

## Wracking the Stereotype: Freedom Expression in Woman on "Man! I Feel Like a Woman!" Shania Twain Song's Lyric

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
<b>History</b> Accepted: 30 March 2025 Revised: 28 April 2025 Approved: 3 May 2025	<i>This study analyzes the song "Man! I Feel Like a Woman!" by Shania Twain using Sara Mills' feminist stylistic theory of three linguistic levels, namely words, phrases, and discourse to explore the lyrics that try to wrack various stereotypes attached to women, especially freedom of expression. This study uses a descriptive-qualitative method and explain the results on the word, sentence, and discourse level. Word-level analysis reveals generic pronouns and nouns emphasizing collective female identity. The phrase level reveals ready-made phrases, presuppositions and inferences, metaphors and transitive choices such as material, mental, relational, and existential that illustrate various aspects that wrack stereotypes against women. Discourse-level analysis reveals characterization, focalization, and schemata that provide deeper insight into the perspectives of the characters in the song. Overall, three-level analysis are in line with feminist principles, emphasizing to wracking stereotypes of freedom expression against women as the main theme.</i>
<b>Keywords</b> Feminist stylistics Stereotype Women expression Wracking	<b>Abstrak</b> Studi ini menganalisis lagu "Man! I Feel Like a Woman!" oleh Shania Twain menggunakan teori gaya feminis Sara Mills dari tiga tingkat linguistik, yaitu kata-kata, frasa, dan wacana untuk mengeksplorasi lirik yang mencoba merobek berbagai stereotip yang melekat pada perempuan, terutama kebebasan berekspresi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif-kualitatif dan menjelaskan hasilnya pada tingkat kata, kalimat, dan wacana. Analisis tingkat kata mengungkapkan kata ganti dan kata benda generik yang menekankan identitas perempuan kolektif. Tingkat frasa mengungkapkan frasa siap pakai, praanggapan dan kesimpulan, metafora dan pilihan transitif seperti material, mental, relasional, dan eksistensial yang menggambarkan berbagai aspek yang merusak stereotip terhadap perempuan. Analisis tingkat wacana mengungkapkan karakterisasi, fokusasi, dan skema yang memberikan wawasan lebih dalam tentang perspektif karakter dalam lagu. Secara keseluruhan, analisis tiga tingkat sejalan dengan prinsip-prinsip feminis, menekankan pada stereotip kebebasan berekspresi terhadap perempuan sebagai tema utama.



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## 1. Introduction

Stereotypes are views or opinions that have been formed and generally accepted by society about a group or individual based on certain characteristics, such as gender, race, religion, or profession. Stereotype is the attribution of certain traits to a person based on a subjective category just because he or she belongs to another group (Rosyidah & Nurwati, 2019). According to Larasati (2018) stereotypes are part of culture that are the result of the conflict of something or someone themselves that is incorporated into symbols, beliefs and values. The stereotype that most often appears in today's society is the stereotype of freedom of expression in women. Women often receive pressure from expectations from society to always be gentle, polite, and not allowed to express themselves freely and openly. Such freedom of self-expression is often considered taboo and hampered by patriarchal social norms. The result of this stereotype is that many women feel insecure and do not dare to express themselves authentically. In addition, women are considered unable to occupy certain sectors, where this is a form of discriminatory behavior against women (Apriliandra & Krisnani, 2021).

An issue of stereotype about freedom expression in woman is still become a hot and popular phenomena which exist in any kind of circumstances. Many conversations and debate regarding this topic can be found in various form of public discussion, such as classroom, workshop, social media, etc. All these discussion rooms consistently talk that woman doesn't have the same right as man. This perspective turns into a discrimination to woman and eventually arise woman awareness that this situation must be change by a movement, namely Feminism. (Bhasin & Khan, n.d.) in (Caroline et al., 2023) state that feminism is women's awareness of oppression by man to woman and the plan against that. However, this movement is often misunderstood as a mere women sentiment to man. This is in line with Gordon' statement in Caroline et al., (2023) which state women in residence, community, and society are influenced by feminism. Language discrimination refers to a social or cultural context in which language is utilized. It implies that language serves a purpose beyond conveying direct meaning. Stylistic analysis can enhance our understanding of its usage.

Stylistics is a branch of applied linguistics that focuses on the use of language and style in literary works. According to Simpson in Caroline et al., (2023) stylistics places language as the main place in the method of textual interpretation. (Almahameed, 2020) argues that stylistics places the main emphasis on the aesthetic aspects of language in 2 media, namely written and spoken. They study various types of language stretches, such as literary texts, speeches, legal texts, news reports, advertisements, jokes, and more. Therefore, song also can be studied using stylistics to prove the feminism ideas from the lyrics, especially in text form. However, to prove the particular idea, that is feminism, it needs feminist stylistics theory.

Manurung et al., (2023) stated that feminist stylistics is a field of stylistics that studies how gender and language style interact, especially

regarding gender and social position. According to (Mills, 1995a) the purpose of feminist stylistic analysis is to draw attention to and change the way gender is represented, because it is clear that many practices of gender representation are not carried out in the interests of women or men. Therefore, feminist stylistic analysis is not only concerned with depicting sexism in the text, but also analyzing how point of view, agency, metaphor, or transitivity are unexpectedly related to gender issues to determine whether these pre-genderization prerequisites are in accordance with the needs of women or men.

In this article, researchers use "Man, I Feel Like A Woman!" song by Shania Twain as the research object. This song that was released in 1997 has achieved various achievements in music industry that also bring her reach Grammy Award as The Best Female Country Vocal Performance in 2000. Shania Twain songs are generally focus in themes such as love, relationship, independence, and empowerment. Lyrics of the song "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!" is full of the meaning of women's freedom and emancipation. The song also questions patriarchal social norms and invites its listeners to understand and appreciate women's power and freedom. Using the stylistic feminist theory of Sara Mills, the author can analyze how the language and lyrical structure of this song are used to construct women's identities and defy existing stereotypes. In addition, this analysis is also useful to provide readers with an understanding that this song plays a role in promoting women's awareness and power in social and cultural contexts. Therefore, this article focuses on feminist stylistics analysis.

There are several previous studies related to this paper, the first research conducted by Artanti et al., (2023) entitled *Women Empowerment in Little Mix's "Salute": Feminist Stylistic Analysis*. This study was conducted to explore the representation of women's empowerment in the song. By using Sara Mills theory, this study reveals a deliberate use of language to empower and unite women. The second is *A Feminist Stylistic Analysis: Women Leadership of Little Mix Feat Nicki Minaj's Lyrics Song Women Like Me* written by Simanjuntak et al., (2024). This paper also uses a feminist approach based on Sara Mills' theory. This study attempts to describing how women leadership presented in song lyrics. The research identified women leadership tendencies in language use, where certain words or phrase were exclusively associated with women. The last previous studies is *A Feminist-Stylistic Analysis of The Taylor Swift Song Entitled "The Man"* written by Caroline et al., (2023). This study focuses on kinds of feminism and explains about feminism expressed about women's social aspects. This research is intended to find out the message of The Man song based on Mills' perspective on feminist stylistics. It was found that The Man by Taylor Swift conveys a message about gender inequality or feminism, stereotypes, and gender roles in society.

Meanwhile, the difference between previous studies and this article is to highlight "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!" song's lyrics that explored how the singer as a woman straightforwardly try to wrack stereotype about freedom expression in woman. Woman also has a same right to express themselves in

any aspects like man because both of these genders are essentially equal. That thing was not found in the previous studies. This object will analyze in 3 levels, that are the level of word, phrase, and discourse using Sara Mill's feminist stylistics theory.

## 2. Methods

The research method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research was chosen because this research aims to provide insight into the feminist-stylistic analysis of the song "Man! I feel like a woman!" by Shania Twain. Qualitative research, as defined by Gay et al., (2011), collect descriptive—narrative and visual—nonnumerical data to gain insights into the phenomena of interest. To analyse wracking the stereotype of freedom expression in woman, the writers used feminist stylistics theory by Sara Mills. The writers explain the results on the word level, sentence level, and discourse that shows feminist stylistic analysis. The primary source of data is from the song itself. The author used this song as the primary source of data and used journals, articles, theses, and internet resources as secondary data sources to support this research. The author follows a few steps in collecting the data source. First, the author listens to the song. Second, the author transcribes lyrics relevant to this research's subject. Lastly, the author used resources from journals, articles, or theses related to the topic of this research and the song itself. The data was then analyzed using a feminist stylistic approach to reveal the gender messages contained in the song. In the feminist stylistic analysis, the writers analyze the use of language, style, and narrative structure in the song "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!" to identify elements that show stereotypes associated with feminist backgrounds.

## 3. Results and Discussions

Energetic rhythms and lyrics in the song "Man, I Feel Like a Woman" makes it one of the songs that can create an uplifting atmosphere. The choice of words arranged into the lyrics in this song, encourages women to feel proud of themselves and invites them to challenge stereotype that are often labelled at women.

This song highlights and emphasizes that women also deserve to enjoy and have fun with the life they have without having to be overwhelmed with fear and obstacles because of the stereotypes that attached to woman. Thus, this song was created with a bold tone and proud of the identity she has as a woman.

**Table 1**  
**The results at the level of word**

No.	Aspects	Lyrics
1.	Generic pronouns	<i>I wanna scream and shout</i> <i>I ain't gonna act politically correct</i> <i>I wanna be free yeah, to feel the way I feel</i> <i>We don't need romance, we only wanna dance</i> <i>We're gonna let our hair hang down</i>

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2.	Generic nouns	<i>The best thing about bein' a woman forget I'm a lady Let's go girls</i>
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### Analysis at The Level of Word

(Mills, 1995) asserts that the foundation for examining word selection decisions is sexism in language. Generic nouns and pronouns, euphemism and taboo, naming and androcentrism, as well as semantics and instances are the analysis of denigrating women (Mills, 1995). Within the context of "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!", the identification of words can be categorized into 2 elements below.

#### 1. Generic pronouns

(Artanti et al., 2023) Generic pronouns are pronouns that refer to individuals or people in a general or inclusive way. In the song lyrics "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!" by Shania Twain, generic pronouns are employed to address and encompass a wide range of women. Here are some generic pronouns used in the song lyrics:

##### a) Pronoun "I"

Through this song using the pronoun "I", Twain wanted to express the dominance of women as full participants in her life. It also means that women have the autonomy and freedom to express themselves as they wish like when the lyrics say, "I wanna be free yeah, to feel the way I feel".

##### b) Pronoun "we"

The use of the pronoun "we" after the word "I" clearly refers to women. The "we" in this song builds a sense of female solidarity and collective agency that asserts women as a strong and independent unit without attachment to men.

#### 2. Generic nouns

Generic nouns are terms that make general references to a class of individuals or objects. In the song lyrics "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!", a variety of generic nouns are employed to refer to and represent a group of women. Here are some generic nouns used in the song lyrics:

##### a) Woman

The use of the word "woman" to express the center of this song. Compared to other words that might refer to masculinity, As in the lyrics of the song "The best thing about bein' a woman", Twain explicitly wanted to express her pride as a woman and counter the stereotype of femininity by using the word "woman".

##### b) Lady

The word "Lady" is often associated with adult women who are traditionally expected to be well-mannered and elegant women. Through the lyrics of his song "forget I'm a lady", Twain wanted

to try to tease that women don't always have to be what traditional society expects them to be. Women also have the prerogative to enjoy life without having to meet the standards she has set for it.

c) Girls

In addition to the words woman and lady, Twain also used the word "girls" to address all women specifically. Through the lyrics of "let's go girls", Twain did not want her invitation to seem aimed at the public, so by clearly adding the word "girls", Twain ensured that it was women who focused on being involved in the action of wracking existing stereotypes.

**Table 2**  
**The results at the level of phrase**

No.	Aspects	Lyrics
1.	Ready-made phrase	<i>The best thing about being a woman is the prerogative to have a little fun</i>
2.	Presupposition and Inference	<i>Man! I feel like a woman! The best thing about being a woman is the prerogative to have a little fun The girls need a break, tonight we're gonna take the chance to get out on the town</i>
3.	Transitivity Choice (Material Process)	<i>I'm gonna let it all hang out Go totally crazy, forget I'm a lady This girls need a break, tonight we're gonna take the chance</i>
	Transitivity Choice (Mental Process)	<i>I feel like a woman</i>
	Transitivity Choice (Relational Process)	<i>I only wanna have a good time The best thing about being a woman is the prerogative to have a little fun</i>
	<i>Transitivity Choice (Existential Process)</i>	<i>Oh-oh-oh really go wild, yeah</i>
4.	Metaphor	<i>I'm gonna let it all hang out Forget I'm a lady Men's shirt, short skirts</i>

**Analysis at The Level of Phrase/Sentence**

Mill (1995) stated that ready-made phrases, presupposition and inference, metaphors, jokes and humor, and transitivity choices are several categories to analyze level of phrase. In the context of the song "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!", the phrases can be divided into: ready-made phrase, presupposition and inference, metaphors, and transitivity process.



## 1. Ready-Made Phrase

Mills in Hussain & Jabeen (2019) indicates that "there are phrases which are pre built and which convey sexist meanings", it called as ready-made phrase.

- *"The best thing about being a woman"*

This phrase shows that being a woman is a positive thing and very good because women themselves also have absolute rights over themselves. Being a woman also means being able to be yourself without the intervention of others. These lyrics also imply that there is an effort by the singer in voicing women's rights in expressing themselves because being a woman is a best thing.

- *"is the prerogative"*

This phrase shows an attempt to wrack stereotypes and fight for the prerogative as a woman who also deserves to be given freedom, especially in expressing herself without anyone having to limit it.

- *"to have a little fun"*

The phrase "a little fun" softens the statement, possibly reflecting societal expectations that women should enjoy themselves but within limits. However, in the context of the song, it is clear that the phrase encourages women to wrack free from restrictions and embrace joy and self-expression. It also echoes feminist ideas of reclaiming that women not only deserve fun, but have the right to pursue enjoyment on their own terms.

## 2. Presupposition and Inference

Mills in Simanjuntak et al., (2024) stated that presupposition is linguistic phrase that refers to the assumptions or beliefs that are suggested by the language. There are various instances of presuppositions and inference in the lyrics of 'Man! I Feel Like A Woman!' songs by Shania Twain. Here of them:

- *"Man! I feel like a woman!"*

Implies that the speaker or singer wasn't previously feeling like a woman or experiencing a newfound realization of femininity or woman. This phrase assumes that there is a specific way to feel like a woman, implying a social constructed idea of femininity. Through these lyrics, it can be seen that no matter how women express themselves, even in ways that are opposed by social norms, women still feel like a woman. Therefore, the lyrics seek to break the stereotype that by acting freely in expressing themselves, women are still women.

- *"The best thing about being a woman is the prerogative to have a little fun!"*

Assumes that being a woman has a multiple aspect, but one of the best is the ability to enjoy oneself. Women are often restricted in society, and having fun may not always be expected or encouraged for them. The phrase challenges this by claiming fun as a right. The lyrics suggest that

feeling like a woman is not just about identify, but also actions and emotions.

- *"The girls need a break, tonight we're gonna take the chance to get out on the town"*

Assumes that women need a break from social expectation. The phrase assumes that women's daily lives are restrictive and breaking free is a necessary.

### 3. Transitivity Choice

Halliday & Matthiessen, (2004) in Artanti et al., (2023) stated that transitivity is the set of possibilities that the narrator uses to arrange the actors in these activities and the circumstances that surround them, as well as the internal world of his consciousness and his knowledge of the exterior universe's activity. In the song, the writers found 3 types of transitivity processes: material, mental, and relational.

#### a) Material process

According to (Li, 2006), the expresses of the idea that a particular entity "does" something, encompassing both abstract and concrete doing and happening is mental process. These are some of material processes found in the song lyrics:

- *"I'm gonna let it all hang out"*  
The material process is "let", the actor is "I" as the singer/woman, and the goal is "it all" that means freedom self expression in woman. The woman is taking active control of her own actions.
- *"Go totally crazy, forget I'm a lady"*  
The material process is "go crazy, and forget", the actor is "I" and the goal is "being a lady" it means the speaker tries to rejecting the stereotype about social expectation of being a lady, and taking action to be carefree and unrestricted.
- *"The girls need a break, tonight we're gonna take the chance"*  
The material process is "need, and take", the actors are "the girls, and we", and the goal is "a break, and the chance". The lyric assumes the constructs women as active agents in seeking their own enjoyment and freedom.

#### b) Mental process

There are sensations, including feeling, thinking, and seeing in the process of the mind. There are some mental processes found in the song lyrics of "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!":

- *"I feel like a woman!"*  
The mental process is "feel", the sense is "I" and the phenomenon is "like a woman". This lyric emphasizes subjective experience, reinforcing the idea that gender is felt and performed rather than biologically determined.

#### c) Relational process

According to Halliday in Artanti et al., (2023) stated that a process and the relationship between two concepts or things are basically the



process of relational. These are some relational processes found in the "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!" song lyrics:

- *"I only wanna have a good time"*  
The phrase "I only wanna have a good time" suggests a relational process, identifying the existence of ownership i.e. position "I" just wants to have a good time to enjoy her life as a woman.
- *"The best thing about being a woman is the prerogative to have a little fun"*  
The relational process "is", the carrier is "the best thing about being a woman", and the attribute is "the prerogative to have fun". The lyric means to reframes womanhood as a space of freedom rather than restriction

d) Existential process

Existential process present things as existing or being brought into existence. The existential process found in the "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!" song's lyric is:

- *"Oh-oh-oh, really go wild, yeah"*  
The existential process is "go wild" that has meaning that wildness and fun exist for women and something they can fully embrace.

4. Metaphor

According to Lakoff & Johnson (2008), metaphor is generally thought of as a characteristic of language alone, involving words rather than thought or action. The song "Man! I Feel Like A Woman:

- *"I'm gonna let it all hang out"*  
This phrase seems to describe a feeling of "relaxation" towards behavior that can be considered deviant. This happens because women are often pressured by many stereotype that have been constructed in society and lead to women's dissatisfaction. So, Twain tried to wrack the stereotype from social, and then allowing woman to be expressive and unrestrained. It's also suggestes that being woman is also being to wrack the boundaries.
- *"Forget I'm a lady"*  
The metaphor "forget I'm a lady" clearly wants to erasing the memmory of being female. This phrase wants to critiques the social expectation about being lady's behaviour that have to be modesty and restraint.
- *"Men's shirt, short skirts"*  
In this phrase, it can be seen that Twain wanted to express women's flexibility in expression. "Shirt" is often associated with masculinity and "skirt" is often associated with femininity, so this metaphor reveals the limitations of women in dressing like men. However, once again Twain tried to wrack this stereotype about freedom of women's expression.

**Table 3**

### The results at the level of discourse

No.	Aspects	Lyrics
1.	Characterization	<i>I'm goin' out tonight I'm feelin' alright I wanna scream and shout I ain't gonna act Politically correct I only wanna have a good time forget I'm a lady I wanna be free, to feel the way I feel Man, I feel like a woman</i>
2.	Focalization	<i>forget I'm a lady Color my hair, do what I dare Oh-oh-oh, I wanna be free, yeah, to feel the way I feel We don't need romance, we only wanna dance We're gonna let our hair hang down</i>
3.	Schemata	<i>No inhibitions, make no conditions Get a little outta line</i>

### Analysis at the Level of Discourse

According to Mills in Artanti et al., (2023) discourse analysis looks for patterns and structures in the text to link particular words and phrases to a broader ideology. Mills divides discourse-level analysis into four categories: focalization, fragmentation, characterization, and schemata. These are characterisation and focalization of the song's lyrics "Man! I feel like a woman" by Shania Twain.

#### 1. Characterization

Mills focuses on how fictional characters are portrayed and how stereotypes often shape the language used to describe them. Descriptions of the character's attire and facial traits also aid the reader in developing an opinion Artanti et al., (2023). There's no particular character in "Man, I Feel Like a Woman" song, except the singer itself. Twain, as a woman, became the representative of women that demand freedom of expressing themselves in this song. The lyrics emphasize women's freedom to express themselves, the will to wrack societal norms, and looking for happiness the same way as men.

The depiction of Shania Twain's character as a representation of a woman who longs for freedom and wracking societal norms can be seen from the following lyrics.

*I'm goin' out tonight I'm feelin' alright  
I wanna scream and shout  
I ain't gonna act Politically correct  
I only wanna have a good time  
Forget I'm a lady  
I wanna be free to feel the way I feel  
Man, I feel like a woman*

All these lines use the word "I" that refers to herself as the only character in this song. This singular form is used by Shania Twain to

represent all women. The lines "I wanna scream and shout" and "I ain't gonna act politically correct" symbolise the effort to wrack down the stereotypes that rule women's freedom in seeking their happiness. This describes the nature of women who no longer want to be influenced by stereotypes society constructs that require them to appear graceful, calm, and caring because of their awareness of matters and equality of rights. The lyrics "men's shirts, short skirts" and "color my hair, do what I dare" emphasize women's desire to be able to express themselves in a more assertive way, such as dyeing their hair and wearing men's shirts and women's skirts as a sign of equality in clothing. These lines of lyrics in the song "Man I Feel Like a Woman" by Shania Twain really illustrate the evidence of Shania Twain as a character who tries to wrack through the stereotypes that restrict women by doing things firmly and frankly without holding back at all.

## 2. Focalization

According to Mills in Artanti et al., (2023), focalization is the process by which a character or narrator uses their thoughts and perceptions to convey the events of a tale to the reader. With language choices and themes that attempt to wrack down existing gender standards, the focus implicitly involves women as the primary audience in the lyrics of the song "Man I feel like a woman." This song also mostly uses first person point of view, with Shania Twain as the narrator that engaged the primary listeners, women, to delve into the lyrics. It can be seen most of the time in the lyrics.

*Forget I'm a lady*

*Color my hair, do what I dare*

*Oh-oh-oh, I wanna be free, yeah to feel the way I feel*

These lines still use Shania Twain as the narrator to represent women as a whole that seek freedom of expression equality of rights, and effort to wrack stereotypes. However, several lines of lyrics also contain collective involvement of women that more engage all women through the lyrics.

*We don't need romance*

*We only wanna dance*

*We're gonna let our hair hang down*

This illustrates the assertion that women only want to seek happiness without having to depend on men.

## 3. Schemata

Through the lyrics "*No inhibitions, no conditions, get a little outta line!*" Twain tried to portray a bit of rebellion over the limitations and constraints of expression for women. Women often get judgment if they are judged to be "out of line" both in speech and behavior. Therefore, women are often not free to express themselves as they really are.

In these lyrics, Twain wants to represent herself as a woman to be an active decision-maker. This reaffirms that women can also choose and decide how they want to express themselves. This statement is in line with the feminist discourse that opposes gender-based standards of behavior, especially in societies that are more restrictive of women's actions than men's.

#### 4. Conclusion

The analysis of word level in "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!" such as "I" and "we" highlights how language is used to assert the woman as in control of her every decision and seeks to wrack perceived stereotypes. Similarly, the selection of common nouns such as "woman," "women," and "girls" serve to redefine and reclaim femininity on women's own terms.

Through phrase-level analysis, the song is seen as more than just a pleasant song - it subtly challenges society's restrictions on women. Presuppositions and inferences reveal that while the song embraces femininity, it also criticizes the restrictions placed on women and encourages them to break free. The choice of transitivity highlights women as active agents, emphasizing their control, emotions, and self-definition. The song's metaphors reinforce themes of rebellion, gender performance, and confidence, framing femininity as a choice rather than a limitation.

The discourse in this song conveys a powerful message of female freedom and self-expression, wracking the stereotypes. The song's characterization highlights themes of freedom, joy, and rejection. Through focalization, Twain encourages women to claim their rights and happiness without relying on men who have been considered a necessity as stereotyped. The schemata present her as an active decision-maker, choosing her own path and wrack constructed stereotypes. Overall, the song serves as an encourage anthem, inspiring women to fight stereotypes and embrace their freedom.

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