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Decoding silence in thematic analysis: cancel culture, narrative control, and image rehabilitation

Introduction: This study examines the innovative concept of decoding silence through thematic analysis, focusing on Taylor Swift's Reputation album. After a period of silence following a public feud with Kanye West and Kim Kardashian in 2016, Swift reemerged with Reputation, providing a context for exploring the role of strategic silence as a communicative tool in the context of cancel culture. This research is significant as it addresses the underexplored role of silence in narrative control and image rehabilitation, particularly in the realm of celebrity culture. **Goals and Methods:** The primary aim is to investigate how Swift utilizes thematic elements in her lyrics, visuals, and music videos to reshape the public narrative post-silence. Employing thematic categorical content analysis, the study will analyze all 15 songs from the Reputation album. This methodology allows for the identification of recurring themes related to silence, power dynamics, identity, and resilience. Additionally, the analysis will incorporate selected media articles and fan reactions to enrich understanding of Swift's narrative strategies. **Results:** Expected findings suggest that Reputation serves as a platform for Swift's narrative rehabilitation and reflects a strategic use of silence as resistance. The thematic analysis is anticipated to reveal the complex interplay between silence and voice, highlighting her reestablished agency in the public eye. **Conclusions:** This study emphasizes the importance of decoding silence in thematic analysis, positioning it as a crucial element in understanding celebrity narrative management. By showcasing how silence can be a strategic tool, the research contributes to discussions of cancel culture and image rehabilitation in the music industry, illustrating how artists, particularly women, reclaim their narratives through nuanced storytelling.