

# 'WAP' prompts debate on empowerment

Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's hit single and music video divided fans, including those in the school community, on whether the lyrics and production were truly empowering women or taking away from their respectability.

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Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's new song "WAP" has sparked controversy since its release in August. Both female rappers have come under fire for producing and singing a sexually explicit song.

However, "WAP" has also been seen by many as an ownership of female sexuality and a feminist anthem in the male-dominated entertainment industry.

## Expectations and reactions

Jason Papadopoulos (24) said he first found "WAP" on social media and said he disliked it.

"I thought it was a strange song, to be honest," he said. "The lyrics were definitely different than most songs I've heard."

Papadopoulos said he felt "WAP" was more degrading rather than empowering as he said he does not think the song has a good message.

"The lyrics are pretty vulgar," he said. Despite his opinion, Papadopoulos said the message of the song can vary depending on how it is interpreted.

"It can either be perceived as really empowering, but also really degrading," he said. "It's all how you look at it."

Bissan Kablawi (22) said she had positive ex-

pectations for the song after first discovering it through TikTok.

"I thought these two very powerful women in the rap industry coming together would be such an amazing creation," she said.

Although Ross said "WAP" is empowering for her, she said there are risks for younger girls listening to it as they may hear the lyrics in a completely different light.

"If I were a parent of a young girl, I would worry that she'd be exposed to that and that the message she might be getting is, 'this is how you should behave,' or 'this is what you should aspire to,' or 'this is valued by society,'" she said.

Ross also said she would feel uncomfortable with young girls taking the lyrics too literally.

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"The same way I don't think violent video games cause violence, I don't think this would leave much of an imprint on younger kids, but I think it's still something to look out for," he said.

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It's exciting to see women singing about something that traditionally is reserved only for men.

Lisa Ross,  
Choral Director

Nevertheless, Ross said the explicit lyrics were necessary to get the message of the song across.

"I'm wondering if they could have achieved the same goal artistically without it, and I don't think that they could have," she said.

Similarly, Papadopoulos said the use of explicit language amplifies the message of the song.

"It leaves a stronger message, so whatever they're trying to get across, it makes it more powerful," he said.

However, due to the extreme lyrics, Kablawi said the song is probably not for everyone.

"It wouldn't be very appropriate for the younger generation to listen to it," she said.

surrounding female sexuality. By having women in the rap music industry taking ownership of their bodies, she said they are bending traditional roles.

"It's usually dominated by men singing about women's bodies," she said. "But in the song, they're singing about themselves and what they want sexually, as opposed to what their sexual partners want from them."

Kablawi also said the song is empowering as it challenges standards set for women in society.

"Women have grown up in such a terrible society where they're placed in a little box saying, 'you have to do this, you have to do that,'" she said. "[They] are showing how proud and confident they are of their bodies and themselves, which is difficult to do in this society."

## Inspiring change

Kablawi said that she hopes the song can inspire women to break through gender standards.

"I want them to listen to it and know that they don't have to conform to the stereotypical standards of women anymore and they can be free with anything they want in-

cluding their sensuality, which is what this song's about," she said.

Ross said she found that "WAP" confronts gender norms and patriarchal structures in the music industry.

"It shines a lens on the hypersexuality of women," she said. "It almost takes this saying of, 'Oh, yeah, you want us to be sexual, we'll show you sexual and we're gonna hold up that mirror until you are uncomfortable with it.'"

Ross said that the mature topic of WAP invites necessary conversation on how women are treated in society.

"By them holding up that mirror, we can have conversation," she said. "We can be introspective and say, 'Well, maybe we are hyper-sexualizing women too much, maybe we are placing value on things that we don't actually want to promote to young girls.'"

Overall, Ross said that she understands why there are contrasting opinions around "WAP" and she said it is important to discuss them.

"The whole point of art is, it is that people are allowed to react to it differently and we should react to it differently," she said. "When artists are especially evocative, that's when we can grow and have conversations as a culture."



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