility and rapping ability that made her stand out from other artists. However, she was also known for having troubles with her female counterpart Lil Kim for years.

Eve is another popular female artist. She became popular in the late 90s and according to an article published by ABC News: “the rapper who had to battle male rappers to get signed by Ruff Ryders Entertainment, said that in the late 1990s and 2000s, when she launched her career, it was difficult for female artists to breakthrough in hip-hop because the industry was male-dominated.” Despite those obstacles, she still topped the charts with her album in 1999 called “Let There Be Eve.. Ruff Ryder’s First Lady” and was the first female rapper to enter the charts with an album being in the first position.

Those female artists have changed the hip-hop industry for ever which is the reason they are often nicknamed the “pioneers” of female rap. Indeed, they showed the public opinion that they had talent and creativity and were not only there to support men. Each of them had something to add to the industry whether it was their vocal abilities, their powerful messages or their music videos such as Missy Elliott’s most famous music video called “Work it”. They worked hard and fought to get the recognition they deserved while facing criticism and gender stereotypes coming from their male counterparts. It is important to mention their names since

they have paved the way for contemporary females rappers such as Nicki Minaj or Cardi B to enter the hip-hop industry and establish themselves.

Even if they were successful during the 90s, their legacy is still continuing to this day, people are still mentioning them as the most famous rappers in history and still considered them as influences for contemporary artists.

It is important to mention that a second wave of female rappers has emerged from the beginning of the 2010s.

Figure 3: Contemporary female rappers¹⁵



This period is significant in hip-hop history since it showed that it was not the end for female rap, they kept on working in the industry despite the obstacles they had to overcome. The difference between then in the 90s, and now is that, it seems like female rappers nowadays are more confident about what they want to achieve, they are more assertive and confident thanks to their predecessors. Before making a short list of the new female rappers and their particularities, it is important to recall that for many years, the female rap industry was “empty” in a sense that after the 90s and early 2000s there was no one. Until one day, Nicki Minaj also known as the “Queen of Rap” arrived and changed the game for ever.

¹⁵ “2020 was the year female rappers dominated”, *NPR.org*, published in 2020, [retrieved on the 7th of March], link to the article: <https://www.npr.org/2020/12/10/944625003/2020-was-the-year-female-rappers-dominated>

Thus, it is possible to consider her as a “pioneer” of female rap as well since for years, she has been the only one in this generation to ever grow in the industry for so long.¹⁶ There are many reasons to explain this statement, the first one being that, she was the first one to ever succeeded in collaborating with both male and female artists, especially rappers (See Appendix II). As opposed to other female artists, she actually got support from other male rappers such as Lil Wayne and Drake who believed in her. This is an important element to take in consideration since it has always been unusual in this industry to see male rappers promoting a female artist and at the same time, to treat her as their counterpart instead of discrediting her. This allowed her to gain more popularity and respect from other artists.

Cardi B was the second female rapper to enter the music industry. She became famous in 2017 due to her particular behavior and became popular within months. People were pleased to see a new woman in hip-hop after so many years because they thought that it was important for this generation to have several female rappers as a sort of “representation”. Megan The Stallion succeeded in establishing herself as well in the hip-hop industry over the years. Similar to her counterparts, she imposed her own musical style and conveyed this image of a strong, powerful and confident woman.

Thanks to these women and many more, it is possible to witness over the last couple of years, an evolution in the hip-hop industry (See Appendix III). There is, nowadays, a high number of female rappers in the industry and they all promote female empowerment, confidence and self appreciation for younger girls and boys.

¹⁶ The word “pioneer” is used to point out the fact that she had a real impact in the history of hip-hop.

PART II: FEMALE RAPPERS: A CULTURAL RESET

This chapter will be dedicated to the history of feminism in hip hop, how it evolved, and how it led to female empowerment. The first part of this chapter will focus on the history and evolution of feminism in hip-hop. Songs from Queen Latifah and Princess Nokia (a contemporary female rapper) will be analyzed to understand how they promote feminism, especially in the 90s and how are they doing it now. The second part will be an examination of the evolution of women's status after the emergence of feminist movements in the 90s. For this purpose, an analysis of their nominations and prizes obtained during the prestigious musical ceremonies will be conducted to see whether there has been an improvement over the years, especially for the new artists.

Chapter 1: A new form of feminism: Can hip-hop and feminism go together?

It is no secret that hip-hop is a predominantly male industry. Female rappers needed to be mentally strong while facing gender inequality and stereotypes from both their male counterparts and the media. While most hip-hop male artists were singing about their struggles, some female artists decided to stand up for themselves as well, and express their feelings through their music. As Aria S. Halliday, a Gender and Women's and African American studies professor at the University of Kentucky once stated,

To a certain extent, there is the artist who makes certain music and then there is the manager and then there are the producers and then there are the record company execs who make the decisions about what music should be put on the radio. They're making decisions about what songs to play over and over and I think that in most of those areas, most of the people who are making those decisions are men who have built their careers and built their fame off of similar ideas of women and what their place is¹⁷.

¹⁷ HARVEY, Danielle, "Hip Hop and the Female Image : How the Genre has Shaped a Culture and Impacted Women and the Careers of Female Rappers", *Kisaradio.org*, [Consulted on the 17th of March 2023], link to the article: <https://kisaradio.org/hip-hop-and-the-female-image-how-the-genre-has-shaped-a-culture-and-impacted-women-and-the-careers-of-female-rappers/>

Hip-hop soon became for them a political tool, they would mention sensitive topics such as feminism, sexism, and misogyny in hip-hop culture. Talking publicly about those subjects could have threatened their career, however, female rappers of the 90s such as Queen Latifah and Lauryn Hill broke the rules and have long been vocal advocates for women's rights and female empowerment, using their music to call attention to issues like domestic violence and gender inequality.

Understandably, for some, there ought to be no connection between feminism and the hip-hop genre¹⁸. However, these two elements will nevertheless enable female rappers to emancipate themselves from being victims of society into well-respected artists. Over the years, people have argued about the fact that hip-hop music and culture (including rap music) are inherently patriarchal and promote toxic masculinity with many of its lyrics, videos, and performances promoting sexist messages¹⁹. It has always been criticized for its frequent use of derogatory terms when referring to women in general, and in a sense, it might have contributed to a broader culture of sexism and misogyny in society²⁰.

The first feminist movements in hip-hop culture began earlier (in the 70s) and in various forms. Indeed, a lady known as "Lady Pink" was the first to initiate the movement through her unique graffiti that can be seen all over New York. Also known as the pioneer of urban graffiti art, Lady Pink did not shrink from proving to society that she was as talented as a man.

¹⁸ "Definition of feminism", *Merrimam-Webster.com*, [retrieved on the 17th of February], link to the article: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism>

¹⁹ "Definition of toxic masculinity", *Collinsdictionary.com*, [retrieved on the 16th of February], link to the article: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/submission/20783/toxic+masculinity>

²⁰ "Sexism at work", *Eige.Europa.eu*, [retrieved on the 18th of February], link to the article: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/sexism-at-work-handbook/part-1-understand/what-sexism>

Figure 4 : Lady Pink's arts²¹



Shortly after the insurgence of women in the hip-hop culture (deejaying or graffiti), “hip-hop feminism” became an official movement. The term was introduced by Joan Morgan 1999, an American and Jamaican author. According to M. Nicole Horsley, “Hip-hop feminism is a movement – it however should provide a safe space and a voice for poor and working-class women centering their every day struggles at home, school, and work”²². She also stated that “Hip-hop feminism ruptures ideologies of universal womanhood, bodies, class, and gender construction”²³. This movement can be seen as a chance for female artists at the time to escape from the constraints and stereotypes imposed on them (See Appendix IV).

In the music industry, and more precisely, in the hip-hop sphere, “Hip Hop Feminism” started to develop as an official movement during the 90s with female rappers such as Queen Latifah and Lauryn Hill. With their flow, attitudes, and lyrics, they promoted a brand new image of female artists, breaking gender stereotypes. Queen Latifah was one of the very first female artists to release songs about female empowerment and confidence. According to an article written by Jacquelyn Jordan, in 2018 called “From Queen Latifah to Lil’Kim: The Evolution

²¹ “Lady Pink”, Brooklyn Museum, New York City, [retrieved on the 23rd of March], link to the image: https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/about/feminist_art_base/lady-pink

²² HORSLEY, Nicole, “Hip-hop feminism starter kit”, *Journal of Hip-Hop studies*, Volume 7, p.3, 2020.

²³ibid., p. 3

of the Feminist M.C.”, Queen Latifah promoted “women’s importance that demands equal treatment for women, and that demonstrates the need for women to support each other”²⁴.

Her song called “Ladies First” is the ideal expression of how she promoted female empowerment despite the constant negativity and criticism she would receive. The song would later become an official anthem when referring to feminism in hip-hop. The song was released in 1989, and featured another female artist called Monie Love. It was part of an album called “All Hail The Queen” which was released that same year. The meaning of the name chosen for this album is intriguing because, it is a way of expressing respect for women by using the term “Queen” which is a reference to a royal status. The woman is therefore elevated to a higher level, she is worshipped, respected, and is considered to be an important entity. Thereafter, according to Collins Dictionary, the expression “All Hail” refers to an archaic greeting or salutation, which demonstrates that there is already a certain respect. Thanks to those pieces of information, it is possible to comprehend the general theme and that the songs will celebrate womanhood.

This title was chosen as part of this research work in reorder to analyze it, due to the broad subject of women, but more importantly because of her statements, which would not have been fully accepted at the time.

²⁴ JORDAN, Jacquelyn, “From Queen Latifah to Lil’Kim : The evolution of the Feminist M.C.”, *Maneto Undergraduate Reasearch Journal* , Volume 1, p. 55 to p.57, The Temple University, 2018.

Figure 5 : Ladies Firsts album cover by Queen Latifah in 1989²⁵



To begin with, it is conceivable to understand through the lyrics that the two performers are communicating with each other and are simultaneously targeting the male gender. It is also noticeable that there is a type of respect between them because, in the second verse, Monie Love addresses Latifah by calling her “Queen”.

[Queen Latifah]

The ladies will kick it, the rhyme that is wicked
Those that don't know how to be pros get evicted
A woman can bear you, break you, take you
Now it's time to rhyme, can you relate to
A sister dope enough to make you holler and scream

[Monie Love]

Ayo, let me take it from here, Queen...
Excuse me but I think I'm about do
To get into precisely what I am about to do
I'm conversating to the folks that have no whatsoever clue
So listen very carefully as I break it down for you
Merrily merrily merrily merrily hyper happy overjoyed
Pleased with all the beats and rhymes my sisters have employed
Slick and smooth throwing down the sound totally a yes
Let me state the position: Ladies first, yes? (Yes)

Through this, it makes it easier to understand that there is a desire to enhance unity between female artists because, at the time, they were, for the most part, constantly competing against each other because of the industry in which they were working²⁶. Therefore, by calling

²⁵ “Ladies Firsts” album cover published in 1989, available on *Recordsale.de*, [retrieved on the 25th of March] , link to the album cover : <https://recordsale.de/fr/artists/queen-latifah/albums/ladies-first-come-into-my-house>

²⁶ It is worth mentioning that Latifah would years later realease a song called “U.N.I.T.Y.” in which she was also promoting female empowement and confidence. It shows how much she was committed to the subject.

her “Queen” she demonstrated that they needed to be treated with respect and that they did not feel insecure about each other’s performances and talent. It is interesting to analyze Latifah’s verse when she said: “a woman can bear you, break you take you” because of the contrast between the general image that society has of women and this new “version” put forward by female artists of ambitious and fearless young women. Then, it is possible to observe that through the following lyrics: “pleased with all the beats and rhymes my sisters have employed”, they refer to the fact that women’s role in the hip-hop industry has often been ignored so they need to remind how they are as talented as their male counterparts. As for those first two verses, it is clear that they convey a message of “empowerment”, unity, and also love – that is to say, supporting and loving their counterparts regarding their gender.

In her second verse, Monie Love says: “We are the ones that give birth to the new generation of prophets because it’s Ladies First”. We have in this verse a religious reference with the word “prophets”, as they are putting themselves this time on a higher level, maybe they are also alluding that those male rappers – those “prophets” exist thanks to them because they are the ones who are giving birth²⁷. The words “Ladies” and “Firsts” are written with capital letters to enhance this will of making people respect them more.

Another interesting lyric is from Latifah’s second verse, when she says: “Grab the mic, look into the crowd and see smiles cause they see a woman standing up on her own”. These are powerful lyrics especially in this period when it was hard enough for them to get some type of recognition, it shows how brave they were. They did not know yet that they would have an impact on this industry decades later. In this verse, she also said: “Some think that we can not flow, stereotypes they got to go”. As for the rest of the song, the lyrics are showing how they can be as successful as their male counterparts and how they play an important part in the hip-hop industry.

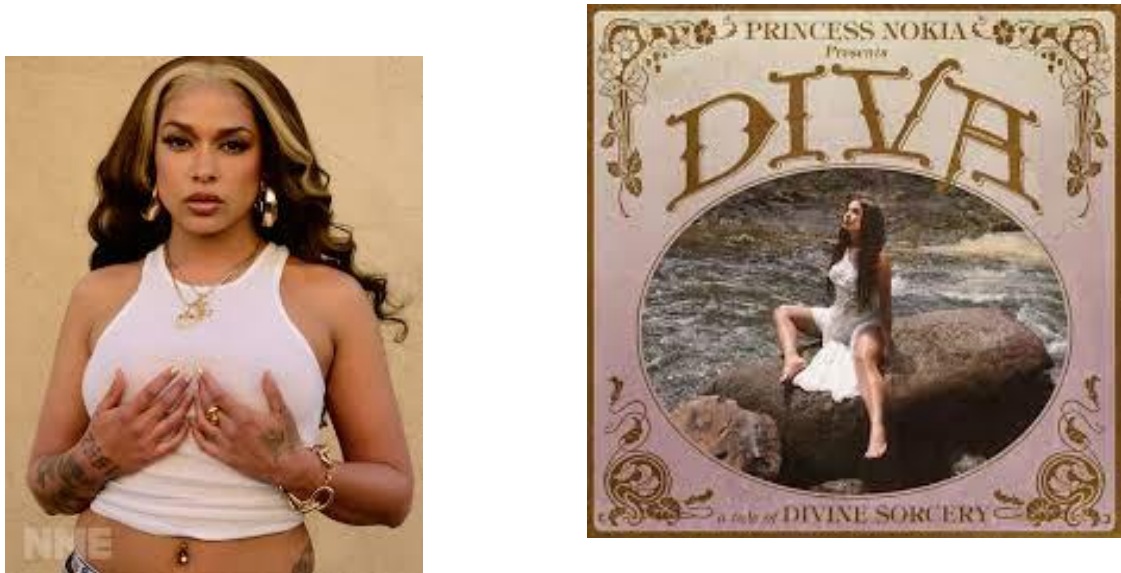
To continue with our analysis, it will be interesting to study Princess Nokia song called “Diva” due to its lyrics²⁸. Princess Nokia is a young female rapper, for the moment, she

²⁷ “Definition of a prophet”, *Collinsdictionary.com*, [retrieved on the 20th of March], link to the article: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/prophet>

²⁸ “Definition of a diva”, *Merriam-Webster.com*, [retrieved on the 20th of March], link to the article: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diva>

is not widely known since she only started getting recognition on social media a few years ago. However, in June 2022, she released a song called “Diva” in which she was making references to other female artists such as Beyonce or Shakira even if they are not rappers.

Figure 6 : Pictures of Princess Nokia’s single cover published in 2022²⁹



To begin with, her first verse starts with references to famous songs from Beyonce and Shakira. Although they have different registers, the fact that she mentions other female artists and is labeling them as “Divas” on one hand, displays that she respects her predecessors, and on the other hand, it may enable these women to see that they had a strong impact in this new generation of female artists. Also, in this verse when she says: “I feel like a goddess, I feel like a diva”, it sounds similar to Queen Latifah’s song “Ladies Firsts”, in which women were perceived as religious and royal entities. It is possible to say that these lyrics are promoting self-confidence. Instead of criticizing these artists and comparing herself to them, she is stating that she is a talented artist as well because she is feeling “like a diva”. The following

[Pre-Chorus]

And I look to all that queens that inspire me
Feeling like a higher me, feeling like Aaliyah, 1993
I does this entirely and I know they proud of me
Channeling their energy, yeah

²⁹ “Diva” single cover by Princess Nokia, published in 2022, [retrieved on the 27th of March], link to the cover : <https://www.nme.com/big-reads/princess-nokia-cover-interview-2021-its-not-my-fault-2925543>

lyrics are part of the chorus but are considered as a verse. In this part, she lauds her predecessors, including Aaliyah, which is interesting because it shows that she acknowledges where she gets her lyrical and musical inspiration from³⁰.

Moreover, in the second verse, there is an element worth analyzing in her lyrics when she says: “I’m the daughter of the witches that they burned at the stake” and as for the rest, it was previously analyzed (confidence and respect towards her predecessors). As mentioned above, those lyrics can be highly controversial since she is making a historical reference.

[Verse 2]
Yo, can't stay in one place
I was meant to be a star like a rocket in space
I done went from internet to ahead of the race
Feeling like I'm Ricky Bobby but I'm brown in the face
I may be the new girl but I'll never replace
All the women here before me, making excellent taste
I just learn from these women, do whatever it takes
I'm the daughter of the witches that they burned at the stake

Back in the Seventeenth Century in the United States, in Salem, Massachusetts, several men and women (141 to be more specific), were falsely accused of witchcraft, which generated widespread hysteria among the residents and many trials were held. Nineteen of them were executed, and some of them have been burned at the stake³¹. Princess Nokia purposely selected these words first of all because, in a way, she is stating that she is not afraid of being perceived as a witch, and it is possible that those “witches” they are talking about are female rappers since they always had a bad reputation. As for the rest of the song, she continues mentioning her female counterparts and is trying to persuade other female artists to join them in the process.

³⁰ Aaliyah was a famous Rnb and hip hop singer in the 90s, however, she died at a young age during a plane accident in 2001.

³¹ SCHONS Mary, “Witch Trials in the 21st century”, *NationalGeographic.or* , [Consulted on the 27th of March 2023], link to the article: <https://www.gettyimages.fr/photos/37th-annual-grammy-awards>

Chapter 2: Achievements accomplished by female rappers: Is it possible to talk about progress?

Figure 9 : Members of Salt-N-Pepa were receiving awards in the 90s³²



This part will be dedicated to an analysis of the evolution of the number of awards and prizes won by female rappers throughout history, to see if there had been any progress in terms of recognition of their contributions to hip-hop music and culture. This analysis will let us understand if they obtained more respect over the years. Female rappers have brought a unique perspective and creative approach to hip hop and their nominations and prizes have helped to eliminate the boundaries of the genre and have led to new innovative styles of rap music.

Despite the overpowering of male rappers in the 90s topping the music charts with their many songs and albums, as more female artists began to enter the hip-hop scene and achieve commercial success, their contributions slowly began to be acknowledged in the late 90s by industry awards³³. Lil Kim was one of the first female rappers to ever win a Grammy Award with her song “Lady Marmelade” featuring Christina Aguilera, Mya, and Pink and won the

³² GRANITZ, Steve, “The 37th annual Grammy Awards”, *Gettyimages.fr*, [retrieved on the 29th of March], link for the image: <https://www.gettyimages.fr/photos/37th-annual-grammy-awards>

³³ “Definition of a record chart”, *Wordsense.eu*, [retrieved on the 21st of March], link to the article: https://www.wordsense.eu/record_chart/

award for “Best Pop Collaboration with Vocals”³⁴. Since Lil Kim was the lead rapper in the collaboration, they still considered that this was the very first time a female rapper won an award. However, the first time a solo female rapper won a Grammy Award was in 1994, when Queen Latifah won the award for “Best Rap Solo Performance” for her song: “U.N.I.T.Y” from her album: “Black Reign”.

This song reached the top of the charts in the United States as it broke the norms by tackling the issue of misogyny which is strongly prevalent in this industry. Thanks to the tremendous success of her song, Queen Latifah proved that a woman can achieve success by addressing issues that seemed relevant to her. Thanks to these pieces of information, it is possible to understand that female rappers only won a few awards at first, and that only one or two out of the many female artists won prizes. It shows that the industry found it difficult to acknowledge their talent. One of the most significant turning points for female rappers was the success of Lauryn Hill album called “The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill” in 1999. The album won five Grammy Awards including one for “Album of the Year” which would make her the first female rapper to win a Grammy for “Best Rap Album”.

The 90s and 2000s were the periods in which female rappers began to receive more recognition although the number of prizes they won was lower compared to their male counterparts, who would receive countless awards and nominations.

However, it was not until the late 2000s and 2010s that female rappers started to receive significant recognition in the main categories. In 2011, Nicki Minaj became the first solo female rapper to be nominated for “Best New Artist” at the Grammy Awards. As for Nicki Minaj, it is noteworthy that she was one of the few female rappers to never receive an award during the ceremonies for years. Reasons for this are never specified, although for a decade she was considered “The Queen of Rap” and has long been the only female rapper to reign in the hip-hop scene during the years 2010³⁵. Nevertheless, her peers have received numerous awards and nominations, which indicates that the industry must not have valued her as an artist. A few years

³⁴ “Grammy Awards history and fun facts”, *Musicianshalloffame.com*, published in 2019, [retrieved on the 22nd of March], link to the article: <https://www.musicianshalloffame.com/history-of-the-grammy-awards/>

³⁵ If you type in a search engine “The Queen of Rap”, you will find picture of Nicki Minaj directly.

later, female rappers such as Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion received multiple nominations and wins at the Grammys, BET Awards, and other industry events. In addition to individual prizes, female rappers have also been recognized for their contributions and collaborations to the Industry. For example, in 2021, Megan Thee Stallion won a Grammy for “Best Rap Remix” featuring Beyonce making history as the first female rap collaboration to win the award.

It is fundamental to mention that this year, in 2023, it was revealed that Nicki Minaj is planning on launching her record label. This information is essential in the course of this investigation because it is a sign that progress is being made, and that female rappers are taking initiatives other than simply singing. It is announced that she will emphasize female artists which is promising and demonstrates that there is indeed a type of unity among them. She declared during an interview: “ “When I get behind an artist, you all know how I do s— for people that are not even signed to me. Imagine what I am going to do for the ones that are signed³⁶.”

Overall, the evolution of awards and nominations obtained by female rappers, reflects the increasing acceptance and recognition of their contributions to hip-hop music and culture.

³⁶ PETERS, Mitchell, “Nicki Minaj Announces Launch of Her Own Record Label on Queen Radio”, *Billboard.com*, [consulted on the 30th of March 2023], link to the article: <https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/nicki-minaj-announces-record-label-launch-queen-radio-1235279961/>

PART III: FEMALE HIP-HOP ARTISTS AND THEIR DIGITAL PRESENCE: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Chapter 1: Female rappers before social media : How did they manage their image and reputation ?

It goes without saying that it is almost impossible nowadays to spend a day without going on social media or on our phones. These new digital tools allow us to call, to play, to watch a TV show on any type of device and anywhere, at any given time. They also provide us with instant informations, there is no need anymore to wait for the morning newspaper as it was back in the day. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center on the general use of social media and how it impacted our society :

“Nearly two-thirds of American adults (65%) use social networking sites, up from 7% when Pew Research Center began systematically tracking social media usage in 2005. Pew Research reports have documented in great detail how the rise of social media has affected such things as work, politics and political deliberation, communications patterns around the globe, as well as the way people get and share information about health , civic life, news consumption, communities, teenage life, parenting, dating and even people’s level of stress³⁷.”

Besides disrupting our society in the way we consume and think, social media have had both positive and negative consequences for artists in the music industry. It is possible to wonder what is particular about this industry and the impacts of social platforms? First of all, because social networks enable artists to build a community; the *followers* with whom they can interact in a more “intimate” way³⁸. This marks a huge difference between the generations of artists in the 90s for example and the current ones since they did not have ways to interact more with their fans. Back then, celebrities were only seen on TV or at special events. It was almost impossible to interact with them. Nowadays, thanks to digital tools, fans can communicate and

³⁷The Pew Research Center conducts demographic research, media content analysis and other empirical social science research. The article is available on https://www.secretintelligenceservice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/PI_2015-10-08_Social-Networking-Usage-2005-2015_FINAL.pdf [consulted on the 12th of April].

³⁸ “Definition of a follower”, *Collinsdictionary.com*, [retrieved on the 22nd of March], link to the article: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/follower>

engage with their favourite celebrities through platforms such as Instagram and Twitter³⁹. However, some celebrities are known for often interacting with their fans while others are known for being more private. Artists use their platforms to promote their upcoming album or single, to interact with their fans and more importantly, to promote themselves. It is no secret that being more active on Instagram for example makes their fans want to know more about their private lives more through their content.

As for female rappers, social media have become major instruments in their communication strategy. According to an article written by Kayla Johnson:

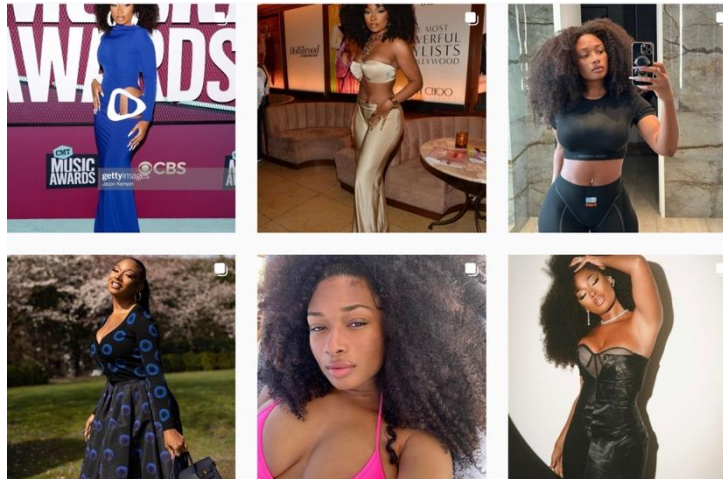
“This mix of untapped talent and digital marketing ingenuity resulted in a boom of emerging women rappers. From Cardi B to Rico Nasty, these women have successfully leveraged their loyal fan bases and made it their mission to create women-centered unity within the rap community. From collaborating on records, cameo appearances in music videos and showing love all over their social media platforms, this new generation of women rappers are leveraging digital spaces (and each other) to dominate the industry together, putting to rest the notion that there is only enough room for one of them at the top⁴⁰.”

Promoting their online presence allows them to get more recognition and success in a sense where it allows them to show another aspect of their personality. From recent years, it has been noted that fans are more attracted by artists (celebrities) who tend to show details of their private lives. This can be explained by the fact that, as humans, it is normal to be curious and to want to know what is happening behind the scenes. Social medias are great tools for artists because it also allows them to promote messages such as self-confidence and freedom of expression. Female rappers such as Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion are known for being quite active on social media. While Megan loves to show her true self; she loves to show her female fans that true beauty does exist and that they do not need superficial additions.

³⁹ Those platforms are the ones where fans engage more with their favorite celebrities, unlike Facebook for example because it gave them less sense of intimacy.

⁴⁰ JOHNSON, Kayla, “How Women in Rap are Dominating by Leveraging Digital Communities”, *Boldculturehub.com*, [consulted on the 14th of April], link to the article: <https://boldculturehub.com/2021/07/how-women-in-rap-are-dominating-by-leveraging-digital-communities/>

Figure 1 – Megan The Stallion’s official instagram account where she promotes herself with and without makeup⁴¹



Cardi B is known for having a funny yet controversial personality through her content. A few years ago, she went viral for posting a hair mask recipe for curly hair. Even if those elements are not related to their musical career, it has been noted that their fans are more drawn to these types of content. According to Keivan Djavadzadeh, in his essay called: “Have social media changed the rules of the game for female rappers?”:

“However, this direct self-promotion represents only part of the activity of female rappers on these platforms. More than just a professional showcase, the purpose of the rappers' accounts on the social networks is mainly to unite and keep the community alive. The rappers sometimes give names to their fan base, like Nicki Minaj and her "Barbz" (which recently became "TheKingdom") or DaniLeigh and her "Lil bebes" or "Lion Gang"⁴².”

⁴¹ Megan The Stallion’s instagram account, [consulted on the 24th of april], link: <https://www.instagram.com/theestallion/>

⁴² DJAVADZADEH, Keivan, “Have social media changed the rules of the game for female rappers? “, *Cairn*, No 223, Issue 5, p.164 – p.167, September 2020, [retrieved on the 15th of April]

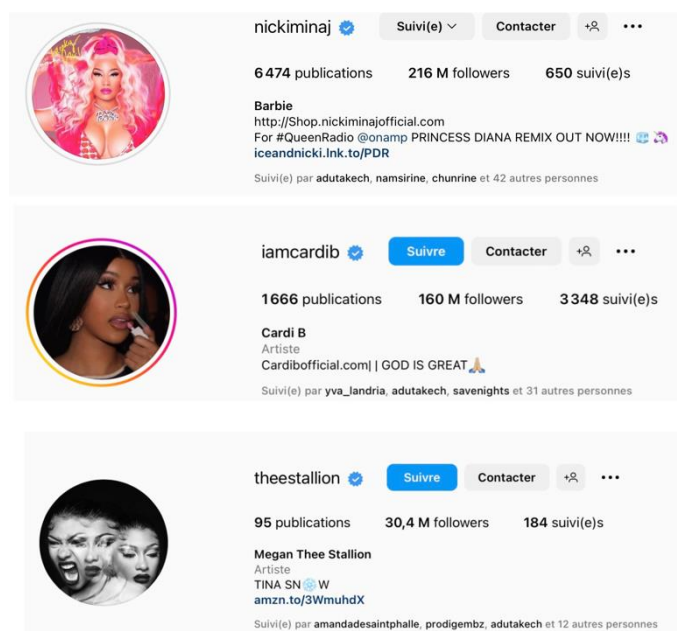
Furthermore, it breaks assumptions made on female rappers that they are only famous because of their physical appearance. It is important to recall that thanks to social media, nowadays, artists struggle less to find an agent since sometimes when they get *viral*, they instantly get more attention and fame⁴³. For example, Doja Cat, a famous Rnb and Rap singer went viral a few years ago for releasing a song called “Moo” in which she was imitating a cow. For some it might sound strange, however, it allowed her to build a real career since she is now a famous singer. She became famous in less than five years, in contrary to her predecessors who would have to wait another two or three years sometimes to finally get the recognition they deserved.

Thus, it has been noted that they have been a race to get the most followers on Instagram. Having a decent amount of followers allows them to get more recognition from both their fans and any brands who would want to collaborate with them. The number one female rapper who has the most followers on Instagram at the moment is Nicki Minaj with 216 millions followers⁴⁴. As part of this research project, a ranking of the three most followed female rappers on Instagram has been made in order to understand how digital platforms can contribute to their career. It is important to recall that these informations were taken on the 15th of April 2023. There is a chance that those numbers might vary in the course of time.

⁴³ Synonym for “popular” or “famous”.

⁴⁴ Information taken from Nicki Minaj’s official Instagram account, [consulted on the 15th of April 2023]. Link to the account: <https://www.instagram.com/nickiminaj/>

Figure 2 – Female rappers who are the most followed on instagram⁴⁵



Furthermore, another digital platform which enabled female rappers to get more recognition is TikTok. There is no doubt that Tiktok have helped musical careers to take off :

“TikTok has become a dominant leader in influence and consumption patterns of products and music. According to Audio Hype, the platform has been downloaded over 2 billion times, while maintaining 800 million frequent users globally. This data supports the idea that TikTok is a reliable source for promotion and marketing, especially in the music industry. The platform has been allowing artists to have increased control over their singles by simply uploading to Tiktok⁴⁶.”

⁴⁵ In order : Nicki Minaj’s instagram account, Cardi B’s instagram account and Megan Thee Stallion’s instagram account, links : <https://www.instagram.com/nickiminaj/>, <https://www.instagram.com/iamcardib/>, <https://www.instagram.com/theestallion/>

⁴⁶SULLIVAN, Tatiana, “The impact Tiktok has on the music industry”, *Cuchimes.com*, published on the 4th of October 2022, [consulted on the 15th of April], link to the article: <https://cuchimes.com/10/2022/the-impact-that-tiktok-has-on-the-music-industry/>

Moreover, back in the 90s, it was more difficult for female rappers without having access to social media since social media platforms did not exist which means that it is quite impossible to talk about their digital presence. However, it is possible to consider traditional media platforms such as the radio and television as tools which helped them to promote their songs. Television was a powerful instrument for promoting their digital presence with musical ceremonies such as the BET Awards. Another TV show which promoted rap artists and music was MTV's "Yo ! MTV Raps" :

Créée en 1988 et présentée par Doctor Dre, Ed Lover et Fab Five Freddy YO! MTV RAPS était considérée comme la première émission à faire découvrir un genre musical underground en plein essor appelé Rap. Pendant près de 7 ans, le programme a été la vitrine du rap US et de la culture hip hop. Il a notamment permis à des légendes telles que 2Pac, Snoop Dogg, Run DMC ou encore Public Enemy de se faire connaître du grand public⁴⁷

Translation :

Created in 1988 and presented by Doctor Dre, Ed Lover and Fab Five Freddy YO! MTV RAPS was considered the first show to introduce a growing underground music genre called Rap. For nearly 7 years, the program was a showcase for US rap and hip hop culture. It allowed legendary artists such as 2Pac, Snoop Dogg, Run DMC and Public Enemy to gain public recognition.

These TV shows introduced us to the most famous rappers in history and contributed in the promotion of rap culture and artists. As for female rappers, it is possible to encounter an extract from when Lauryn Hill was invited to the show (See Appendix V)⁴⁸. Radio can be considered as another tool since they aired every genre of music: from pop to rap music. It

⁴⁷BELZAMINE, Ludovic, "YO ! MTV RAPS : L'émission hip-hop emblématique de MTV fait son grand retour dès le 29 mai sur MTV HITS", published on *megazap.com*, published on the 29th of May 2022, [consulted on the 24th of April], link to the article: https://www.megazap.fr/YO-MTV-RAPS-L-emission-hip-hop-emblematique-de-MTV-fait-son-grand-retour-des-le-29-mai-sur-MTV-HITS_a9255.html

⁴⁸ "Classic Lauryn Hill freestyle on MTV", TikTok video, link : https://www.tiktok.com/@realbars_/video/7174882414169361710 , [consulted on the 24th of april]

allowed hip-hop artists to gain more recognition and popularity. As for today, it is possible to say that YouTube was the very first social media platform to have ever contributed to their digital presence. Since then, they have been able to have their songs and music videos posted online which will allow their work to have a bigger impact on today's generation.

Chapter 2 : The controversies and backlashes

It is almost impossible to make a general statement about how all female rappers experience social media because each of them interact differently on these platforms. Nevertheless, it is possible to provide an overview of the types of challenges and opportunities they may encounter. Social media, as mentioned previously, played a significant role for contemporary female artists by allowing them to promote their songs, image and career. However, it is worth mentioning that besides those advantages, social media can have a darker side. While female rappers can enjoy themselves on every platform, it can occur quite frequently that they will face controversy and criticism over their music or image. Social media have created a digital space where fans and haters can share their opinions publicly, whether it would be about their physical appearances, their lyrics or their music videos. Thus, in contrast to their male counterparts, they will usually get more violent messages.

Over the last few years, they have been dealing with different types of scandals: from their use of offensive language, to accusations of racism and cultural appropriation. The fact that they have been accused of using offensive language is contradictory knowing that their male counterparts have been doing the same thing since they started their careers. Many of them have also been criticized for their sexual image especially on social media.

In 2020, Cardi B and Meghan Thee Stallion received hate messages and backlashes due to their song "WAP". The track was not received favourably by the public because of the explicit lyrics and music video, as James P. Bradley, a Republican running for the House in California said : "Cardi B & Megan Thee Stallion are what happens when children are raised without God and without a strong father figure. Their new 'song' The #WAP (which i heard accidentally) made me want to pour holy water in my ears and I feel sorry for future girls if this is their role

model!”⁴⁹. This statement is an example of what type of criticism they would encounter : misogynistic and sexist, stating that they needed a stronger male figure.

Is it also worth mentioning that they received fierce criticism from another Republican member, DeAnna Lorraine who said: “ Cardi B & Megan Thee Stallion just set the entire female gender back by 100 years with their disgusting & vile ‘WAP’ song⁵⁰.” This demonstrates how they are still living in a patriarchal society since they can not express their needs and opinions without getting backlashes. However, the video almost hit 500 million views on YouTube and the song went viral on TikTok and became a trend.

Cardi B also faced backlashes because of the fact that she invited other women – singers or models, but people were mostly upset because they saw Kylie Jenner, an entrepreneur and TV star in the video and said that she did not deserved to be there because she is a white women.

Figure 3 – Tweets taken both from DeAnna Lorraine and Cardi B’s official twitter account⁵¹



Cardi B responded by saying on Twitter: “Not everything is about race”⁵². Her response quickly made people more angry at her whereas her aim was to promote other female

⁴⁹PAIELLA, Gabriella, “Wait, What: The Week in Wap”, *Gq.com*, published on the 14th of August 2020, [consulted on the 20th of April], link to the article: <https://www.gq.com/story/the-week-in-wap>

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁵¹ “Cardi B responds to politician Deanna Lorraine after she dogs Cardi and uplifts Melania Trump”, *Twitter.com*, written by Cardi B and Deanna Lorraine, [consulted on the 24th of april]

⁵² *Ibid*

celebrities. It is worth mentioning that Cardi B, out of all the other female rappers, is the one who have been receiving the most backlashes on social media over the years.

Later that year, while she was attending a party in Los Angeles with other famous singers, Megan Thee Stallion got shot in the foot allegedly by famous RnB singer Tory Lanez. Nonetheless, even if Tory has been found guilty, Megan faced misogynistic messages on social media from both Tory Lanez and his fans. She was also teased by other male rappers such as Drake and 50 Cent in some of their songs, where they both were alluding to the fact that Megan was a liar. On social media, she started getting hate messages and people were making racist posts about her. She stated that she “became the villain” in the story due to the lack of support from the music industry. She had to fight for months on her own while Tory was seen as the “nice” guy. He denied all claims stating that she was jealous of him and making stories to get attention. This case shed even more light on the issues female artists were facing. The lack of support from the music industry, the insults as well as the misogynistic and racist messages.

Figure 4 : Megan Thee Stallion’s response to the Tory Lanez case⁵³



Unfortunately, compared to the issues females rappers from the 90s were facing, it is possible to say that there have not been any improvements, especially since social media are taking over. At times, several female rappers decided to quit certain social platforms in order to preserve their mental health. For example, in 2022, Cardi B received backlash on Twitter

⁵³ JOHNSON, Zoe, “Megan The Stallion responds to false report that Tory Lanez charges have been dropped”, *Xxlmag.com*, published on the 21st of January 2021, [consulted on the 20th of april], link to the article: <https://www.xxlmag.com/megan-thee-stallion-tory-lanez-responds-false-report-charges-dropped/>

because she was not attending the 2022 Met Gala Ceremony for personal reasons. People started to harass her and her kids. This shows how social media users can be violent since some of them started to insult her family. She responded violently to those tweets before deleting her twitter account. There have been a question about if she should have provided a more respectful response or if she did the right thing considering the fact that she endangered her career.

These controversies underline the issues women in the music industry are still facing until these days. It is possible to wonder if social media are still relevant tools or if they should stick to traditional channels. There is also a need to establish a real community and support system within the contemporary female rappers because even if there are collaborating with each other, it seems as if it could only be for commercial purposes. However, as opposed to female rappers of the 90s, it is possible to say that improvements have been made thanks to social media and hopefully misogynistic and racists messages will end.

Conclusion

To conclude, female rappers, from the start, had to work harder than their male counterparts in order to achieve the same level of success, despite the stereotypes they had to face. Thus, it is possible to understand how breaking gender norms and stereotypes within the music industry have helped them to impose themselves as real artists. They sang songs about their struggles and issues, such as sexism and racism, which has helped them to reach an audience of young women who aspired to be as tough and brave as them.

They broke traditional rules and imposed their musical and lyrics styles for people to consider them as powerful artists. Each of them have their own unique style and energy they bring to the industry. Even if hip-hop has long been a male-dominated industry, they proved that women could do the same, and that nothing could have prevent them for being as successful as their male counterparts. They conveyed feminism messages and promoted self-confidence, something, contemporary female rappers such as Megan Thee Stallion and Nicki Minaj are still promoting to this day.

In the recent years, the number of female rappers have been increasing, thanks to social media, each year, at least two or three new female artists are launching their career. At the moment, a new artist who goes by the name of “Ice Spice” is trending all over social media, and it even allowed to get invited to the Met Gala 2023 even if she has only been in the music industry for a few months. It is possible to conclude that, the only difference between female rappers from the 90s and contemporary female artists was the impact of social media. However, they dealt and are still dealing with misogynistic and hateful messages despite the generational difference. It shows that, even if, there has been evolutions, they might be going to deal with this types of messages for a long time.

Thereafter, it is worth mentioning that, despite their current success, most of them have been receiving backlashes due to their lyrics, photoshoots or their behavior. In terms of lyrics, in most of the cases, they are criticized because, they talk openly about their sexuality, body and needs. The problem is that, male rappers have always been doing the same in their songs but have never been accused of doing that. Female rappers are still fighting until this day to prove that they can do the same.

Also, even if sometimes they have to deal with backlashes, it never stops them from releasing songs and albums about controversial topics such as sexism, racism and feminism in the music industry. They know that they can not step away and never talk about those issues because they are important to them. Another way for contemporary artists to break the traditional rules of hip-hop, is by collaborating with other female rappers since during the 90s, they were put up against each other which led to multiple disputes between them. Nowadays, female rappers are promoting unity and solidarity in contrast to what people wanted them to do in the 90s.

To finish, the contribution of female rappers in the hip-hop industry is slowly but surely started to get recognized. They are no longer being rejected by record labels and can impose themselves while promoting other female artists as well. It is possible to say that their messages will help the future generations of women to make their dream come true and never be afraid of establishing themselves in a male-dominated industry. Stereotypes and sexism will always exist, however, it is possible to keep on working towards any dreams, regardless of what people might say. Nicki Minaj, Lauryn Hill, Missy Elliot, Megan Thee Stallion and many more, have paved the way and became sources of inspiration for upcoming female rappers to start their career.

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Glossary

Term	Definition	Source
Misogyny	Misogyny means the hatred or prejudice against women, typically exhibited by men. It is generally accepted that misogyny is a consequence of patriarchy (male-dominated society).	https://www.britannica.com/topic/misogyny
Rap	Rap music is defined as a genre of music in which rhythmic and usually rhyming with speech is chanted to musical accompaniment.	https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rapping
Sexism	It is said that sexism can be defined as the beliefs around the fundamental nature of women and men and the roles they should have in society. It is also often linked with assumptions such as men are superior to women.	https://eige.europa.eu/publications/sexism-at-work-handbook/part-1-understand/what-sexism

Flow	The term “flow” is usually used by rappers to describe how they are rhyming on the beat.	https://dailyrapfacts.com/17411/what-does-flow-mean/
MC	MC is the short version for master of ceremonies or mic controller. It is usually meant to describe a rapper but the term is not limited to hip hop.	https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=MC
Diva	The term diva usually refers to a glamorous and successful female performer or personality. However, it can be used to describe someone who is acting like a diva in a negative way.	https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diva
BET Awards	BET stands for Black Entertainment Television and was created in 2001 in order to promote African American artists.	https://www.youtube.com/BETNetworks For more information : https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0409651/

Expression “All hail”	This expression can have several meanings, however, it usually is used as an archaic greeting or salutation.	https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/all-hail
Record Chart	A record chart is a ranking of music (songs or albums) according to their popularity during a given period of time.	https://www.wordsense.eu/record_chart/
Grammy Awards	The Grammy Awards were created in 1958 and are the most prestigious shows featured every year. The aim is to promote artists from different genres such as actors or singers.	https://www.musicianshalloffame.com/history-of-the-grammy-awards/
A follower on social media	The term follower can have different meanings. In general, a follower is someone who follows a group of person with whom they share the same beliefs. On social media, a follower is someone who chooses to see messages and publications posted by another person.	https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/follower

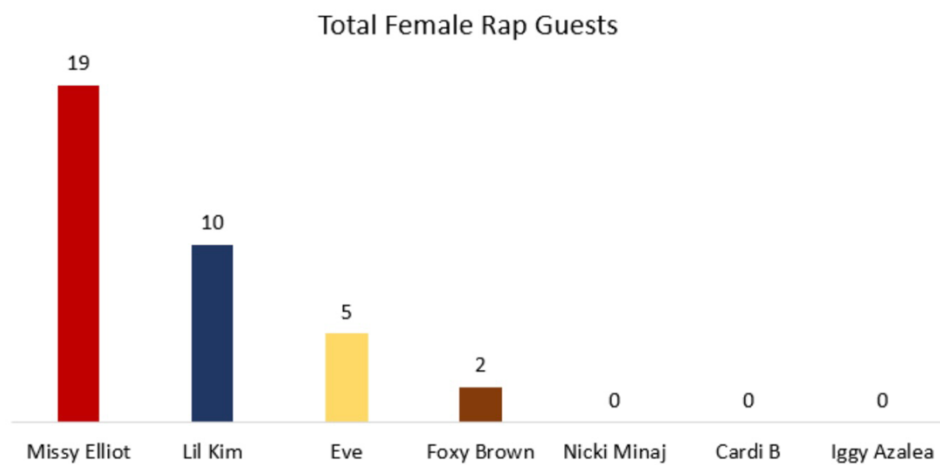
To go viral on social media	When something go viral on social media, it means the post (video or image) is quickly and widely spread or popularized on almost every platform.	https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/viral
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Appendix

Appendix I : Missy Elliot was one of the very few female rappers who had the most collaborations with female rappers

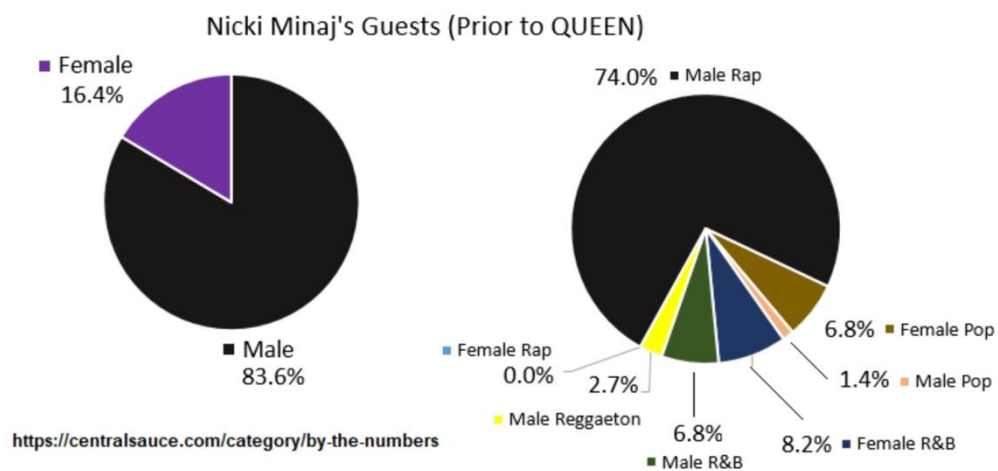
Did Female Rappers Collaborate More In the 90s and 2000s?

The short and long answer is yes, significantly. Taking into account album tracks and singles, here is how often 4 of the top female rappers from this era featured other female rappers:



Source : <https://centralsauce.com/nicki-minaj-women-female-rappers>

Appendix II: Percentage of female artists on Nicki Minaj's albums before her latest album Queen (released in 2018)



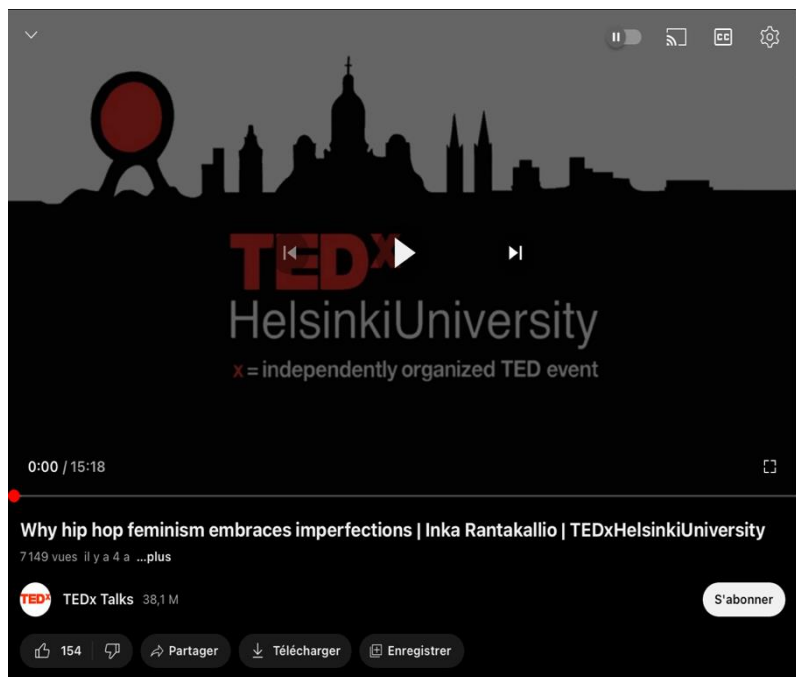
Source : <https://centralsauce.com/nicki-minaj-women-female-rappers>

Appendix III: Rappers (both male and female) with the most n°1 hits

Rapper	Number of #1 charting hits
Drake	26
Lil Wayne	11
Puff Daddy	10
Kanye West	10
LL Cool J	8
50 Cent	7
Bow Wow	7
TI	7
Nicki Minaj	7
Ice Cube	6
Nelly	6
Cardi B	6
Eminem	5

Source : <https://headphonesaddict.com/rap-and-hip-hop-statistics/>

Appendix IV: Ted Talk about hip-hop feminism presented by Inka Rantakallio



Source : <https://youtu.be/cNPBwWiApEI>

Appendix V: Lauryn Hill performing in an episode of “Yo !MTV RAPS !” in 1994



Source : <https://www.tiktok.com/@realbars/video/7174882414169361710>