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**The Representation of Gender  
Discrimination in Taylor Swift's  
Music Video *The Man*. A  
Multimodal Critical Discourse  
Analysis**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CA	Conversation Analysis
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DA	Discourse Analysis
MA	Multimodal Analysis
MCA	Multimodal Conversational Analysis
MCDA	Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics

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## ABSTRACT

*In a society dominated by men, women have always been objectified and regarded as inferior to men. Gender discrimination has been present in the daily life of women for a very long time. The role of mass media has been crucial to shape society's mind in believing men to be better than women. The emergence of new technologies and new means of communication have provided an effective tool to raise awareness on this discrimination. The aim of this paper is to show how the issue of gender inequality is represented in Taylor Swift's music video *The Man*. In order to do so, the most important scenes of the video portraying daily life discriminatory situations were selected. Afterwards, both a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis and a Multimodal Conversational Analysis have been carried out with the objective to see how the different modes of communication i.e., speech, visuals, gaze, and gestures come together to create meaning. The findings of the analyses conducted on the music video show that gender discrimination is still a major issue on the everyday life of millions of women and that there is still much work to do in order to put an end to this problem.*

**Keywords:** *Gender discrimination, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, Multimodal Conversational Analysis, music*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The present study aimed to analyze Taylor Swift's music video *The Man* to reflect upon the representation of gender discrimination in music. To do this a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) has been conducted along with a Multimodal Conversational Analysis (MCA) to examine in depth different scenarios in which women are discriminated against men.

One of the reasons for carrying out this project is that I believe it is important and necessary to reflect upon the issue of gender discrimination and how it is portrayed in multimedia contexts. Moreover, another important aspect of this project was to study up to what extent multimodality can be used to create meaning and explore its presence in music videos. On top of that, the inspiration for using one of Taylor Swift's music videos for the analysis comes from the fact that she has always been an advocate fighting for women's rights and the injustices that artists suffer in the music industry and *The Man* music video clearly reflects upon the issue of gender discrimination.

In order to carry out the present study, this research paper has been divided as follows: firstly a section devoted to theoretical background focused on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Halliday (1978) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), multimodality, MCDA, a section devoted to previous studies of MCDA related to music, a Multimodal Conversational Analysis (MCA) and finally, a section



devoted to is related to talk about gender discrimination as it is the focus of the study. Afterwards, a section devoted to explaining the methodology followed to conduct the analysis. Following this section, the MCDA of Taylor Swift's music video for the song *The Man* will be conducted to answer the research questions and fulfil the purpose of this study. Finally, a conclusion has been included in which the limitations of the study are presented and further research is suggested as well as some possible pedagogical implications.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis

SFL was created by Halliday during the 60s in the United Kingdom and is viewed as a central power in world semantics. Halliday forms the context of a condition regarding three significant strands. The first one is "field" which indicates the topic being discussed; the second one is "tenor" which refers to the people engaged in the conversation and the relationship between them; and finally, the "mode" which refers to the way in which the message is conveyed (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997).

SFL model suggests that human language has advanced enough to create three universal types of meaning. Those types are i) The experiential meanings which are connected with how reality is addressed and the syntactic asses for understanding the experience of

the world. ii) The interpersonal meanings which are worried about the interaction between speaker(s) and addressee(s), and iii) the textual meanings which deal with the production of a text and how it is organized so that it makes sense (Eggins, 2004).

To explore ideology and language, etymologists have adopted a more critical approach to Discourse Analysis (DA). Fowler and Kress (2020) added to the improvement of Critical Linguistics with the aim of critically analyze texts. This improvement expands on Halliday's theoretical groundworks of SFL.

CDA is a term coined and introduced by Norman Fairclough (1989; 2010). As Fairclough (1989) stated, language is social because when individuals talk, listen, write, or read they do so in manners which are socially resolved and create social impact. Moreover, the author also claimed that social phenomena are linguistic in that the language that happens in social settings is part of those processes and practices in which it occurs. Therefore, it can be stated that even though, at the same time that language is social and reflects the world in which it exists, society is linguistic because it is influenced by its inhabitants and how they speak. As stated by Halliday (2003), world perspectives are reflected by language since it is a system of meaning-making decisions.

Moreover, CDA is a type of analysis that concentrates on the manner in which social power abuse, dominance and inequality are established, recreated, and resisted by text and talk in social and

political settings. Furthermore, it also examines important social issues, like sexism, imperialism, prejudice, and other types of social inequality and how this is reflected in language. What is more, CDA adds a specific spotlight on discourse and on relations among talk and other social components like power relations, ideologies, social identities, and organizations (Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 2003).

Up until the 1990s, it existed a huge preference for monomodality and the linguistic choices people would make to convey meaning. However, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2017, 2021) started to be concerned not only with the linguistic choices of discourse but also with visual aids and non-verbal communication, important aspects considered in a multimodal approach to the analysis of language.

## 2.2 Multimodality

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2017), within the visual semiotics, multimodality is the utilization of different semiotic modes and their combination in a socio-cultural domain, which brings about a semiotic product or event. It tends to be used to examine any sort of text, verbal or visual, and the social setting where the text was made. Modes allude to a set of socially and culturally molded assets for creating meaning. Non-verbal communication also contributes to the transmission of the message. This type of communication can be achieved through the use of different modes. A mode characterizes a 'channel' of portrayal or communication for which before Kress and

Van Leeuwen no name had been proposed (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021).

When engaging in interaction, participants tend to use different semiotic modes which have been shaped through their historical, social, and cultural uses. For instance, speech, gaze, gestures, facial expression, and posture (Jewitt, 2014; Jewitt et al., 2016). In the present study, there will be special attention to the gestures that participants make when communicating. According to McNeill's (1992) classification of gestures, there are two basic types: emblems and co-speech gestures. Emblems are those gestures that convey meaning independently of speech, for instance, a thumbs up, or the piece sign although they differ from one culture to another. Whereas co-speech gestures help to understand the spoken language and are produced alongside speech. There are four types: i) iconic gestures which symbolize object qualities, spatial relationships, and actions; ii) deictic gestures tend to connect speech with different objects, ideas and places; iii) metaphoric gestures transform an abstract idea into a more concrete form; and finally, iv) beat gestures which do not convey semantic meaning and are used to maintain the rhythm of speech.

In a multimodal approach, all modes are outlined as one domain. Mutually they are treated as one associated social asset for meaning making by individuals from a social group in a specific moment in history (Handford & Gee, 2012). Moreover, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2021) state that multimodality is an issue of adequacy of modes, of the

completion of meanings, and defeating the partiality of modes in isolation. Therefore, modes should be considered all together when analyzing any kind of text because each mode brings more information to the whole meaning.

It is because of this understanding that not only the linguistic choices made by the participants are important when communicating, but that visual and non-verbal elements also play an important role in creating a message that MCDA emerged in order to analyze all of these elements.

### 2.3 Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

Even though many CDA professionals have generally centered around the verbal mode, more consideration is being paid to other modes of communication such as the visual mode of images and videos (e.g. van Leeuwen, 2004; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). Fairclough (1989) perceived the value of considering visual components of spoken communication like facial expressions and gestures when analyzing a conversation.

Moreover, Van Leeuwen (2004) focused on the significance of dissecting visual components of images like color, typography, and composition, contending that these components attempted to convey and deliver meaning, particularly in relation to one another. Thus, many linguists have realized the importance of examining other elements of

a text apart from what is being written, as they all contribute to the meaning-making process of communication.

Furthermore, as Fairclough (1989) stated it would be unnatural to think about discourse in solely verbal terms. In any event, when messages are verbal, speech is joined with gestures, gaze, movement, and posture so much that it could not be understood without reference to these additional items. Because of this, when considering television, filmed, and even printed material the importance behind the visuals is more evident.

The mission of MCDA, therefore, is to understand the power and significance of texts that use different modes and elaborate devices that can give an understanding of the connection of the meanings of a local area and its semiotic signs (Handford & Gee, 2012; Jewitt, 2014; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021; Machin, 2007). Therefore, language is one mode of creating meaning among the many resources available and MCDA should pay attention to every mode in order to make a thorough analysis.

### *2.3.1 MCDA in music*

Throughout recent years there has been a growth in the use of technologies of the small screens. A social change has been greatly intensified by newly available technologies which now appear to be turning into a social force in their own right (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021). For instance, web pages like YouTube, Spotify, Instagram and

Twitter have become quite famous among younger generations. For this project, the focus will be on music and music videos and how they convey meaning.

McQuail (2000) portrays music videos as the primary postmodern TV administration and, subsequently, part of a genuinely social revolution that has occurred inside the mass media, bringing about another aesthetic where pop music has turned into a dominant art. Moreover, according to Djonov and Zhao (2016) content analysis of music videos has focused on various specific topics which are culturally sensitive like politics, gender, and race. However, the diverse multilayered discourses and meanings in videos have seldom been addressed in research.

According to Lyndond and McKerrell (2018), analyzing music from a multimodal discourse perspective is a moderately late development which is embedded within CDA which sees music as a piece of communication frequently inseparably set inside a variety of modes used to express a belief system. Moreover, Moore (2016) proposes that music sound is more ambiguous than other modes like images or written text. Because of this, some songs have a narrower range of potential meanings through the interrelationship of music and languages while others manage to have more potential implications. Therefore, lyrics and music are open to several interpretations depending on the listeners and the context in which it is being analyzed.

However, the power of music lies in its use as multimodal communication. Apart from the lyrics, images and sound also give meaning to a song. Musical sound is one component of bigger multimodal texts along with other interactive semiotic resources such as rhythm, instrumentals, tone, tonality, melody, and pitch and their relationship with lyrics, image, written text, color, and other modes of communication (Lyndon, 2019). Therefore, a MCDA of music has to be focused not only on the lyrics but also on the visuals, and the sound which also play an important role in the transmission of the message.

There are many music videos in which, apart from the lyrics of the song and the visuals of the video, there are also short conversations portrayed by the protagonists of the video. In order to analyze these conversations, a MCA has to be followed.

## 2.4 Multimodal Conversational Analysis

Conversation analysis (CA) emerged during the times of the interactionism approach. However, it was not until the mid-70s that researchers noticed that using videos instead of just a recording affected what could be studied (Jewitt et al., 2016). Scholars realized that by studying the conversation along with the video could draw more important conclusions than studying just the utterances made by participants as they could study other modes of communication. According to Mondada (2019), Multimodal Conversational Analysis (MCA) is defined by considering different semiotic resources beyond



the traditional ones such as gaze, facial expressions, and other resources. Therefore, in an MCA, both verbal and non-verbal elements would be taken into account when conducting the study.

In order to fully comprehend what MCA is, pragmatics and interactional competence have to be considered. On the one hand, Crystal (2008, p. 379) defines pragmatics as “the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication”. Furthermore, pragmatics is divided into two different branches, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. The former alludes to the different assets for carrying out a conversation. Among these resources are pragmatic strategies like being direct or indirect, other means of making a communicative act more or less intense and routines (Kasper & Rose, 2001). While the latter has to do with the social point of view of the participants and incorporates the different choices of interpersonal meanings related to politeness such as social distance, the level of imposition and the degrees of power (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Thus, pragmalinguistics deals with the linguistic choices participants make while sociopragmatics is related to how participants make an utterance appropriate for the specific context in which it is occurring.

On the other hand, according to Young (2011) interaction alludes to the connection between how participants use language and

interactive resources and the environment in which they are used. This means that interaction refers to the ability people have to participate in a community. Young (2008, 2011) points out that the interactional competence has three components, namely i) the participants' identity, ii) the linguistic assets, and iii) the interactional resources used. Moreover, this interactional competence can also be divided into three sub-competences: First, the actional competence which deals with the knowledge of how to perform speech acts in the target language. This is important because, especially, second language learners need to understand how to perform certain speech acts i.e., how to complain, how to ask for something, or how to apologize in a polite way. Second, The conversational competence which deals with the turn-taking system is crucial because speakers need to understand how to conduct a correct exchange with another person. Third, the paralinguistic competence which deals with the non-verbal elements of communication like body movements, gestures, gaze, etc. which help to construct meaning along with the verbal communication (Celce-Murcia, 2007).

Considering all of this information, multimodality and its different approaches and analyses can serve to look into very different topics and scenarios. In this case, the focus of this project is on how gender discrimination is represented in a music video bearing in mind the different modes of communication available.

## 2.5 Gender discrimination

Gender inequality takes various forms, depending on the economic structure and social system of a specific society and on the way of life of a specific culture within a society. In spite of the fact that it is denominated gender discrimination, it is normally women who suffer this discrimination in comparison with similarly situated men (Lorber, 2012).

Researchers generally see social conventions about gender as basic to discrimination against women, especially in the work environment (Ridgeway & England, 2007). Intentionally or not, people make an interpretation of gender-related thoughts into discriminatory behaviors through sex categorization and gender stereotyping. Despite other status which they may occupy, individuals will generally classify each other by sex, which actuates gender generalizations and may evoke orientation situated in-group/out-group processes (Reskin, 2000; Ridgeway & England, 2007)

According to Lorber (2012) in workplace environments women usually receive lower payment for the same work and are always hindered in their opportunities for progression, particularly to top positions. There is also an unevenness in how much housework and childcare a spouse does, contrasted with her husband, even when both invest a similar measure of energy in paid work outside the home. Along history, women have always been condemned to work in the

house and their children while men went to work in factories which has led to obvious gender discrimination even nowadays.

Media generally depicts women in conventional and compliant jobs like nurses, secretaries, or educators, and seldom depict women in non-traditional roles such as the manager of a company or a doctor. (Rasmussen & Densley, 2016). Moreover, apart from this depiction of stereotypical female gender jobs, sexual objectification is also common in mass media. Objectification “occurs whenever a person’s body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from his or her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing him or her” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 175).

Furthermore, objectification of women in media takes various forms, the principal of which is an emphasis on females’ physical appearance. Media reliably shares the message that physical appeal is critical, including references to women’s body parts and ways of behaving connected to women’s appearance (American Psychological Association [APA], 2007). Gender discrimination has economic, socio-cultural, and historical origins that affect the individual’s unconscious, which might be reflected in a journalist’s work (Mangani, 2020). Gender discrimination and objectification have always been present in mass media, one way or another, and even though it is obvious that there have been changes in recent years, there is still much work to do as people have those stereotypes very much present in society.

Women have, for quite some time, been underrepresented in the mainstream pop music market (Dowd et al., 2005), generally leftover at the margins of the music business, while men have occupied more focal areas, including most production roles and decision-making roles (Gaar, 1992). Female artists have collected fewer industry assets (Bayton, 1990), less radio airplay (Childerhose, 1998), restricted mainstream success in male-ruled genres (Schippers, 2002), lower profits and less steady work in comparison to men and have also been confined to secondary music genres (Schmutz, 2009).

It is important that women raise their voices against these injustices that occur all over the world in different areas, whether at work, in the street, at school and of course in the music industry, which is the focus of this work. It is crucial that those people who have a voice, for instance, a celebrity, raise awareness of this discrimination that women suffer whether it be in their songs, music videos or even movies.

Up until here a theoretical background on some important aspects of the project has been presented. The theoretical background section begins with an explanation of what SFL and CDA are. Following this, an explanation of what is multimodality and how it appeared is presented. Afterwards, a section devoted to MCDA has been provided alongside with a section dealing with MCDA especially in the field of music as the present study will focus on conducting a MCDA on a music video and the lyrics of the song *The Man*. Moreover, MCA has been discussed as the video contains a brief exchange

between the protagonist and the director that was worth analyzing. Finally, a subsection regarding gender discrimination was presented as the aim of the project is to analyze how this issue is presented in the music video.

## 2.6 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the present study is to analyze a Taylor Swift's *The Man* lyrics and music video and how it represents gender discrimination by conducting a MCDA following the social semiotic approach proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2021). Moreover, a MCA will also be carried out to analyze the 20 second conversation that appears at the end of the music video. In order to do so, the research questions that will be addressed are the following:

1. What message do the lyrics and music video convey?
2. How do modes of communication represent the issue of gender discrimination?

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The following section is devoted to explaining the data, data collection and the analysis that has been conducted in this study. The first subsection will be dedicated to describing both platforms from which the music video and lyrics were extracted. Concerning the second subsection, the steps followed in the analysis of the music video are introduced and described.

### 3.1. Data

The lyrics of the song were collected from a music platform that provides both lyrics and possible interpretations of the meaning of the song named Genius (*Genius*, 2014) while the music video was taken from YouTube (Taylor Swift, 2020). The video was selected due to its thematic approach to the gender discrimination in different daily life situations. The video has a duration of 4:14 minutes where Taylor Swift dresses up as a man and represents several scenarios in which women are discriminated or not treated equally to men.

### 3.2. Data collection and analysis

In order to analyze the data collected for this study, an objective, qualitative and detailed analysis based on examining the verbal and visual elements present in both the song and the music video of *The Man* by Taylor Swift was performed. Moreover, to conduct the analysis four steps were followed.

1. First, a DA was carried out to analyze the lyrics of the song in isolation and examine the contextual variable of field of the SFL approach (Halliday, 1978). In order to carry out this analysis the lyrics were analyzed considering the word and phrase frequency of it (*Word Frequency Counter*, 2019). Moreover, the different parts into which a song can be divided into were also

considered, i.e., verse 1, pre-chorus, chorus, verse 2, and bridge.

The following are the steps taken to conduct the DA:

- a. Firstly, the phrase frequency was analyzed.
  - b. Subsequently, considering that the most repeated phrases belonged to the chorus, the other parts of the song were also included so that no important information was lost.
  - c. Finally, word frequency was also examined.
2. The different steps followed to carry out the visual analysis are the following:
- a. The first step included watching the video on YouTube as many times as needed to get a general idea of what it is about.
  - b. The next step was to take screenshots from those scenes that were considered more interesting and relevant for the MA.
  - c. Finally, the last step was to analyze the different screenshots taking into account the participants, their gestures, actions and body expressions (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).
3. Thirdly, a CA was included due to the fact that at the end of the video there is a 20 conversation between Taylor as a director, and Taylor dressed up as the character Tyler. In order to conduct the analysis both the verbal and non-verbal elements such as gestures, were analyzed.



4. For the final step, a MA was conducted. For this, both interpretations of the lyrics and the visual elements in isolation were compared and analyzed as a whole to connect the different modes of meaning. Ultimately, a final subjective interpretation of the message conveyed by both the song and the video was presented.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the present section, the analysis of *The Man* is presented as it was described in the data collection and analysis section. First, the lyrics in isolation will be analyzed through DA. Subsequently, the screenshots of the video will be analyzed for the video analysis. Afterwards, a CA will be conducted to examine the conversation that takes place at the end of the video. Finally, a MA will be done considering the results from the previous analyses and a final interpretation of the theme of the song will be provided.

### 4.1. Discourse analysis

#### *4.1.1. Phrase and word frequency*

When examining the lyrics of the song, one of the most important elements was the lexical cohesion that it displays as a result of the repetition of words and phrases. Table 1 presents the most repeated phrases that have between 5 and 11 words.

**Table 1: Phrase frequency**

<b>Number of repetitions</b>	<b>Phrase</b>
9	If I was a man
5	I'd be the man
4	I'm so sick of them coming at me again
3	Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man
3	I'm so sick of running as fast as I can

Table 1 shows the phrase frequency of the song *The Man*. As seen in this table the most repeated sentences are the ones that belong to the chorus. For instance, the one that is repeated the most is “If I was a man” which alludes to the theme of the song of wondering what would happen and how would media and society treat Taylor Swift if she was a man. The second most repeated sentence is “I’d be the man”. In this sentence, Taylor supposes that if she had been a man, she would have been one of the most respected men in the industry. The following three sentences are “I’m so sick of them coming at me again”, “Wondering if I’d get there quicker if I was a man”, and “I’m so sick of running as fast as I can”. All these sentences reflect Taylor’s view of how media has mistreated her and has accused her of being a calculated person because she was a woman, while they were praising men for the same situations.

Regarding the structure of the song, apart from the chorus, there are also 2 verses, 2 different pre-chorus, and a bridge as presented in Table 2. In contrast to the chorus, the verses and the bridge do not show much lexical cohesion because they are only said once.

**Table 2: Verses, pre-chorus, and bridge of the song**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Verse 1</b></p>	<p>I would be complex, I would be cool They'd say I played the field before I found someone to commit to And that would be okay for me to do Every conquest I had made would make me more of a boss to you</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pre-Chorus 1</b></p>	<p>I'd be a fearless leader I'd be an alpha type When everyone believes ya What's that like?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Verse 2</b></p>	<p>They'd say I hustled, put in the work They wouldn't shake their heads and question how much of this I deserve What I was wearing, if I was rude Could all be separated from my good ideas and power moves</p>

<b>Pre-Chorus 2</b>	<p>And they would toast to me, oh,  let the players play  I'd be just like Leo in Saint-  Tropez</p>
<b>Bridge</b>	<p>What's it like to brag about  raking in dollars  And getting bitches and models?  And it's all good if you're bad  And it's okay if you're mad  If I was out flashing my dollars  I'd be a bitch, not a baller  They'd paint me out to be bad  So, it's okay that I'm mad</p>

*Table 2* displays the lyrics of the different parts of the song that do not belong to the chorus.

- Verse 1 is a supposition of what would have happened if Taylor had been a man in the music industry. Taylor posits that if she were a man, she would be considered “cool” for those same issues that she was criticized. Then she goes on to denounce how tabloids have treated her private life regarding her love relationships and the sexist double-standards that exist in society. The media has always painted Taylor as a woman who dated many men just for fun and that did not have true feelings for them. However, when a man dates many women, they are portrayed as if they were successful winners.

- Regarding the first two lines of the pre-chorus, she talks about how she would be a leader if she was a man and she was able to do whatever she wanted with her life and her music without someone controlling her or criticizing her every move. The lines “When everyone believes ya” and “What’s that like” are a reference to the Me Too movement which is centered on the experiences of those women who have survived a sexual assault. Taylor reflects upon the fact that for women to be credible they need to present many proofs, while men are believed just because of their words.
- Verse 2 reflects upon several instances where women are criticized more than men. For instance, “What I was wearing, if I was rude” contemplates how women are the most judged for their looks after a red carpet or when they react in an impolite way. The final line of this verse considers how her looks and her attitude would not be considered if she was a man and all this would be detached from her career choices and ideas.
- The second pre-chorus makes a reference to Leonardo DiCaprio and his annual gala that his foundation organizes in Saint Tropez. The actor is known for dating women much younger than him yet no one is surprised or shocked about it and treats it as a normal matter. However, when a woman does the same practice, she is condemned.

- The bridge is a part of the song that serves as a link between the Chorus after the second verse and the final chorus. In this bridge, Taylor makes a direct comparison between how men are praised for dating many women and bragging about how much money they have while if a woman does the same, she is treated as if she was money hungry. Then, in the last two lines of the bridge “They’d paint me out to be bad” and “So, it’s okay that I’m mad” she goes on to say that the media has always condemned her for doing the same practices than men and she is finally ready to tell everybody that she does not support those injustices that occur to women.

Finally, Table 3 presents the most repeated words in the song *The Man*. Each word has been classified according to its grammar category.

**Table 3: Word frequency**

<b>Type of word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Word</b>
<b>Nouns</b>	26	Man
<b>Verbs</b>	24	Be
	14	Was
<b>Auxiliary verb</b>	24	Would/'d
<b>Pronouns</b>	32	I
	10	Me
<b>Conjunction</b>	19	If

The whole song is a supposition of what would happen if Taylor was a man instead of a woman in the music industry. As seen in Table 3 some of the most repeated words are the pronoun “I”, the noun “man”, the verb “be”, the auxiliary verb “would” or “’d” and finally the conjunction “if”. It makes sense that these are the most repeated words in the song as they clearly reflect upon the main message of the song.

#### 4.2. Visual analysis

##### *Screenshot 1. Setting scene*



The video opens with the protagonist, Tyler, peeping through the window of what seems to be his office and the title of the song written on the walls (see Screenshot 1). The camera moves closer to him until we can only see the upper part of his body and the music starts playing. Then, he turns around and starts to walk to the exit of his office.

*Screenshot 2. Tyler crumbling a piece of paper*



*Screenshot 3. Women picking up the piece of paper*



As he steps out of his private office and into the rest of the building, he is handed a paper by one of his workers. He looks at the



paper and as we can see in the Screenshot 2, he crumples it and then throws it away without hesitation. Behind him, there are three women who collect that piece of paper as if it were the bouquet of flowers that brides throw at their weddings (see Screenshot 3). We can infer that he is the boss because of his attitude and the rude way that he treats the rest of the people there.

Both Screenshot 2 and Screenshot 3 seem to reflect the issue of gender discrimination in the workplace. Here women are portrayed as desperate secretaries who are in love with their boss and want to catch his attention and would do anything to get something from him while he probably does not even know who they are. According to Lorber (2012), women are always underappreciated in their job position and are less likely to prosper and achieve higher positions. Moreover, in mass media such as series and films women are always represented as secretaries who are desperate for a little attention from their boss who as previously mentioned tends to be a man (Rasmussen & Densley, 2016). Therefore, this is a critique of the injustices women suffer when they are at work.

*Screenshot 4. Tyler being acclaimed by his employees*



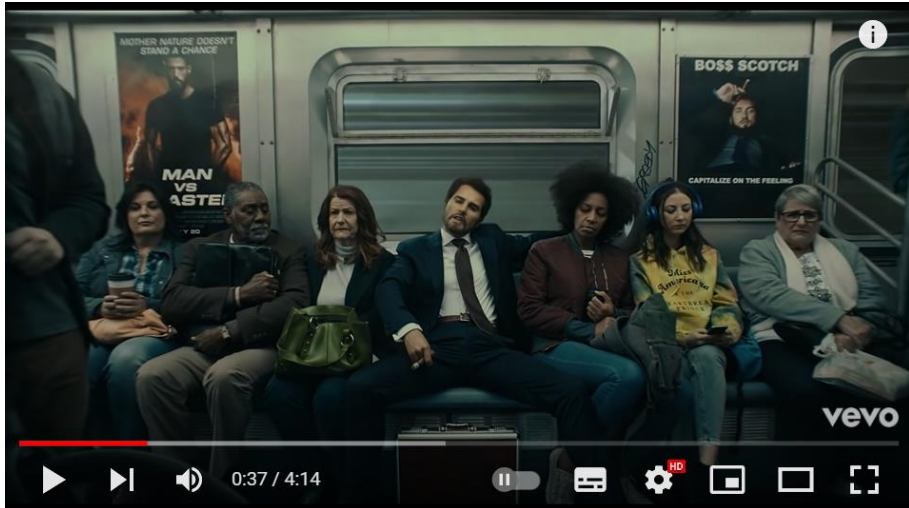
However, as we can see in Screenshot 4, despite the fact that he is being disrespectful to everyone in the workplace, they are all cheering for him as if he was a great boss and did not treat them inadequately. Moreover, this is a clear allusion to the movie starring Leonardo DiCaprio, *The Wolf of Wall Street*.

*Screenshot 5. Tyler winking at the camera*



Finally, at the end of this scene, he turns to the camera and winks while the rest of the employees applaud him (see Screenshot 5). This is a form of acknowledging the audience and trying to introduce them to the plot of the story. It could also be a reference to his feeling of superiority and a form of feeling empowered.

### Screenshot 6. Tyler in the subway



Screenshot 6 is set inside a subway where the main character is sitting on a bench with other people. As we can see, although there are a lot of people sitting on the same bench who are pressed against each other, the protagonist is sitting with his legs wide open occupying more space than he needs. This is what is colloquially known as “manspreading”. This practice is something that men are allowed to do because they are the “superior” gender and everyone just accepts it although it is making everyone else on the subway uncomfortable as they do not have enough space to move.

Moreover, on the wall of the subway, there are two posters. The one on the left is promoting a movie called *Man vs. Disaster* and includes the heading “Mother Nature doesn’t stand a chance”. This could be a reference to how men are hypersexualized in action movies.

Furthermore, the poster on the right seems to be about a man called Boss Scotch and says, “Capitalize on the feeling”. This is a clear reference to the problem she had with her previous record label (i.e., Big Machine Records), its founder Scott Borchetta and the sale of the masters of her songs to Scooter Braun, the manager of several other big artists of the industry and a man who has previously spoken in a pejorative way of Taylor Swift.

*Screenshot 7. Tyler reading the newspaper*

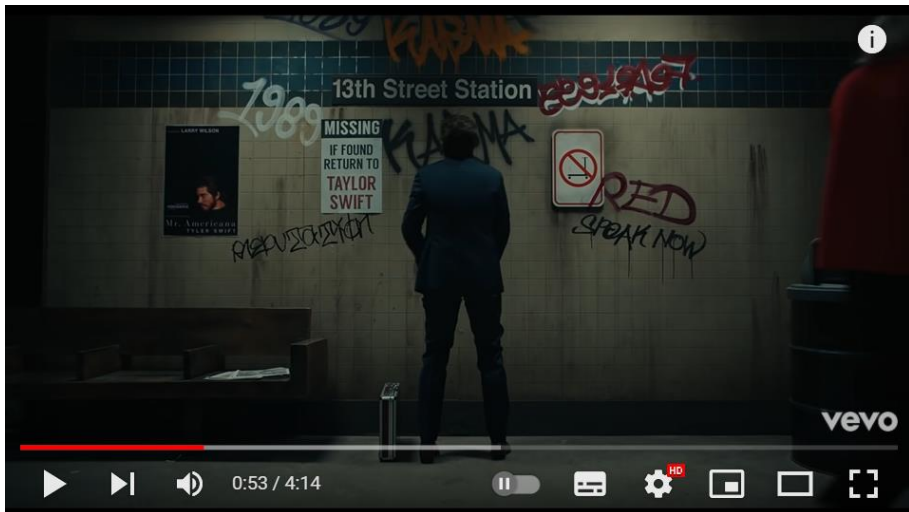


In Screenshot 7 we can see a newspaper that was created especially for the video. In it, we can see several sections. On the front page, the heading “What man won the year in celebrity dating?” can be read. This is a clear reference to past headlines created about Taylor Swift’s dating life where they pictured her as a woman who dated many

men just for fun and who jumped from one boyfriend to another without remorse. His eyebrows are frowned as if he were interested in what he is reading.

As we have seen previously in the study, mass media has always portrayed women in an inferior way compared to men and often objectifies the body of women as an object of pleasure for men (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). In this case, Screenshot 7 is a critique of how mass media portrays women as desperate for love when they have several boyfriends whereas when a famous man has several girlfriends, he is praised.

*Screenshot 8. Album names as graffiti*



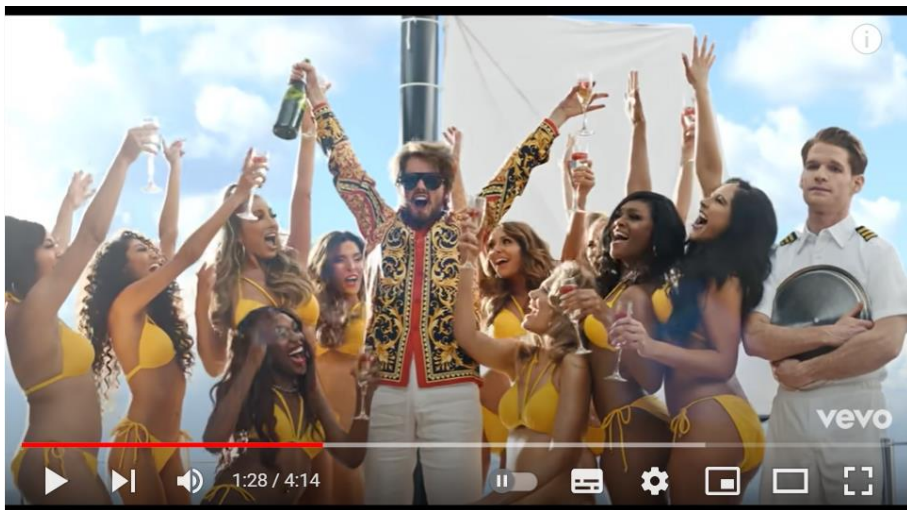
Screenshot 8 is probably one of the most important scenes in the video. It shows a wall full of graffiti and three posters while Tyler

stands in front of it. As previously mentioned, Taylor had a disagreement with her previous record label (i.e., Big Machine Records) when she tried to buy the masters of her first six albums. However, they did not allow her to buy them and instead, they sold them to Scooter Braun. The graffiti on the wall are the names of her first six albums: *Taylor Swift*, *Fearless*, *Speak Now*, *Red*, *1989*, and *Reputation*. Moreover, one of the posters says “Missing. If found return to Taylor Swift” clearly referring to the issue of the ownership of her previous albums. Furthermore, the poster on the right is a sign prohibiting the use of scooters in the station, which is a clear reference to Scooter Braun, the man who bought her music without her consent. Furthermore, the word karma is written twice which could be a reference to the fact that karma will get to both Big Machine Records and Scooter for treating her wrongly. Finally, the poster above the coach is a reference to the documentary that she released on Netflix when she released the album to which this song belongs, i.e., *Lover*.

Screenshot 8 is a clear criticism of the music industry and how powerful men are allowed to do whatever they want with the artists' career. As mentioned above, the music industry has always been ruled by men, either in the production roles or decision-making roles (Gaar, 1992). The managers of big record labels tend to create abusive contracts for their artists, so that the label gets most of the profits from the music released and the merchandising and are in control of the artists' image. Women usually get the worst contracts as they tend to

have lower incomes than men and less steady work, especially when they reach a certain age (Schmutz, 2009), as they are no longer seen as the manipulative young women they were at the beginning of their career. With the issue of rerecording all her previous catalog, Taylor Swift is pointing out the injustices of the music industry that especially women have to suffer and is paving the way for younger generations of artists to sign fair contracts that allow them to be in control of their music and their career.

*Screenshot 9. Tyler on the boat celebrating*

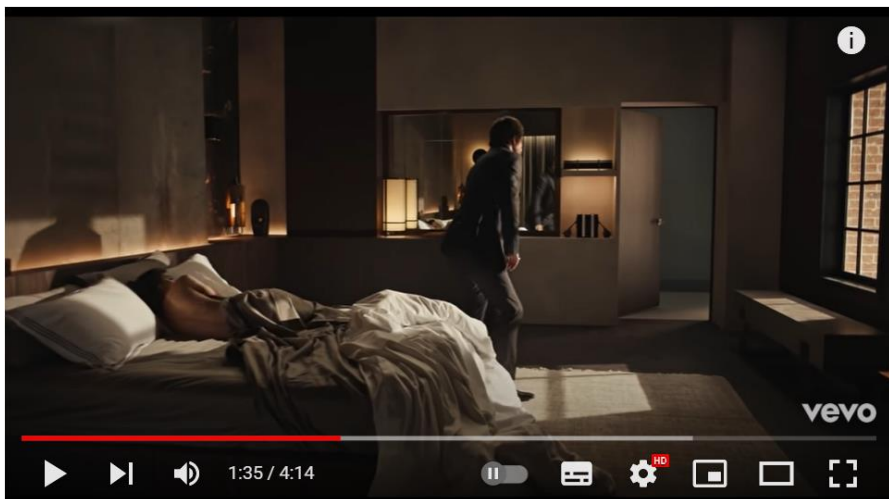


Screenshot 9 is a clear reference to the lyric of the song “I’d be just like Leo in Saint Tropez”. This sentence references the annual gala that Leonardo DiCaprio’s foundation organizes in Saint Tropez where he has been photographed with several women. What we can see in the picture is that Tyler is celebrating surrounded by pretty girls wearing a



bikini. The waiter being another one of his employees, has been treated wrongly and therefore he does not want to be there while Tyler and the other women are celebrating as we can see in his facial expression of discomfort. According to American Psychological Association [APA], (2007), women have always been objectified by media and portrayed as objects that only exist for the male interests. In this case, Screenshot 9 seems to reflect how women are so blinded by Tyler's male power that they do not care that he is treating them as mere objects of his entertainment. Here, the issue of gender discrimination is clearly reflected as, along history, women have always been treated as inferior to men and as objects that only function as male entertainment.

*Screenshot 10. One night stand 1*



### *Screenshot 11. One night stand 2*

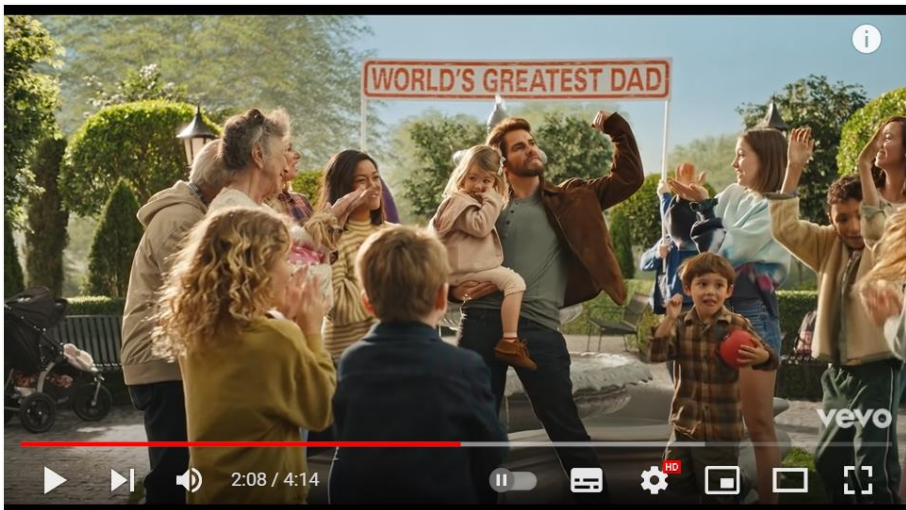


Screenshot 10 and Screenshot 11 represent a typical situation that occurs after a one-night stand with someone you do not know deeply. It normally happens to the girl when she has to get out of the man's house and it is colloquially known as the "walk of shame". However, in this case, when Tyler gets out of the room, he claps several hands which could symbolize how men tell each other about their affairs and get high fives when they 'get the girl'. So instead of feeling ashamed of what happened the night before, he feels proud and brags about it with his friends.

One clear aspect of gender discrimination is that women are criticized for having affairs with men just for pleasure because in society it is not conceived that a woman has these kinds of relationships for her pleasure while if a man does it, he is treated as an achiever. As

Lorber (2012) highlights, gender inequality has several forms and it is most likely that it affects women. In this case, discrimination comes from objectifying women and believing that they exist only for men's pleasure and condemning women when they live their sexuality freely.

*Screenshot 12. World's greatest dad*



As Lorber (2012) highlights, gender inequality has several forms and it is most likely that it affects women. In this case, discrimination comes from objectifying women and believing that they exist only for men's pleasure and condemning women when they live their sexuality freely.

Screenshot 12 displays the differences that exist when talking about parenting between men and women. It is believed that when a woman takes care of their child, she is doing what a woman is supposed

to do and is not perceived as something special. However, when a man does the bare minimum with his children, they are praised. In the picture, we can see how everyone is cheering him up and applauding him because he brought her daughter to the park. They even put up a banner that says “World’s greatest dad” in celebration of his great act of fatherhood.

*Screenshot 13. Tyler and friends in a bar*



In Screenshot 13, we have Tyler with two friends in a bar discussing while they are having a drink. Tyler’s face clearly shows lust and the hand gestures that Tyler is doing give us a clue that they are talking about women’s bodies. This is a representation of the over-sexualization and objectification that women suffer from society and especially from men.

According to Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), a clear example of gender discrimination is how the body of women has been objectified along history and has been portrayed as an object for the man's entertainment. For instance, mass media has always focused on the physical appearance of women which has obviously influenced how society perceives women.

*Screenshot 14. Tennis match*



*Screenshot 15. Tyler getting mad at the tennis match*

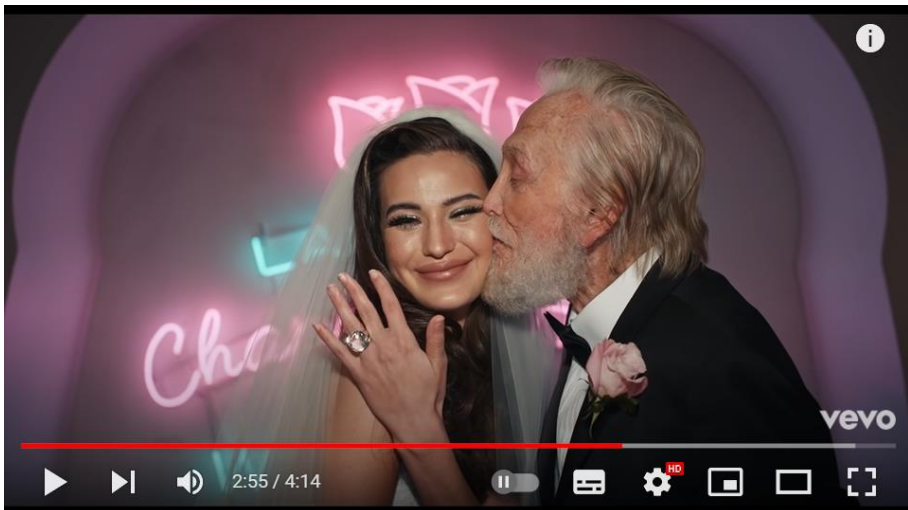


In Screenshot 14 and Screenshot 15 we can observe Tyler playing a tennis match for an unknown women's charity which is kind of ironic taking into account previous scenes of the video where he has objectified women when talking with his friends as in Screenshot 13. There is a point in the match where the referee cancels a point for Tyler and he loses his temper. In Screenshot 15 we observe how he approaches the referee very angry as we can infer from his facial expression and his frowned eyebrows and he takes out his middle finger. This is an obvious reference to a similar situation that happened to Serena Williams and from which she received a lot of backlash. During the 2018 US Open final, Serena Williams scolded a referee and she received very sexist and mean comments. However, when a man does the same thing, they are praised for standing up for their rights and

are justified because of the passion that they have for that sport which is a clear double standard between men and women.

There is a quote that Taylor Swift once said in an interview when talking about the double standards that exist in society when treating a man and a woman that clearly explains this scene. “A man is allowed to react. A woman can only overreact.” (CBS Sunday Morning, 2019). This means that when a man gets angry because he thinks that an injustice has been committed, they are free to react as he sees best. However, when a woman has the same angry reaction to a similar situation everyone claims that she is overreacting or that she is acting irrationally.

*Screenshot 16. 58 years later*





Screenshot 16 is set 58 years later. We see Tyler getting married to a much younger woman. He is kissing her cheek and she is smiling and posing for the picture showing off her new wedding ring.

This is a critique of how old men are allowed to date and marry much younger women and no one criticizes it because people see it as a normal thing that men are attracted to younger women repeatedly while if a woman does the same thing they get condemned by society as someone who is taking advantage of a younger man. The fact that people perceive these kinds of behaviors as something normal is also induced by the press and its constant objectification of women who have always been seen as an object of entertainment for men to satisfy their sexual desires (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

*Screenshot 17. Tyler and Taylor talking about a scene*









In Screenshot 17 we see both Tyler, the protagonist of the video, and Taylor Swift as the director. We see how Tyler goes to talk to the director of the video when they say cut to ask her if she liked how he interpreted the scene and if she would like to change anything. Both the conversation and their gestures will be analyzed in more depth in the following section.

#### 4.3. Multimodal Conversational Analysis

At the end of the video there is a 20 seconds conversation between Tyler (i.e., the protagonist), Taylor (i.e., the director), and an extra named Lauren. An MCA has been done to analyze both verbal and non-verbal features of the conversation.

**Table 4: Utterances and gestures of the participants**

No.	Figure	Time	Speaker	Utterance	Gesture
1		3:34	Tyler	“Eh, just checking. Was that last take more what you had in mind?”	Metaphoric gesture

2		3:38	Taylor	<p>“Pretty good! Ah, could you try to be sexier? Maybe more likeable this time.”</p>	Metaphoric gesture with her hand
3		3:43	Tyler	<p>“Ok, ok. No problem.”</p>	Nods his head
4		3:48	Taylor	<p>“By the way, excellent work over there Lauren. That was astonishing.”</p>	Nods her head


5		3:51	Lauren	“Thanks!”	Lack of interest
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Table 4 shows the different interactions between the participants of the conversation and the type of gestures each of them do to accompany their utterances.

The scene begins with Tyler leaving the set and going to talk to the director, in this case Taylor Swift. When he arrives next to her, he says “Eh, just checking. Was that last take more what you had in mind?” This expression is joined by Tyler pointing with his hand to where they have been shooting the scene. This gesture could be a reference to a past action and refer to the last scene they have filmed. To this, Taylor answers “Pretty good! Ah, could you try to be sexier? Maybe more likeable this time.” While she says "maybe" she does a figurative gesture like moving her hands in front of her as an approach to stowing away and mellowing the genuine goals behind her expression. After this Tyler says “Ok, ok. No problem.” while he nods his head in agreement with what he is being told by the director and then, leaves the scene. Following this, Taylor sits back in the director’s chair and tells Lauren, one of the extras of the video, “By the way, excellent work over there Lauren. That was astonishing.” Tyler nods her head while

pronouncing the word “astonishing” so as to emphasize the message and reassure Lauren that she is doing a good work in the video. At the end of the scene, Lauren says “Thanks!” to Taylor. However, Lauren is staring at her phone all the time and does not look at Taylor, the director, in the eyes when answering her, which indicates a lack of interest in what she is doing.

The conversation presented above is a clear replica of the conversation that many female artists in the music industry have with their managers. In these conversations they are always asked to act in front of the cameras in a calmer way, without having strong reactions, accepting everything that is said to them as good girls just to look good in front of today's sexist society that does not like a woman to reveal herself. This is again a reference to how women are sexually objectified by mass media and the public and the many injustices that female artists have to face in the music industry, and especially in the pop music market, as male artists are not asked to act sexier on camera (Dowd et al., 2005).

Taking all of these findings into consideration, it is clear that we still live in a society where mass media portrays women as an object of pleasure for men (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), and depicts them as who are not capable of reaching higher positions and doing the same job as a man (Rasmussen & Densley, 2016). There is still much to be done against these injustices and for women who have a great platform,

like Taylor Swift, to speak out against these injustices is a big step towards ending them.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this project was to reflect upon how gender discrimination was represented in *The Man* music video. Currently, with the spread of new technologies, new ways of communicating have appeared. With the emergence of social media and applications such as Instagram, Twitter, or YouTube people have realized that not only does written language convey meaning but that also visuals help in the creation of meaning and sometimes they even play a bigger role than written language. With these new ways of communicating and the advances that have been made in society, people have begun to speak out against the injustices that millions of people suffer every day, and one of these inequities is gender discrimination.

The MCDA and MCA that have been conducted in the present study of the music video *The Man* have presented some interesting results. These findings suggest that gender discrimination is present in everyday situations and the music video portrays them in an exaggerated way so that the audience can notice them and can become aware of these injustices and the unbalanced situation that exists between men and women. In addition, results show how music can portray gender discrimination in its lyrics and how it can be a useful tool to raise awareness on several controversial topics.

One of the limitations of the study is that a MA is time consuming and, therefore, the study has been restricted to the analysis of only one video. Further research could focus on analyzing other videos that contemplate gender discrimination and establish a comparison between them, as well as analyzing several videos that reflect upon different stigmatized issues and compare them to see how they portray the different topics using multimodality.

Regarding pedagogical implications derived from the analysis done in the present study, one could be to use this video for educational purposes. Indeed, it could be used in a high school context to raise awareness of these situations that occur in everyday life to women. At the beginning of the class, the song would be presented to the students without the video so that they can focus only on the lyrics. Afterwards, the teacher would ask the students to discuss with their classmates what they think the song is about. Subsequently, the teacher would play the video and after watching it, students would be asked to reflect upon the different situations that they have just seen and what they think about them. The session could end with a brief explanation from the teacher of what gender discrimination is and a final discussion between the students about what society could do to improve these injustices. Further research could examine the potential benefits that the inclusion and analysis of this video could have among teenagers.

In the meantime, this project has shed light on how gender discrimination is still very present in our daily lives. This is why there

is still a lot to be done in order to put an end to this type of discrimination. Therefore, making this problem visible through music and music videos may help to understand the situation and look for solutions.

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## APPENDIX

### **[Verse 1]**

I would be complex, I would be cool  
They'd say I played the field before I found someone to commit to  
And that would be okay for me to do  
Every conquest I had made would make me more of a boss to you

### **[Pre-Chorus]**

I'd be a fearless leader  
I'd be an alpha type  
When everyone believes ya  
What's that like?

### **[Chorus]**

I'm so sick of running as fast as I can  
Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man  
And I'm so sick of them coming at me again  
'Cause if I was a man, then I'd be the man  
I'd be the man  
I'd be the man

### **[Verse 2]**

They'd say I hustled, put in the work  
They wouldn't shake their heads and question how much of this I  
deserve  
What I was wearing, if I was rude  
Could all be separated from my good ideas and power moves

**[Pre-Chorus]**

And they would toast to me, oh, let the players play  
I'd be just like Leo in Saint-Tropez

**[Chorus]**

I'm so sick of running as fast as I can  
Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man  
And I'm so sick of them coming at me again  
'Cause if I was a man, then I'd be the man  
I'd be the man  
I'd be the man

**[Bridge]**

What's it like to brag about raking in dollars  
And getting bitches and models?  
And it's all good if you're bad  
And it's okay if you're mad  
If I was out flashing my dollars  
I'd be a bitch, not a baller  
They'd paint me out to be bad  
So, it's okay that I'm mad

**[Chorus]**

I'm so sick of running as fast as I can  
Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man (You know that)  
And I'm so sick of them coming at me again (Coming at me again)  
'Cause if I was a man (If I was a man)  
Then I'd be the man (Then I'd be the man)



I'm so sick of running as fast as I can (As fast as I can)  
Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man (Hey)  
And I'm so sick of them coming at me again (Coming at me again)  
'Cause if I was a man (If I was a man), then I'd be the man  
I'd be the man  
I'd be the man (Oh)  
I'd be the man (Yeah)  
I'd be the man (I'd be the man)

**[Outro]**

If I was a man, then I'd be the man