

CAPITALIZATION OF BODY IN MODERN MUSIC VIDEOS

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ABSTRACT

The report presents the results of a comparative qualitative visual analysis of Russian and British popular music videos from the point of view of the functioning of the bodily images in them. Modern interpretations of the Bourdesian theory of capital are used as a theoretical framework for the analysis. Bodily capital is comprehended as independent type of capital which has at least four dimensions: physical, erotic, gender, and aesthetic. The accumulation of bodily capital is carried out through various forms of bodywork, aesthetic labour, body modifications, "purchasing beauty" and so on. The conversion of bodily capital is the return on investment in the form of material and symbolic profits. The result of the study was to identify and compare the ways of physical, erotic, gender and aesthetic capitalization of the body in Russian and British music videos with the highest number of views in 2019 on Youtube. In addition to the influence of social position on the bodily representation, we trace the significance of national and cultural contexts for the accumulation and conversion of bodily capital in the analysed videos.

KEYWORDS

Bodily capital, erotic capital, gender capital, aesthetic capital, body work, Bourdieu, music videos, pop music

The report presents the results of a comparative qualitative visual analysis of Russian and British popular music videos from the point of view of the functioning of the bodily images in them. Modern interpretations of the Bourdesian theory of capital are used as a theoretical framework for the analysis. Following other researchers, bodily capital is defined as «the value attached to people's appearance, attractiveness, or physical abilities that may be exchanged for other forms of economic, social, or cultural capital» [1, p. 64]. We consider it as an umbrella term covering the various types of capital associated with corporeality [2], about which a lot has been written over the past three decades [3, 4, 5, 6, 7] etc.. In other words, we comprehend bodily capital as independent type of capital which has at least four dimensions: physical, erotic, gender, and aesthetic.

Capitalization of corporeality has two aspects: accumulation and conversion. The accumulation of bodily capital is carried out through various forms of bodywork, aesthetic labour, body modifications, "purchasing beauty" and other "narcissistic investments" a variety of resources in the properties of appearance and health. The conversion of bodily capital is the return on investment in the form of material and symbolic profits. Studies show [8, 6, 9, 10] that the possession of bodily capital (bodily attractiveness) in one or another aspect of it often endows its bearer with signs of prestige, facilitates the career ladder, increases the chances of getting a higher salary, higher grades in training, strengthens the strength of the relationship with him.

The possibilities for converting of body capital for its carriers, including athletes [3], models [11], "party girls" [7], retail and hospitality workers [12, 13], are significantly limited, while the true owners and beneficiaries of attractive, healthy and skillful bodies are representatives of groups standing at the higher levels of the social hierarchy, including agents, brokers, promoters, owners of clubs, fashion houses, boutiques, etc.

Capitalization of corporeality in music videos associated, firstly, with the plot visualization of the process of transformation of bodies and behaviour or the accumulation of bodily capital by working on physical

bodies and aesthetic properties of appearance and voice, constructing gender identity, modelling of erotic behaviour, etc. Secondly, the capitalization of corporeality in the music video includes a demonstration of the obtaining of certain benefits resulting from the conversion of corporeal capital into economic, cultural, or social capital in literal or symbolic form.

The result of the study was to identify and compare the ways of physical, erotic, gender and aesthetic capitalization of the body in Russian and British music videos with the highest number of views in 2019 on Youtube.

Physical capitalization was studied from the perspective of the body types presented in videos. We included analysis of the external attributes, as well as various body transformation and appearance oriented activities, such as sport, beauty routine, food consumption, etc. In British videos, there is a tendency to show more mesomorphic bodies, while in Russian ones more ectomorphic bodies are demonstrated. This observation applies to both male and female main characters. What is more, in Russian videos characters are often stratified through marking them with attributes such as clothing and jewellery. On the other hand, in British videos the main characters are more unified; in addition to this, they often prefer sports clothes. Russian characters demonstrate a tendency for carnivalization; what is more, they more often prefer formal/evening garments. For example, the main male characters in Russian videos were 3 times more often dressed in formal suits than the British. Sport is also more often featured in British than in Russian videos, both as an attribute of everyday life or a crucial field of accumulation of embodied capital.

Gender capitalization was considered from the perspective of the gender diversity of the main characters in the video, gendered body-oriented strategies of behaviour and appearance. The number of female performers and mixed/non-binary performers in the UK videos is noticeably higher, as is the number of female characters in the video. In Russian videos, a significant part of the representation of the body type of female characters reflected their functions in the video. "Girl capital" motive was demonstrated through the motives of a female companion who does not have any other function, except for reinforcement of the gender order and highlighting masculinity of male characters. At the same time, we note that Russian videos have a greater aptitude for irony and humour. Comic effects are often based on the ironic use of gender stereotypes, both behavioural and appearance-related.

The erotic dimension concerns, first of all, the quantitative and qualitative strategies of accumulation of erotic capital [14], as well as the functional use of erotic capital in the context of the bodily presentation. In both Russian and British clips, qualitative strategy takes precedence over quantitative. At the same time, the erotic dimension of physicality is functionally used as an attractor for the audience, an indicator of the social status of the character. Erotic capitalisation might be also a way to measure the overall level of character's success: sexual life or successful partnership is as important as accumulated wealth, "ideal" body or social environment (e.g. Doni, Rita Oro, Little Big, Jonas Blue).

Finally, the aesthetic dimension of corporeality allows us to observe corporeality in the perspective of beautiful and ugly. The characters of the videos modify their body images in accordance with narrow (sometimes even subcultural) ideas of beauty. Unconventionally beauty is expressed through the embodiment of reversed gender/body/erotic audience expectations (e.g. Little Big and Ed Sheeran). The accumulation of aesthetic capital of characters is carried out through body modifications (tattoos, piercings, plastic surgery), cosmetics, clothing and accessories, hairstyles, and hair colours. In particular, a tattoo can act as an indicator of physicality (see Lolly Bomb video): applied even to a non-human and clearly inanimate object (missile), it personalizes and humanizes it.

In conclusion, we consider to use the term "corporeality capitalisation" as integrating erotic, physical, gender, and aesthetic dimensions of body using and development. Following Bourdieu, we note the key influence of social position on the bodily representation of the individual and on the perception of him by others. What is more, masculinity and femininity indicators in behaviour, external marks are often mixed in both British and Russian videos. However, the symbolic marking of different types of body-oriented activities differs. For example, sports and sports style in clothing are significantly more included in the space of British videos than in Russian ones. We agree with the criticism of Bourdieu and trace the significance of national and cultural contexts for the accumulation and conversion of bodily capital in the analysed videos.

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