

This essay will analyze how “You Belong With Me” by Taylor Swift demonstrates internalized misogyny, and is anti-feminist. Taylor Swift released this song in 2008 with her album “Fearless”. It is an extremely popular song, even to this day, and won the MTV Video Music Award for best female video, as well as the Kids’ Choice Award for favorite song. It is considered one of her ‘country-pop’ songs. The music video had a very cliché plot; Taylor is the shy nerdy girl in love with a boy-next-door football player who’s currently dating the head cheerleader. Of course, in the end Taylor gets the boy and goes to prom with him while the cheerleader ends up alone. The only non-stereotypical idea in the music video was the cheerleader being brunette, and not blonde. The song puts down the other girl for wearing makeup and skirts, while saying that Taylor is the better option because she does not care about ‘superficial’ things.

In the music video, we see Taylor in glasses, a t-shirt, and jeans reading a book when she’s talking to the boy she likes. When his girlfriend, the cheerleader, pulls up she’s wearing pink, skirts, heels, and makeup. When the guy gets into the car with his girlfriend, Taylor sings the line “Hey, what you doing with a girl like that?”. This line UGHHH, and gives the audience an idea that the cheerleader shouldn’t even be considered as a girlfriend choice. The lyrics create a narrative where Taylor depicts herself as the ‘nice girl,’ who feels entitled to a romantic relationship based on the assumption that she is a better match than the current partner. It’s a very negative theme throughout the song, where Taylor is constantly putting the other girl down to bring herself up. This line is immediately followed by the chorus of, “She wears high heels—I wear sneakers”, reinforcing and stereotyping the image of the two girls. Another chorus line that continues to create the misogynistic view of the song is “She wears short skirts—I wear t-shirts”. Throughout the chorus, Taylor continuously shames the cheerleader for her looks, making it

seem that the other girl is in the wrong for 'dressing-up' instead of wearing jeans and t-shirts. Taylor reduces the cheerleader to nothing but a superficial airhead, and makes herself the part of the 'ideal' woman. This narrative may be seen as enforcing the notion that a woman's worth is tied to her ability to be the ideal partner for a man, rather than emphasizing individual agency and self-worth. The song is incredibly misogynistic, because Taylor can not say anything nice about the other girl, as she sees the other girl as some competition she made up in her head, instead of a peer.

I am not a fan of Taylor Swift, and this song is one of the reasons why. In the past, she produced many songs that follow this trend of internalized misogyny, putting girls down for wanting to wear makeup, dresses, and heels, making them feel less than for the things they like. The whole song promotes this type of negative characterization, which creates harmful stereotypes and reinforces the idea that women must conform to certain societal norms to be considered worthy of love and attention. Taylor Swift is the biggest star in pop, and her fan base is 99% young women who look up to her. They listen to her music, and watch the music videos, and absorb the messages, and this internalized misogyny becomes a trend and a mentality that many women take, because it is an idea they grew up learning. It's important to call out misogynistic media to create a change. There needs to be more media challenging negative stereotypes, and advocating for diverse representations of women is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and empowering narrative.