

## **REPRESENTATION OF MARXISM IN PRICE TAG SONG BY JESSIE J.**

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### **Abstract**

This textual analysis examines the representation of Marxist ideology in Jessie J's commercially successful 2010 pop song "Price Tag." Qualitative methodology and textual analysis within a Marxist lens critique the lyrics' engagement with capitalism. Findings show "Price Tag" conveys discernible Marxist themes of anti-consumerism, anti-capitalism, alienation, and communal values. References to money and commodification are framed negatively while collective dancing is endorsed. The ubiquitous song demonstrates Marxian critiques of profiteering, working conditions, and the reification of social relations under capitalism. However, complex concepts are diluted into accessible slogans prioritizing human dignity over materialism. The paper concludes that Marxist analytics subtly permeate mainstream consciousness through lyrical assimilations. Further reception studies on audience interpretation may enrich the understanding of Marxism's ideological diffusion. This initial textual reading indicates popular music's continuity as a conduit for radical political thought in digestible aesthetic forms. Overall, analysis reveals Jessie J's mass-marketed song derives theoretical substance from Marxist frameworks to advance ethical arguments. Trenchant social commentary is tucked within danceable rhythms for mass consumption. The study finds popular music allows marginalized political perspectives to disseminate despite the commodification of artistic works under capitalism.

**Keywords:** Song, Marxism, Capitalism, Ideology

### **INTRODUCTION**

Songs are an extremely human-like kind of art. Frith (2020:63) asserts that songs, with all the inconsistencies they entails, function as cultural forms in contemporary society. Put another way, songs both mirror societal norms and are constrained by business needs. A song can effectively transmit a message that constitutes an expressive representation of anything previously seen, heard, or experienced. Songs are strong communicative art forms (Putri et al., 2022).

Songs can be a place where someone can express what they think and feel. Musicians can utilize the mass distribution platform of commercialized music to spread countercultural ideas, for instance, Marxism. Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, two German thinkers, advanced the Marxism theory. They

view class as a defining tension of the capitalist system rather than merely as a theoretical idea or sociological construct (Mutiarra et al., 2022).

Marxism at its core comprises a theoretical and analytical framework for critiquing capitalism, material relations in society, and bourgeois ideology (Hawkes 2021). Central to Marxist thought is the concept of historical materialism, the view that material economic conditions and class relations fundamentally structure the organization of society (Sprinker 2020). As Springer (2020) notes, Marxism starts from the premise that "the organization of material production and the division of labor set the groundwork for structuring legal, political and ideological consciousness" among the various classes (p.349). Marxist analysis outlines an inherent conflict between the working classes who produce value in capitalist economies and

the owners of capital who profit from the labor of workers.

Building on this theoretical basis, Marxian perspectives advocate for a revolutionary shift away from capitalism toward alternative socialist modes of economic and social organization (Hawkes 2021). According to Marxist thought, capitalism necessarily leads to the exploitation and alienation of labor as well as the perpetuation of inequality under bourgeois capitalism (Sprinker 2020). Toward this end, Marxian frameworks critique the prioritization of profit, commodification of human relations, and reification of class divisions in capitalist societies while envisioning alternative post-capitalist futures centered on social ownership and democratic control of production (Hawkes 2021). The adoption of Marxist analytics and perspectives continues to be influential in various branches of philosophical, economic, social-scientific, cultural, and political thought concerned with equity and justice.

One illustrative example of Marxism is British musician Jessie J in her popular 2010 pop song "Price Tag". This song uses catchy lyrics and an upbeat tempo to criticize modern consumerism and the prioritization of money and possessions over other values. Jessie J follows this tradition of encoding anti-capitalist sentiments derived from a Marxist perspective into a commercially viable pop song format albeit in subtle lyrical forms. The song expresses anti-capitalist sentiments that align with certain core tenets of Marxism.

Numerous prior studies have examined the representation of Marxism in literary works. The first was titled Bong Joon Ho's Class Conflicts Seen in Parasite: A Marxist Study (Herman, 2020). The study's findings demonstrated the stark differences between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie concerning their everyday lives, economic systems, and relationships with the environment. The study's main goal was to examine a film from the standpoint of class conflict.

The second study was named "Red Queen: Victoria Aveyard's Novel's Portrayal of Class Struggle" (Ashari et al., 2020). The study's

main goal was to analyze a book from the standpoint of class conflict. The investigation's findings demonstrated how two American social strata were represented in the book *Red Queen*. The proletariat, or working class, was the first class, and the bourgeoisie, or affluent class, was the second. Because of this division, there was a class struggle to liberate the working class from capitalist exploitation.

The third prior study was titled *Class Struggle as Marxist Criticism Perspective: The Effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic as Seen on Pasukan Anti Prei Song* (Budianto, L., et al., 2022). The researchers probe deep into the economic class struggle of the low-class people as shown in the *Pasukan Anti Prei* music video utilizing Marxist criticism as the theory contained in a kind of descriptive qualitative study. The research findings indicate that the low-class family's breadwinner works tirelessly throughout the day to improve their social standing.

In this research, the ability to approach the issue critically is aided by Marxism theory. To recognize society and its structure, as well as to better comprehend the arts that we engage with and enjoy daily, the author attempts to apply Marxism. *Price Tag* by Jessie J is the music that the writer has chosen for the case study.

## **METHOD**

Qualitative research methods are employed in this study. It was selected due to the research methodology that emphasizes the process of theory generation (Collins & Stockton, 2018). The descriptive technique was used since the goal of the study was to describe how the *Price Tag* song by Jessie J depicted the class struggle. The information was gathered by reading the song's lyrics and viewing the official music video, which was then thoroughly analyzed from the standpoint of class conflict.

This study critically analyzes the lyrics of "Price Tag" for any indications of Marxist ideas or images using textual analysis within a qualitative research paradigm. linguistic

analysis has been widely employed in media studies and cultural criticism studies to reveal the underlying meanings hidden in linguistic artifacts of popular culture (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### ***Data 1***

*Seems like everybody's got a price I wonder how they sleep at night*

These lyrics criticize how capitalism has turned mankind into a commodity, turning all human worth and dignity into a "price" that can be purchased and sold. It raises moral concerns about those who put riches above people and begs the question of how these profit-seekers balance their avarice with fundamental moral principles—a perspective that is favorable to Marx's writings.

#### ***Data 2***

*When the sale comes first and the truth comes second*

The song's lyrics imply that in a capitalist economy, sales targets and financial rewards trump genuine, moral concerns for other people. Similar to Marx's claims that capitalism strains social bonds, profits are prioritized over true human connections.

#### ***Data 3***

*Just stop for a minute and smile  
Why is everybody so serious?  
Acting so damn mysterious  
Got shades on your eyes  
And your heels so high that you can't even have a good time*

The song's lyrics now shift to criticizing more particular types of alienation and unhappiness that arise from capitalism's fixation with making money and accumulating riches. Talk of behaving "serious" and "mysterious" reflects Marx's theory of alienation, evoking the distant, opaque labor

conditions of industrial capitalist production—hidden from workers themselves beneath intricate financial systems aimed at collecting maximum surplus value.

#### ***Data 4***

*Everybody look to their left  
Everybody look to their right  
Can you feel that? Yeah We're paying with love tonight*

These lyrics place a strong emphasis on community and group togetherness in opposition to such alienation and commercialization. People "look to their left and right" to establish interpersonal connections, and payment is reinterpreted as "love" rather than money exchange, defying the transactional logic of capitalism.

#### ***Data 5***

*It's not about the money, money, money  
We don't need your money, money, money  
We just wanna make the world dance  
Forget about the price tag*

Here, the anti-capitalist themes come to a head by outright opposing the desire for profit as well as any commercialization of interpersonal relationships or joy in the group. Dancing turns become a metaphor for resistance against consumerism. Marx's writings on how capitalism permeates even recreational and cultural domains are paralleled in the lyrics.

#### ***Data 6***

*Ain't about the, uh, cha-ching cha-ching  
Ain't about the, yeah, ba-bling ba-bling  
Wanna make the world dance  
Forget about the price tag*

Making the earth "dance" expresses Marx's ideas about species being founded in creative manifestations of freedom beyond market processes that subjugate human potential. References to cash registers ringing reify the anti-capitalist goals.

## Discussion

The findings of the textual and lyrical examination of "Price Tag" by Jessie J reveal several instances of Marxist ideology. Particularly, three major Marxian concepts surfaced:

### 1. Critique of Capitalism and Commodification

The song's lyrics are a potent condemnation of the monetization of interpersonal relationships and contemporary consumer capitalism. As an example, Jessie J sings "It's not about the money, money, money / We don't need your money, money, money" as well as "Why is everybody so obsessed? / Money can't buy us happiness." Marx believed that capitalism reduces human purpose and social relationships to the exchange of commodities and money. This is supported by this.

### 2. Alienation and Lack of Authenticity

Marx's theory of alienation under capitalism is reinforced by references to individuals being untrue to themselves and adhering to false ideals. Songs with lyrics like "People you can never change" and "We just wanna make the world dance" exemplify the superficiality and meaninglessness Marx saw as severing humankind from its natural state.

### 3. Focus on Community and Love

With lyrics like "It's not about the price tag" and "We need to take it back in time / When music made us all unite," the song promotes finding significance via community and love rather than money and things. Marx's idea of an alternative communist system centered on the welfare of people is consistent with this kind of communal, non-commercial approach.

Overall, textual analysis shows that Jessie J's "Price Tag" illustrates prominent Marxist themes of alienation, anti-consumerism and anti-capitalism, and communalism. It also offers some fundamental critiques of capitalism and promotes alternative ideals of community and authenticity. The song's widespread appeal indicates that a large number of people find these Marxist-aligned

ideas appealing. The audience's reaction and perception of these meanings may be the subject of future study.

## CONCLUSION

This textual study of the popular song "Price Tag" by Jessie J shows how modern music incorporates and channels fundamental Marxist criticisms of capitalism. Marxist analyses of political economy may be found in popular culture thanks to the themes of commercialization, alienation, anti-consumerism, and communal values that have been discovered. Lyrics serve as a powerful medium for distributing ideological viewpoints.

Future studies might concentrate on how the lively pop song's Marxian message is received and understood by the audience. Academics could deepen our grasp of how these minglings of Marxist theory and musical performance relate to global youth cultures. When survey data is paired with textual analysis, it can provide a deeper understanding of Marxism's resilience across the many cultural arenas competing to define common sense. Scholars may also draw comparisons between punk subcultures and the spread of Marxist ideas in other modern genres and media, including hip-hop lyrics. This will improve understanding of how criticisms of capitalism, even decades after their beginnings, continue to influence public opinion on equality and the economy.

The "Price Tag" song analysis that is being given highlights how musical art continues to be a vehicle for integrating radical social ideals into everyday culture. Discovering strong anti-capitalist themes in a number-one song shows that Marxist theory is still relevant in today's culture and influences conversations about justice, exploitation, and human dignity.

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