

**III PMMIS 2019**  
**Post mass media in the modern informational society**  
**"Journalistic text in a new technological environment:**  
**achievements and problems"**

**CATEGORICAL VERBAL BEHAVIOUR AND MEDIA IMPACT**

Larisa Topka (a)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Irkutsk State University, Lenin str. 8, Irkutsk, Russia, lavtop@list.ru

*Abstract*

Possessing a supra-individual character, the media as an organized social system streamlines the joint activities of people, meeting their social needs, the main one of which is adaptation to the environment. A situation of this kind reflects the causal dependence of the development of a language on existing social phenomena. The paper is devoted to the study of the adaptive function of categorical verbal behaviour, one of the gender-related variants of which is misogynistic verbal behaviour, where misogyny is understood as a kernel of sexist prejudice and sexist world outlook, and one of the main condition for the unjust treatment of females in male-dominated societies. Gender stereotypes, which are characteristic of patriarchal cultures, in particular American, no less spread through the media as one of the actors of the modern information domain, retain the predominant role of men in global society. The paper also displays the phenomenon of communicative androgyny, which correlates with social parameters of the participants in communicative interaction, giving them an advantage in choosing certain patterns of behaviour in the domain of cognitive interactions to master a broad spectrum of social roles they perform, contributing to the increase of their (participants') adaptive capacity. It also touches upon the phenomenon of cultural globalization, namely the influence of the American mass culture on the world community through the media.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy [www.FutureAcademy.org.UK](http://www.FutureAcademy.org.UK)

**Keywords:** Categorical verbal behaviour, media impact, misogyny.



## 1. Introduction

As it develops, humankind as an aggregate of living organisms of a certain structural unit of biological systematics (*homo sapiens*) provides itself with greater safety and comfort. To adapt to life in society a person invents various ways of self-preservation improving its (life) quality and helping not only to survive but also to feel confident in the outside world, which encompass objects of material culture that facilitate existence as well as means that keep individuals from mutual destruction: laws, traditions, values, institutions of power, social norms. A person as a living organism is inherent in the desire to survive under any conditions of its existence, in other words, to interact successfully with the surrounding reality, including the information environment.

The situation where the strongest one survives, the individual who is more adjusted to the environment, dictates a certain model of verbal behaviour – the categorical one. Categoricality is a tactical device used by communicants to achieve a certain goal of impact, influencing the nature of their relationship, by means of creating a tense atmosphere of interaction, and sometimes an acute conflict situation. Categoricality arises in communication and is implemented at all levels of the language system; a categorical statement serves as a means of its textual representation.

Categorical verbal behaviour determines a person, often rude and tactless, who is confident, endowed with inner strength, and has the determination to perform a certain action (Topka, 2018, p. 149).

Masculine verbal behaviour is traditionally considered to be categorical, distinguished by high egocentricity, since men as a whole are characterized by a peremptory expression of their opinion, expressed by categorical statement, as well as the presence of tactics of direct influence on the communicative partner [for the details see: (Topka, 2016)]. There is an assumption that feminine verbal behaviour in potentially conflicting and directly conflicting situations of communicative interaction, as opposed to masculine, is less categorical, since women in general have speech tactics aimed at maintaining cooperative relations with the interlocutor.

One of the gender-specific variants of categorical verbal behaviour is a misogynistic verbal behaviour. Misogyny, as Johnson (2000) claims, is a kernel of sexist prejudice and sexist world outlook and, hence, is one of the main conditions for the unjust treatment of females in male-dominated societies. Deep are the roots of misogyny. It can be manifested differently, through raunchy jokes and pornography, through sexual violence and self-contempt to their bodies, which may be implanted in women's mind from early childhood in their families or at school. The origins of this phenomenon should be sought in the religious consciousness, and, no less, in the philosophical worldview of the members of society. In such world religions as, for example, Christianity or Islam, the dominant role of a man is emphasized. In the Bible in the New Testament in the Epistle to the Ephesians of St. Apostle Paul, the women are instructed: Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything (Epistle to Ephesians, 2018, para. 22, 23, 24).

The Koran, a sacred book for all Muslims, also testifies to the dominant role of a man, his unshakable superiority from birth to death, for example, the inheritance of the children is considered in favor of the male heir, or rather as one to two: Allah commands you as regards your children's (inheritance); to the male, a portion equal to that of two females (The "Noble" Quran, 2018, para. 11).

The philosophical aspect of the study of misogyny allows us to trace the process of cultivating masculine gender superiority since ancient times. According to the ancient Greek poet Hesiod, it was the first woman – Pandora, the Greek Eve, who brought evil and misfortune to this world: from her is a pernicious race (as cited in Rockefeller, 2017, para. 590).

Gender stereotypes, actively supported by the media, which are characteristic of patriarchal cultures, including American culture as well, reflect and retain the dominant role of men in society, where the verbal behaviour of the participants of communication is strictly regulated due to their social status as well, which is the main indicator in explaining the causes of new trends in the implementation of masculine and feminine verbal behaviour in the context of American English.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The prerequisites for the emergence of the phenomenon of misogyny in modern American society are considered in the paper, as well as factors affecting the emergence of the communicative androgyny phenomenon which provide women with an advantage in choosing certain behavioural structures in the cognitive interaction area to master a wider range of social roles they implement in order to increase their adaptive potential.

To adapt to life in society, a person invents various methods of self-preservation, which facilitate his existence. The masculinization of female verbal behaviour, namely, its change in the direction of increasing the categorical nature, is an adaptive mechanism in the situation of total misogyny in the media.

Misogynistic verbal behaviour is one of the gender-related variants of the categorical verbal behaviour. The need to consider the gender characteristics of the individual's verbal behaviour in conjunction with his belonging to a particular social group, as well as with a specific situational context and with the changing situation in society, is due not only to the complexity of this phenomenon, but also to its press coverage and popularization in mass media.

## **3. Research Questions**

Gender stereotypes, which are well spread in the patriarchal cultures, including American culture as well, reflect and retain the dominant role of men in society. This situation is actively supported by the media displaying the strict regulation of the communicative participants' verbal behaviour in accordance with the social status as well, which is the main indicator in explaining the causes of emergence of new trends in the masculine and feminine verbal behaviour.

The correlation of gender marking of communicants with the realization of their status-role relationships becomes apparent in the process of communicative interaction, complicated by the requirements of society to a man and a woman, as well as the specifics of their socialization, causing different motives of behaviour, as well as different strategies and tactics of communication.

The convergence of hetero-gender standards of verbal behaviour, levelling the difference between sex (biological) and gender (social), shows the importance of the sex variety as the foundation for classifying individuals and distributing them in the political, economic or social hierarchy.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The task of the research is to identify the trends that contribute to the growth of misogynistic sentiments in modern global society, as well as masculinization of female verbal behaviour through the prism of media impact.

The study of human verbal behaviour from the viewpoint of media impact involves a generalizing study of the psychological and social attributes of the individual in the process of his or her interaction with people and the surrounding reality, the information environment.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The paper reflects the study of gender-marked categorical verbal behaviour, which became widespread in the media, namely in the language of the Internet sites that have an obvious misogynistic orientation, such as, for example, March Nigga Step Lyrics, Kill You Lyrics on Genius Lyrics platform, as well as online platforms such as Reclaim The Internet, Women's, and the like, covering a wide range of issues and problems with a clear gender marking, faced by modern women, and reflecting the trend towards the communicative androgyny. Communicative androgyny, in our opinion, is not just a combination of socio-psychological qualities, which are characteristic of both women and men, bringing together female and male standards of verbal and non-verbal behaviour, but also a characteristic of the behaviour itself that does not have clear gender parameters.

The study is based on the content of sites with a pronounced gender discrimination, as well as articles of online platforms, texts of interviews, public speeches of significant political figures.

Research methods include system analysis, comparative and statistical methods, as well as content analysis of sites.

#### **6. Findings**

The phenomenon of misogyny is characteristic of patriarchal cultures, where masculine and feminine verbal behaviour is strictly regulated, because it is determined by the social status of communication participants and reflects, and, most importantly, retains the dominant role of men in society, which is a primary factor in explaining the causes of misogyny in the context of the American English language.

One of the clearest proofs of the existence of misogyny in modern American society is the hip-hop genre, which is also called "rap" music. It should be noted that according to Lynch (2018) statistics in Business insider in the Nielsen Music report, the R & B and Hip-Hop genres are responsible for more than 25 % of the consumption of all music in the United States, which puts them in the place of the most popular music genre. The language of hip-hop is frankly misogynous, in the texts of rap music five main misogynistic themes come to light: the derogatory naming of women; the representation of women as a sexual object; legitimization violence against women; distrust of women; glorification of prostitution and pimping. It is precisely the representation of a woman as a sexual object that is the most common misogynistic theme in rap music.

According to Weitzer and Kubrin (2009) content analysis in 67% of the studied lyrics of rap tracks, a woman is the object of a sexual representation. Misogynistic rap often depicts physical abuse. The famous American rapper Terius Gray (Juvenile) in his track “March Nigga Step” openly preaches violence against a woman: If she thinks you’re jokin’, is she goin’ get a quick chokin’? (Juvenile, 1999, para. M). The scientists put forward various theories about what exactly is the basis for the fact that such a significant number of rappers use misogyny in the lyrics of their tracks. For example, one of the most famous rappers of our time, Marshall Bruce Mathers (Eminem), in his third studio album, “The Marshall Mathers LP”, represents a manifestation of misogyny in 11 of his 14 tracks (Eminem, 2000, para. E).

However, Adams and Fuller (2006) of Howard University suggest that hip-hop artists only adopt negative stereotypes about women who dominate American culture after they themselves witnessed poor parenting and appeal to women. Dyson (2007), a professor of sociology at Georgetown University, considers misogyny to be a time-tested American tradition, with which Hip-hop extracts an understanding of how men and women should behave.

Being one of the most popular musical trends of a contemporary American culture – rap has a strong influence on it, establishing rap promotion, with negative content of misogynistic orientation, cultivated in music tracks and actively replicated in the media. For example, the work of famous American rappers has a frank sexual orientation and is openly sexist, teeming with obscene vocabulary and scenes of violence. A famous American rapper Kanye West openly declared in the interview to “The Guardian” that «Generally rap is misogynistic» (Mokoena, 2015). Producers and studio leaders themselves encourage musicians to create tough lyrics as more commercially successful, popularizing this content through open sites and TV music channels all over the world.

Modern information technologies contribute to erasing differences in the way of life of people from different countries, and a complex of interrelated information service structures that make up and ensure their functioning facilitates access to various cultural values. In the situation of transformation of global society, due to various information processes, new phenomena appear that are both constructive and destructive. One of nowadays destructive phenomena is a rising categoricity of woman’s verbal behaviour not only in American society but also in global society in general as a reaction to the misogyny in the mass media. Research of DEMOS (Interactive Unified Portable Operating System) reveals huge scale of social media misogyny. The study monitored the use of the such obscenities as “slut” and “whore” by UK Twitter users. It found that 6,500 individuals were targeted by 10,000 aggressive and misogynistic tweets in the period of three weeks. The research displayed the fact that internationally, more than 200,000 aggressive tweets using the same words were sent to 80,000 people in the same period – and according to the study, more than half of the offenders were women (Laville, 2016).

A woman who represents herself through categorical verbal behaviour tends to gender domination, trying on a model of not an emotional, but an instrumental leader. For example, the headings of Women’s online platform vividly reflects the current state of affairs, the obvious masculinization of the female view of life: Empowering Women Worldwide, Women Power, Business, Women’s Right (Women’s, 2019); as well as the blogs of Reclaim The Internet: The Conference of Strong Women, To Be Strong and Independent (Reclaim The Internet, 2019), because strength, power, business and law are traditionally masculine attributes. A social media monitoring company Brandwatch also conducted research on Twitter

analyzing approximately nineteen million tweets to reveal different forms of misogyny, but the results were unexpected, as it was found that 52% of misogynistic tweets were written by women, and 48% by men (Joyce, 2016).

In the verbal behaviour of women from different cultures has emerged a tendency towards an increase in its categorical nature; in France, for instance, the desire of French women to use obscene vocabulary to express their emotional state or attitude towards something indicating coarsening of women's speech was recorded. It helps to reduce gender differences in the language and leads to the fact that the reduced names are fixed in the language, making the language norm less strict. The results of gender studies of the modern German language also point to the destruction of sharp, impassable boundaries between the replicas of disapproval of men and women in German, although they emphasize that the detected changes in their verbal behaviour depend on both the gender of the participants in the dialogical communication and the characteristics of their mental state, profession, status-role characteristics, pragmatic situation of communication (Topka, 2015, p. 160). This means that obscene vocabulary loses the status of an unequal attribute of representatives of a masculine gender group. In a situation of open confrontation women's discourse is also characterized by a high degree of categoricity, which indicates a violation of the gender communicative norm.

Gender differences are eliminated, including through the improvement of social conditions: in civilized countries, a high level of technical progress contributes to psychological and, consequently, communicative androgyny; sex is inferior to the onslaught of gender, biological entity is transformed under the influence of social one, on the other hand, in countries that are far from a favourable economic situation, erasing the lines between masculine and feminine behaviour, one cannot speak about challenging the status of a man, and even less about gender equality.

Communication between individuals takes place within the framework of social communities that have their own history of formation, which largely determines their properties. Language tends to change as a result of the division of the society itself into different social groups, as well as due to the interference of society in language issues from ideological positions.

Cultural globalization, that exists thanks to information and communication technologies in particular, diminishes the dominant role of the state in the cultural sphere, carrying out the required communications using universal means of communication, as well as adapting, for a number of objective reasons, mainly American cultural realities, often replacing ethnospecific cultural phenomena with them.

## **7. Conclusion**

A steady upward trend in increasing categoricity of feminine verbal behaviour in case of contesting a man's social status to achieve gender equality and borrowing the values of the overwhelming majority or part of a community of individuals with a higher status (in this case, a male community), by using obscene vocabulary and self-confident style of communication, leads, in our opinion, to an overestimation of the female model of behaviour from the point of view of men's values and, consequently, to self-devaluation. At the same time, androgynous verbal behaviour gives a woman the priority of choosing a complex of psychological reactions to a certain situation in order to master a wider range of social roles realized by her both in society in general and in modern American society in particular, increasing her adaptive potential.

Trying on a model of an instrumental leader, a woman imitates a masculine course of action, representing herself through categorical verbal behaviour. Due to the fact that intrinsic value is associated with emotions and feelings, where an individual experiences negative value as negative emotions and positive value as positive emotions, a feeling of self-confidence, emotional dominance as a positive value causes a change in feminine verbal behaviour towards categoricity. Opportunities to remove social, gender differences reveal the biological characteristics of the individual – dominance for the sake of survival, since, as it is known, the strongest one survives.

The unity of a person and the information environment inevitably leads to changes in the understanding of human nature, revealing an invisible connection between them, explaining the deep foundation of the phenomenon of holism and the understanding of this vital consensus.

## References

- Adams, T.M., & Fuller, D.B. (2006). The Words Have Changed But the Ideology Remains the Same: Misogynistic Lyrics in Rap Music. *Journal of Black Studies*, 36(6), 955.
- Dyson, M. (2007). *Know What I Mean?: Reflections on Hip-Hop*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.
- Eminem (2000). *Kill You Lyrics*. *Genius Lyrics*. Retrieved from: <https://genius.com/Eminem-kill-you-lyrics>.
- Epistle to the Ephesians (2018). *The Bible*. Retrieved from: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/ephesians/5.html>
- Johnson, A. (2000). *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A User's Guide to Sociological Language*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Joyce, G. (2016, May 26). React: Will Twitter ever be Free of Misogynistic Abuse? *Brandwatch*. Retrieved from: <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/react-will-twitter-ever-free-misogynistic-abuse/>
- Juvenile (1999). *March Nigga Step Lyrics*. *Genius Lyrics*. Retrieved from: <https://genius.com/Juvenile-march-nigga-step-lyrics>
- Laville, S. (2016, May 25). Research reveals huge scale of social media misogyny. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/may/25/yvette-cooper-leads-cross-party-campaign-against-online-abuse>
- Lynch, J. (2018). For the first time in history, hip-hop has surpassed rock to become the most popular music genre, according to Nielsen. In *Business Insider*. Retrieved from: <http://www.businessinsider.com/hip-hop-passes-rock-most-popular-music-genre-nielsen-2018-1>
- Mokoena, T. (2015, October 6). Kanye West: 'Generally rap is misogynistic. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/oct/06/kanye-west-showstudio-interview-rap-is-misogynistic>
- Reclaim The Internet (2019). *Reclaim The Internet-Inspire And Lead By Example*. Retrieved from: <http://www.reclaimtheinternet.com/>
- Rockefeller, L. (2017). The creation of women as Zeus' revenge: an excerpt from Hesiod's "Theogony." Retrieved from: <https://peersofbeinan.wordpress.com/2017/06/27/the-creation-of-women-as-zeus-revenge-an-excerpt-from-hesiods-theogony>
- The "Noble" Quran (2018). *4 Sura An-Nisa' (The Women)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/quran/noble/Sura4.html>
- Topka, L. (2015). Genderny aspekt issledovaniya rechevogo povedeniya [The gender aspect of speech behaviour study]. *Filologicheskiye nauki*, 10(52/2), 158-162.
- Topka, L. (2016). Gendernaya differentsiatsiya kategorichnogo rechevogo povedeniya [Gender differentiation of the categorical verbal behaviour]. *Obshchestvennyye nauki*, 6(2), 253-260.
- Topka, L. (2018). Adaptivnaya funktsiya kategorial'nogo rechevogo povedeniya. Problemy kontseptualnoy sistematiki rechi i rechevoy deyatelnosti [Adaptive function of categorical verbal behaviour. Problems of conceptual systematics of speech and speech activity] In *Materialy X Vserossiyskoy nauchnoy konferentsii* [Materials of the X All-Russian Scientific Conference] (pp. 148-155). Irkutsk: BSU Publishing House.
- Weitzer, R., & Kubrin, Ch. (2009). *Misogyny in Rap Music. A Content Analysis of Prevalence and Meanings*. Retrieved from: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1097184X08327696>
- Women's (2019). *Empowering Women Worldwide*. Retrieved from: <https://women-s.net>.