Abstract

This diploma thesis focuses on the topic of gender in music and also its perception by the audience. The research topic was chosen for the increasing consumption of music media and for the lack of research focused on gender in music and on the perception of music lyrics in general.

The research part uses both the qualitative content analysis of music lyrics contained in the sample of Billboard Top Charts songs for the past 50 years (between years 1970-2019), and also semi-structured qualitative interviews on a multi-generation sample. Included in the content analysis was the total of 500 songs, interviewed were 8 respondents of various genders and ages to accomplish a diverse sample.

The topics of males, females and their relationship proved to be the dominant topics in the research music sample, and it also went through a significant development over time. The research identified a movement from metaphoric language to explicit, at the same time it identified a development of the metaphors. Also observed was the inclination to communicate different topics between male and female artists. Women were more focused on the topics of love, love triangle, end of the relationship, and submission. Men focused predominantly on the topics of sex, intimacy, and in the recent years also on money and addictions, which are topics almost never tackled by women. Hence, the move towards the focus on money is also connected with consumerism, which was addressed during the qualitative interviews.

Music proved to belong actively in the lives of the listeners, at the same time many of the respondents connected it with emotions and key life moments. Such connection implies that music may also have an active influence on the construction of an individual's identity. The interviews further illustrate the usage of music for its symbolic value, when it serves to support the social status of an individual, and that even from the gender perspective. As a key period when lyrics play an important role, this thesis named adolescence.

The content analysis of popular music lyrics also identified stereotypes related to men and women, which were in alignment with the stereotypes identified in the in-depth qualitative interviews. Such correspondence suggests a potential general applicability of these stereotypes even beyond the researched sample.