

# Fuck Linguistics

Use of fuck on the Billboard Charts : 1982-2002

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Sociolinguistics II

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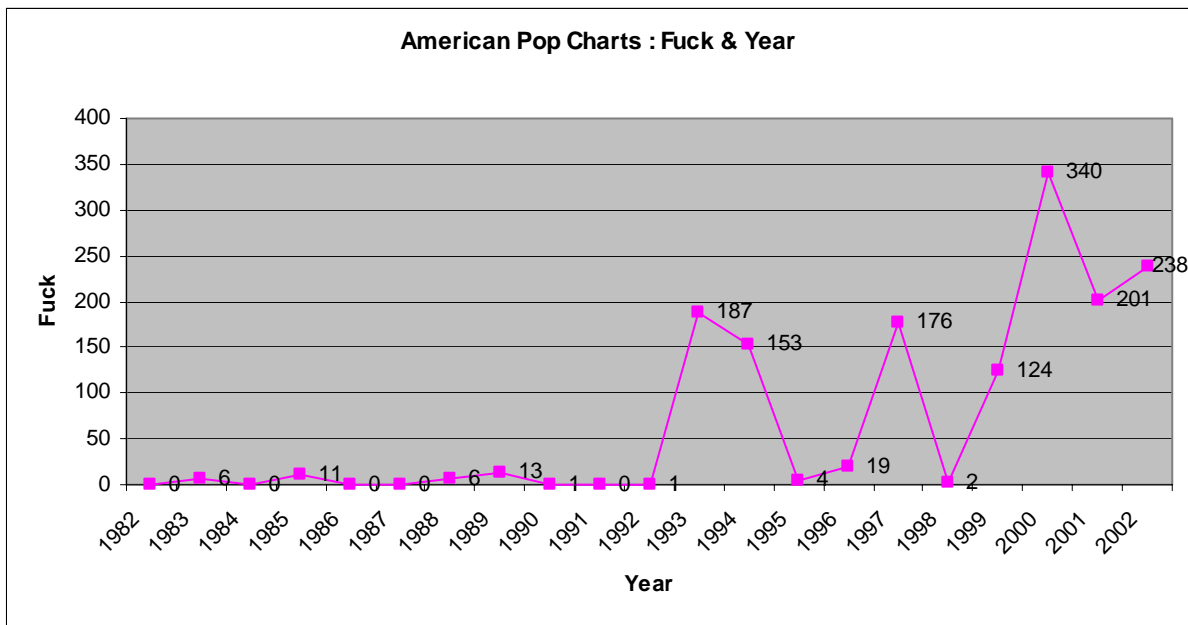
**Hypothesis:** Use of the word fuck in popular music has increased over the last 20 years

**Methodology:** Counting instances of fuck in the Top Ten albums of each year, 1982-2002

**Results:** There is a significant increase in the use of fuck

**Analysis:** Profiles of Artists producing fuck and their covert norms (focus on the network of Dr. Dre), profile of the consumers (focusing on Males 13-35) who consume albums containing fuck.

**Conclusion:** Fuck is increasing in the context of the Top Ten.



Over the last 20 years Artists started saying fuck more. The graph above shows a marked increase in instances of fuck in popular music beginning in 1993. Since Dr. Dre dropped *The Chronic* in 1993, at least 100 million Americans have bought an album containing 50+ instances of fuck. These are the results of my study of 200 Top Ten albums from 1982 to 2002.

This significant increase is evidence of a broader change in English worldwide. There is wide-spread use of the word fuck, and fuck is becoming more acceptable. I say worldwide because my findings corroborate the FCUK store in downtown London. They also corroborate Computer Analysis of the British National Corpus (100 million words, spoken and written) conducted at the University of Lancaster. The findings of McEnery, Baker, *et al* clearly show that fuck is a **variable in motion**.

Fuck is **marked** socially and speakers **shift styles** depending on context. Women say fuck less than men, and if I am speaking to a woman I will say fuck less. In fact, fuck is the most obvious socially-bound variable in English. Its use can be predicted almost entirely from sociological probability (as illustrated in the University of Lancaster tables I've included here). I am male. According to BNC Corpus data, the word fuck should make up about 1% of my utterances (once a paragraph). I should also be 7.5 times more likely to use it among men. Sociological **probability governs performance**. No rule from Universal Grammar can explain why I definitely wouldn't say "Fuck Chomsky" in this context. It is a probabilistic Sociolinguistic rule.

McEnery, Baker, *et al* studied a realistic language sample of 100 million words. I have studied a sample of 100 million albums that keep it real in their own way. We have both found high instances of the word fuck, and evidence that it is a Sociolinguistic variable in motion.

British Corpus Data on fuck

Form	Male	Female
Total	10.06	1.79

word forms: occurrences per 1000 utterances  
 $10/10,000 = 1\%$  ;  $300/40 = 7.5$

Target	Speaker		
	All	Male	Female
Male	343	300	43
Female	113	40	73

## Methodology

My sample consisted of 200 albums. I chose the Top Ten Albums of each year, 1982-2002, as listed in the Billboard database ([www.billboard.com](http://www.billboard.com)). I searched the lyrics for instances of the word fuck. I counted 1482 instances of fuck.

The albums were popular enough that people had transcribed and posted lyrics online, and I was able to search these written lyrics and count instances of fuck. My main sources were [www.lyricschart.com](http://www.lyricschart.com), [www.lyricstime.com](http://www.lyricstime.com), [lyrics.rockmagic.net](http://lyrics.rockmagic.net), and [www.stlyrics.com](http://www.stlyrics.com). If the lyrics were not there I submitted the following search terms to Google [“album name” “artist name” lyrics]. In a few cases I downloaded and listened to MP3s off of KaZaA Lite, Soulseek, or Shareaza. In this way I was able to find lyrics for each song from each of the 200 albums in my sample. This data is publicly available for replication of my results, and the Billboard Top Ten Charts (1982-2002) are included in my appendix.

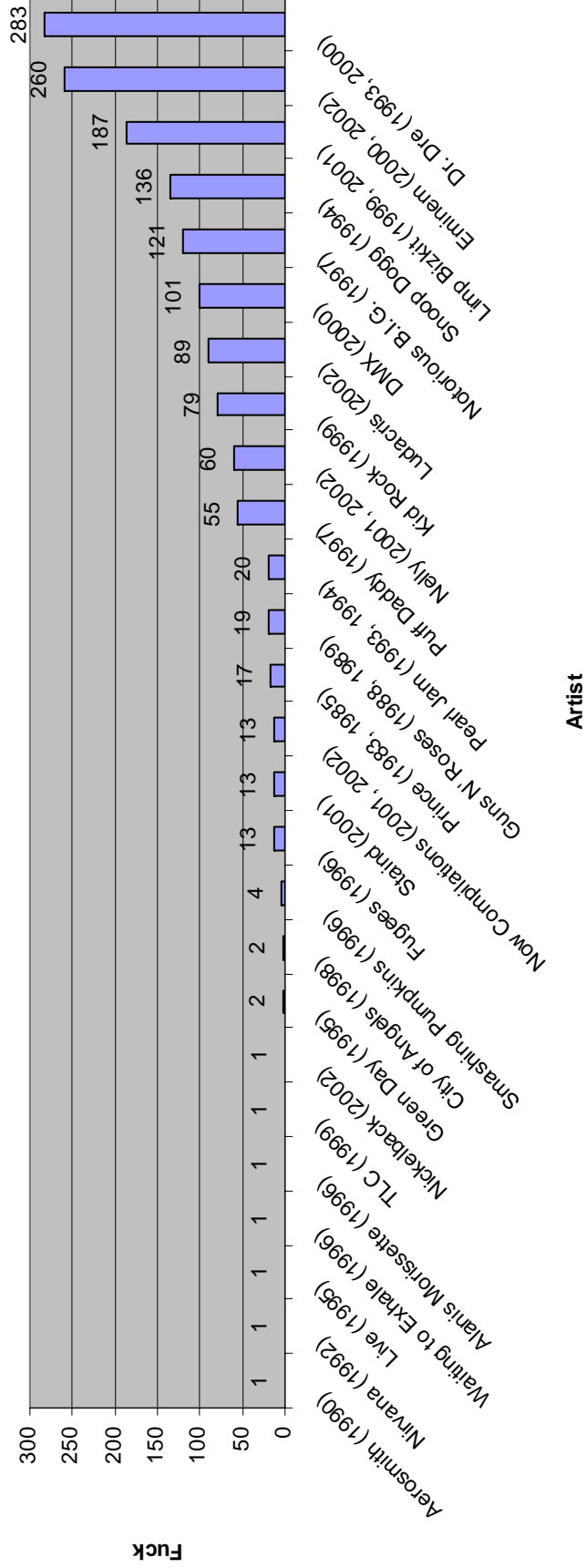
Up until 1991 Billboard data was gathered through focus groups and voluntary reporting from Radio and Record Stores. After 1991 it was calculated based on Soundscan data, how many times a given barcode was scanned across the nation. This brings the interesting methodological criticism: Were artists saying fuck before and just not being measured? Even in this case the results are still interesting, because there was an upswelling of fuck once accurate statistics began to be collected. This implies that it is a robust vernacular form.

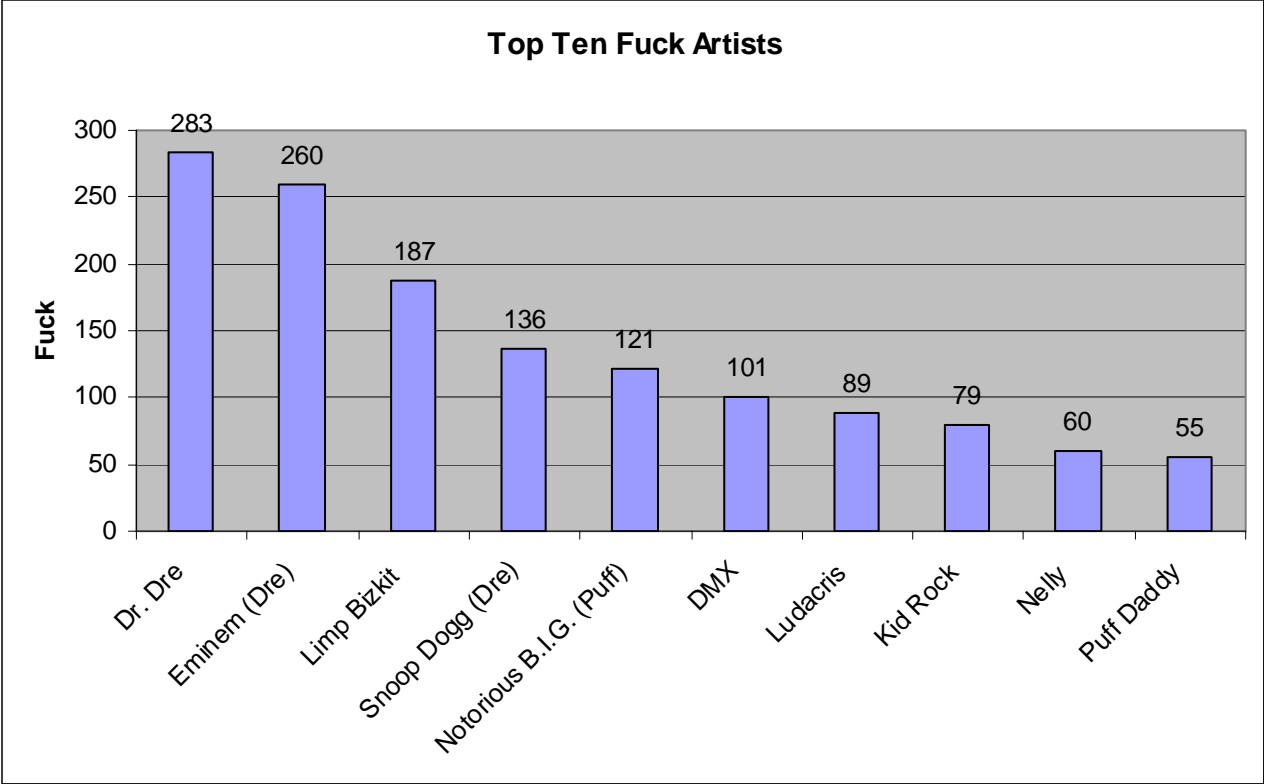
Sales data is from [www.rockonthenet.com](http://www.rockonthenet.com) which republishes RIAA sales data (gold, platinum, diamond, certification). My demographic data on Music Consumers from the RIAA.com and the NPD Group. Their specific methodology is detailed on page 31.

## Results

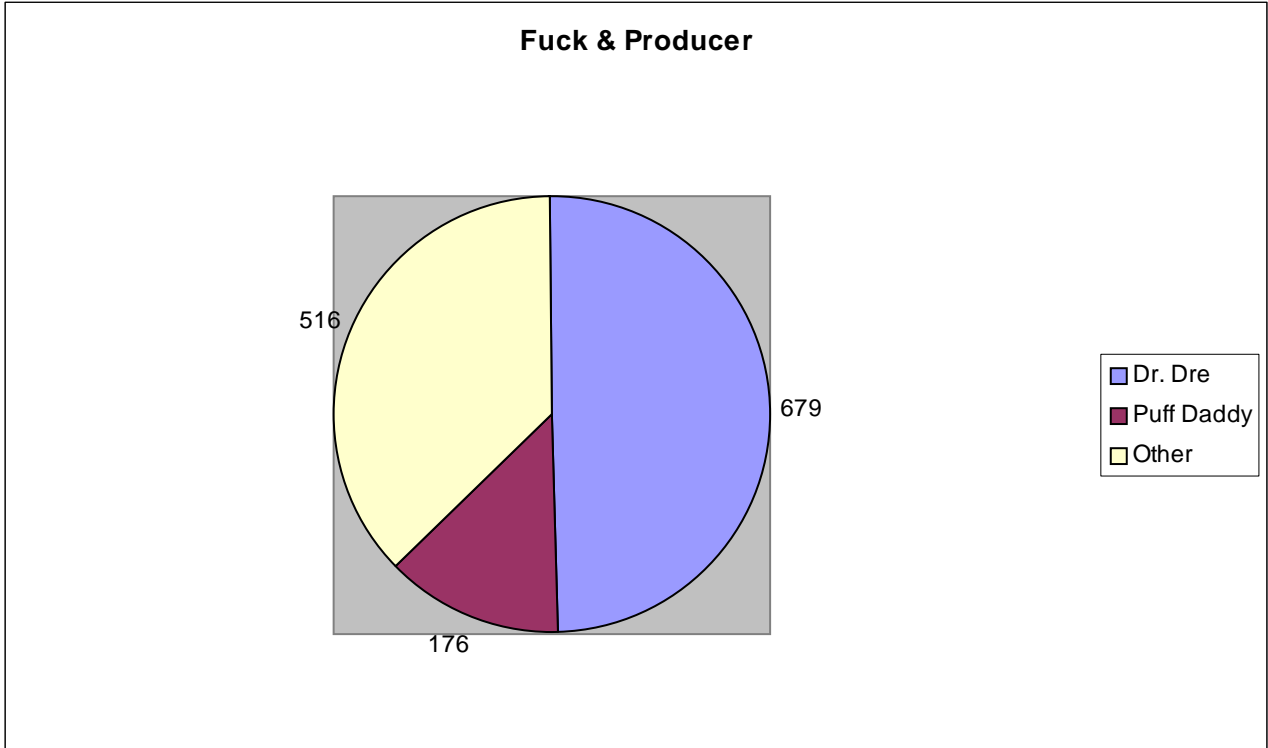
Year	Fuck	Artist
1982	0	
1983	6	Prince
1984	0	
1985	11	Prince
1986	0	
1987	0	
1988	6	Guns N' Roses
1989	13	Guns N' Roses
1990	1	Aerosmith
1991	0	
1992	1	Nirvana
1993	187	Dr. Dre
1994	153	Snoop Dogg, Pearl Jam
1995	4	Pearl Jam, Green Day
1996	19	Alanis Morissette, Fugees, Waiting to Exhale (Soundtrack)
1997	176	Notorious B.I.G., Puff Daddy
1998	2	City of Angels (Soundtrack)
1999	124	Limp Bizkit, Kid Rock, TLC
2000	340	Eminem, Dr. Dre, DMX
2001	201	Limp Bizkit, Staind, Nelly, Now 5 (Various Artists)
2002	238	Eminem, Ludacris, Nelly, Now 8, Nickleback

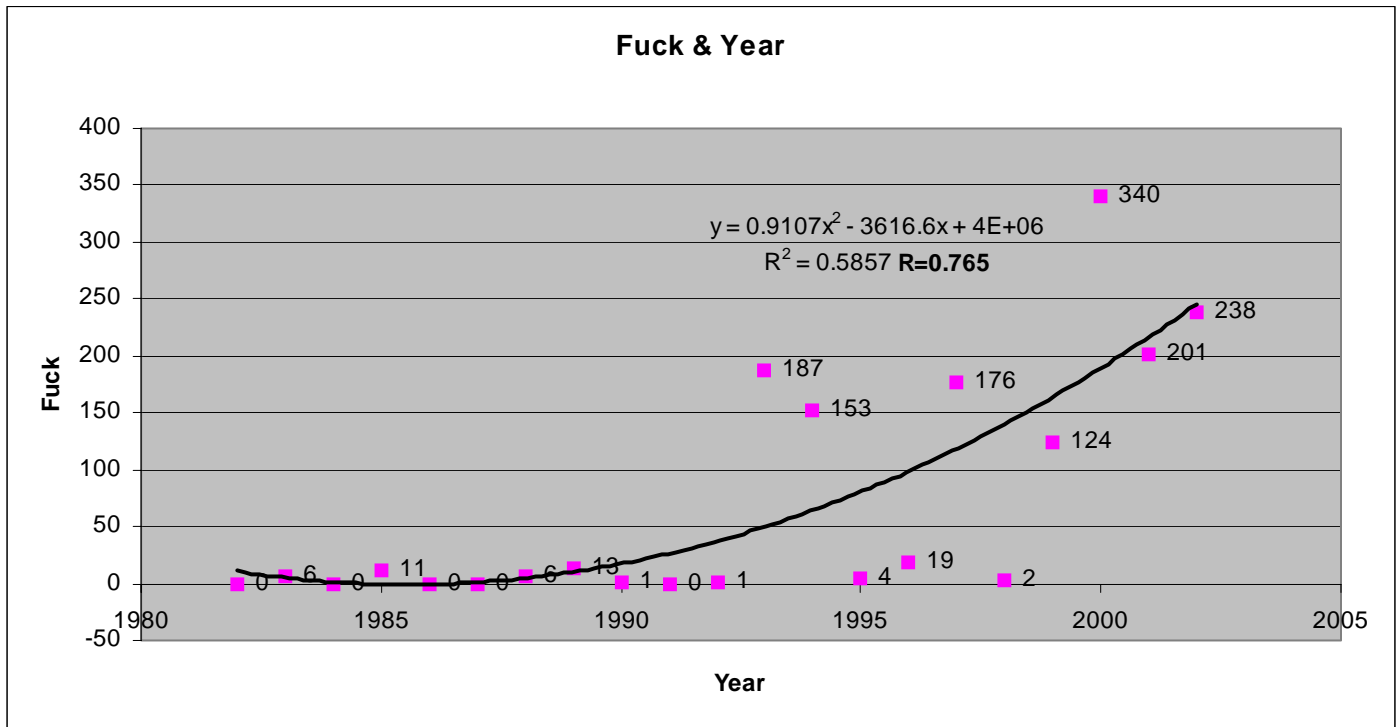
## Fuck and Artist



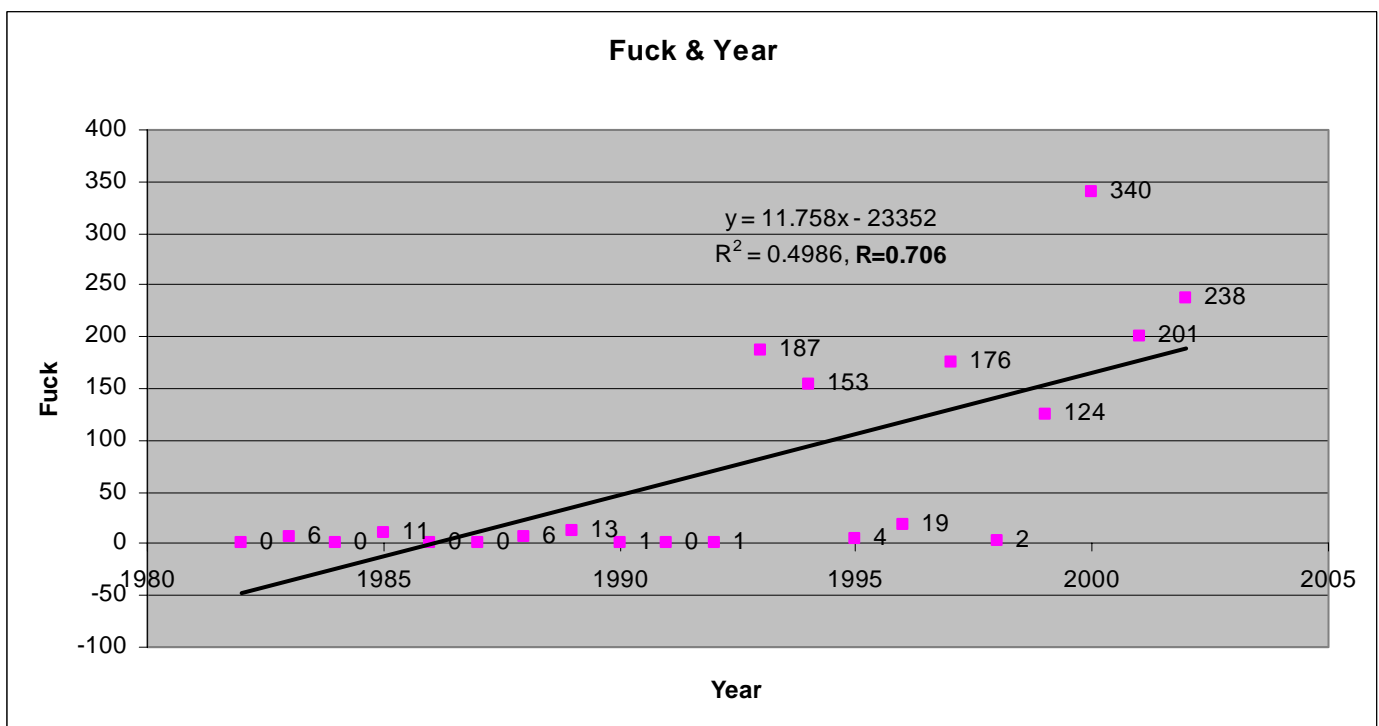


This data refers to Artists with extreme use of **fuck**, which I quantify as being over 50 instances. This Artists are all Rap/Hip-Hop Artists. Limp Bizkit is Rap/Rock Fusion.





This data shows a significant increase in use of the word fuck in Pop Music over the lasts 20 years. A polynomial best-fit line matches the data with an R of 0.765, which is highly significant. A linear line (Pearson Coefficient) fits the data with an R of 0.706. An R value over 0.5 is generally considered significant. Artists are saying fuck more, and millions of people are and listening to it. The next section will detail who is saying fuck and who is hearing it.



The change looks like almost exponential growth, but Bailey's function of linguistic change states:

“A given change begins quite gradually; after reaching a certain point (say, twenty per cent), it picks up momentum and proceeds at a much faster rate; and finally tails off slowly before reaching completion. The result is an S-curve” (1973)

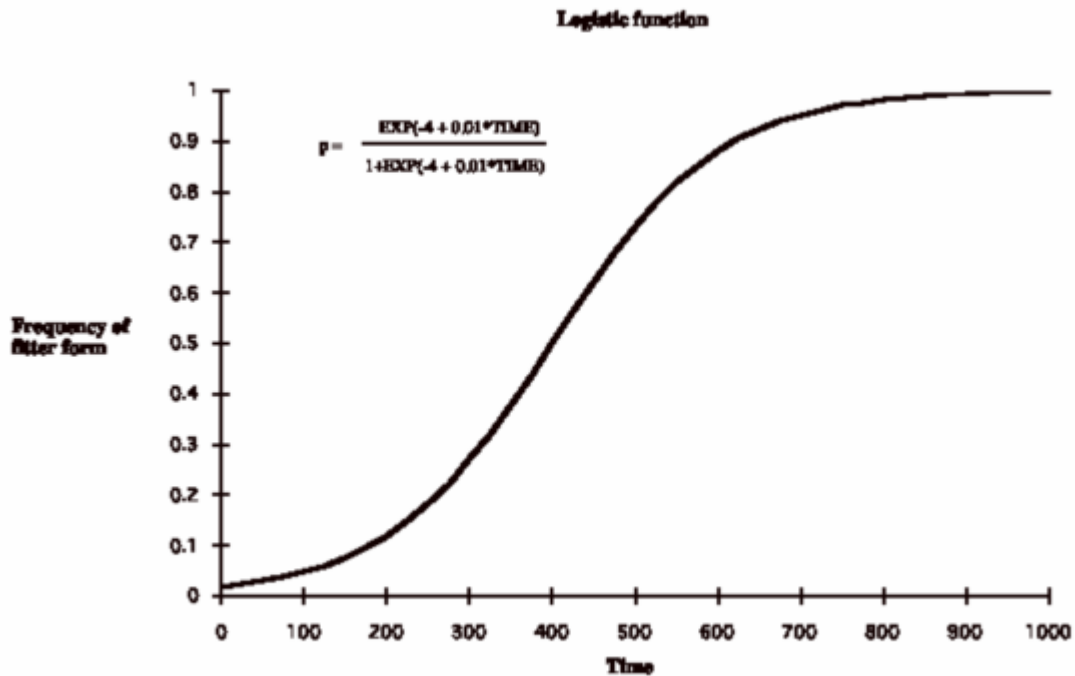


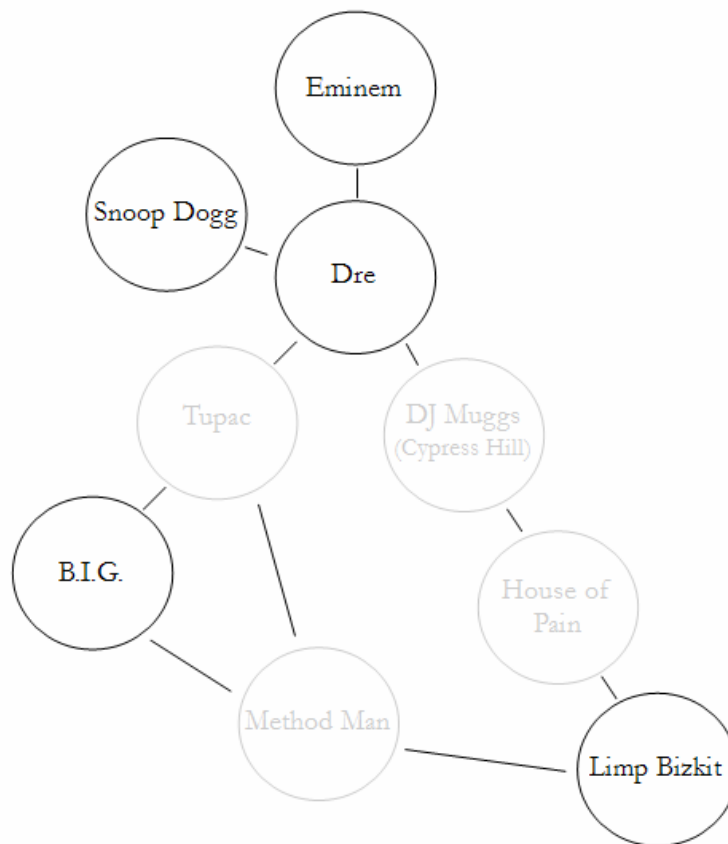
Figure 1: The logistic function.

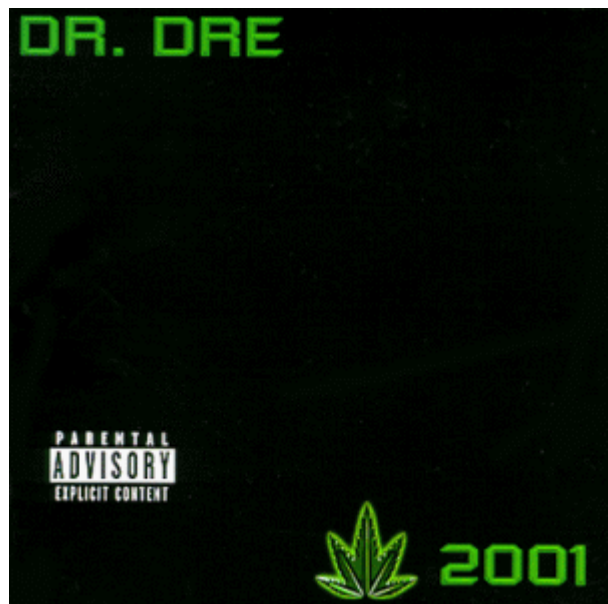
This sort of eventual tapering off seems likely for the Pop Music data because Limp Bizkit and Eminem have already begun to approach the physical limits of the number of times one can say fuck in a song.

## Who is saying **fuck**?

Who—Rappers, mostly Gangsta Rappers, most notably Dr. Dre. All Artists with more than 50 instances of **fuck** are listed in the Results section. The Top 5 Artists releasing albums full of the word **fuck** are Dr. Dre, Eminem, Limp Bizkit, Snoop Dogg, and the Notorious B.I.G. In this section I will introduce each of these Artists with a Rolling Stone or VH1 Biography, followed by the lyrics of one song. The lyrics aren't chosen as much for their **fuck** content as for their biographical information. As the network below demonstrates, Dre is has produced or is otherwise connected to everyone in this sample.

The following section hypothesizes that these Gangsta Rappers espouse the same values as the gang members of Labov's 1968 New York City study—namely violence, stealing, cursing, drinking, drugs and sex.





## Dr. Dre

Black, Male, 38, born working class/poor

b. Andre Young, 18 February 1965, South Central, Los Angeles, California, USA

Dr. Dre was born Andre Young in 1965. He was reared by his mother and grandmother in a Compton housing project. At an early age Young was subjected to the gang influences of his environment, forming a rough and tough exterior that would later manifest itself in his music. Young became interested in hip-hop in the early 1980s and recorded several demos of his own productions. He also played clubs and house parties, making a name for himself in South Central Los Angeles. This is where he later collaborated with Ice Cube writing and producing material for Eazy E and his Ruthless Records enterprise. Eventually this partnership led to the super-funk gangsta trio, N.W.A. (Niggaz With Attitude). By the time they had released their second album, Straight Outta Compton, N.W.A., with Dre's innovations, became nefarious for their hard core sound and controversial content. (They received a warning from the Federal Bureau of Investigation upon the release of their single "Fuck tha Police.")

After the release of the successful 1990 EP 100 Miles and Runnin' and its follow-up, Efil4zaggin ("Niggaz 4 Life" spelled backward), Dre made efforts to leave N.W.A. (Ice Cube departed the year before). By this time, Dre and partner Suge Knight were working on their own project, Death Row Records. When the manager of N.W.A refused to let Dre out of his contract, however, Knight allegedly threatened his life in order to win the commodity that Dre had become.

On his own in 1992, Dre released his first solo album, The Chronic, and began an alliance with Snoop Doggy Dogg, who helped the album gain its multi-platinum status. Singles like "Nuthin' but a G-Thang" and "Let Me Ride," exploited Dre's edgy, bold G-funk sound and, in the next four years, the album's influence on the industry became overwhelmingly apparent. Among his Death Row productions are the 1993 Snoop debut Doggystyle which made Snoop a household name. The success of Warren G.'s "Regulate" and Ice Cube's "Natural Born Killaz" are also credited to Dr. Dre.

In a protest against long-time friend and partner Suge Knight, Dre left Death Row Records in 1996 and formed another label, Aftermath Records. His first effort Dr. Dre Presents...The Aftermath was released in 1996 and featured several other rap artists. "Been There Done That" became a hit single.

Dre's most recent album, Dr Dre 2001, dropped in November 1999.

- VH1.com)

Dr. Dre is central to the trend of increasing **fuck** use in Pop Music. His "Chronic" album in 1993 was the first to produce a significant amount of the word **fuck** (184 instances). As the data on page 7 shows, he has produced almost 50% of all instances of fuck. Out of the Top 5 artists saying **fuck**, Dre has produced 3 (himself, Eminem, and Snoop Dogg). In 2003 he seems set to add another, the enormously popular 50 Cent. Interestingly enough, he says **fuck** infrequently. His high album counts come mostly from guest artists. With the release of "The Aftermath" album and its single "Been There, Done That" Dre seemed set to leave Gangsta Rap, but sales were disappointing. Apparently people wanted more Gangsta Rap, and Dre produced in 2000 with "Chronic 2001" - a return to form, and to the top of the charts.

The Watcher (Chronic 2001 - 2000) 2 instances of **fuck**

Things just ain't the same for gangstas.  
Times is changing, young niggas is aging,  
Becoming old Gs in the game and changing,  
To make way for these new names and faces, but  
The strangest things can happen from rappin, when  
Niggas get wrapped up in image and actin,  
Niggas get capped up and wrapped in plastic,  
Zipped up in bags when it happens, that's it.  
I've seen em come; I've watched em go,  
Watched em rise, witnessed it and watched em blow.  
Watched em up high, suddenly watched em grow.  
Watched the lawsuits when they lost the dough.  
Best friends and money: I lost them both.  
Went, visited niggas in the hospital.  
It's all the same shit all across the globe.  
I just sit back and watch the show. (The watcher)

Everywhere that I go  
Ain't the same as befo' (The watcher)  
People I used to know  
Just don't know me no mo'  
But everywhere I go  
I got people I know (The watcher)  
Who got people they know  
So I suggest you lay low (I watch)

I moved out of the hood for good, you blame me?  
Niggas ain't made me if niggas they can't be.  
But niggas can't hit niggas they can't see.  
I'm out of sight, now I'm out of they dang reach.  
How would you feel if niggas wanted you killed?  
You'd probably move to a new house on a new hill.  
And choose a new spot if niggas wanted you shot,  
I ain't a thug, how much Tupac in you you got  
I ain't no bitch neither.  
It's either my life or your life,  
And I ain't leaving, I like breathing.  
Nigga we can go round for round,  
Clip for clip, shit, fo'-pound for pound.  
Nigga if you really want to take it there we can,  
Just remember that you fuckin' with a family man.  
I got a lot more to lose than you, remember that,  
When you wanna come and fill these shoes. (The watcher)

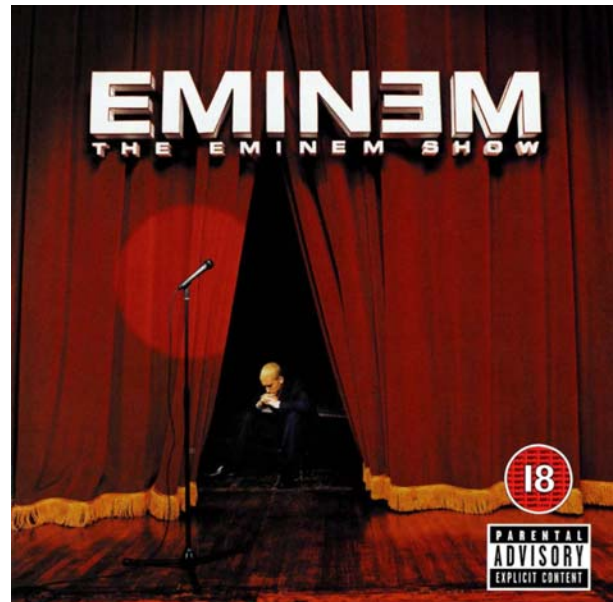
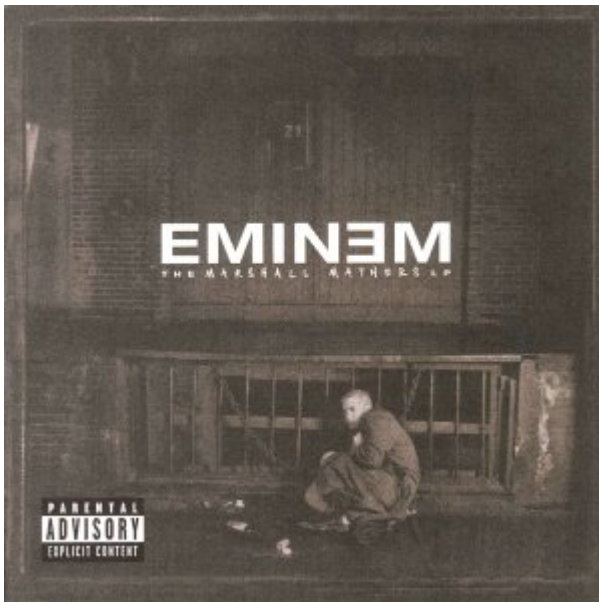
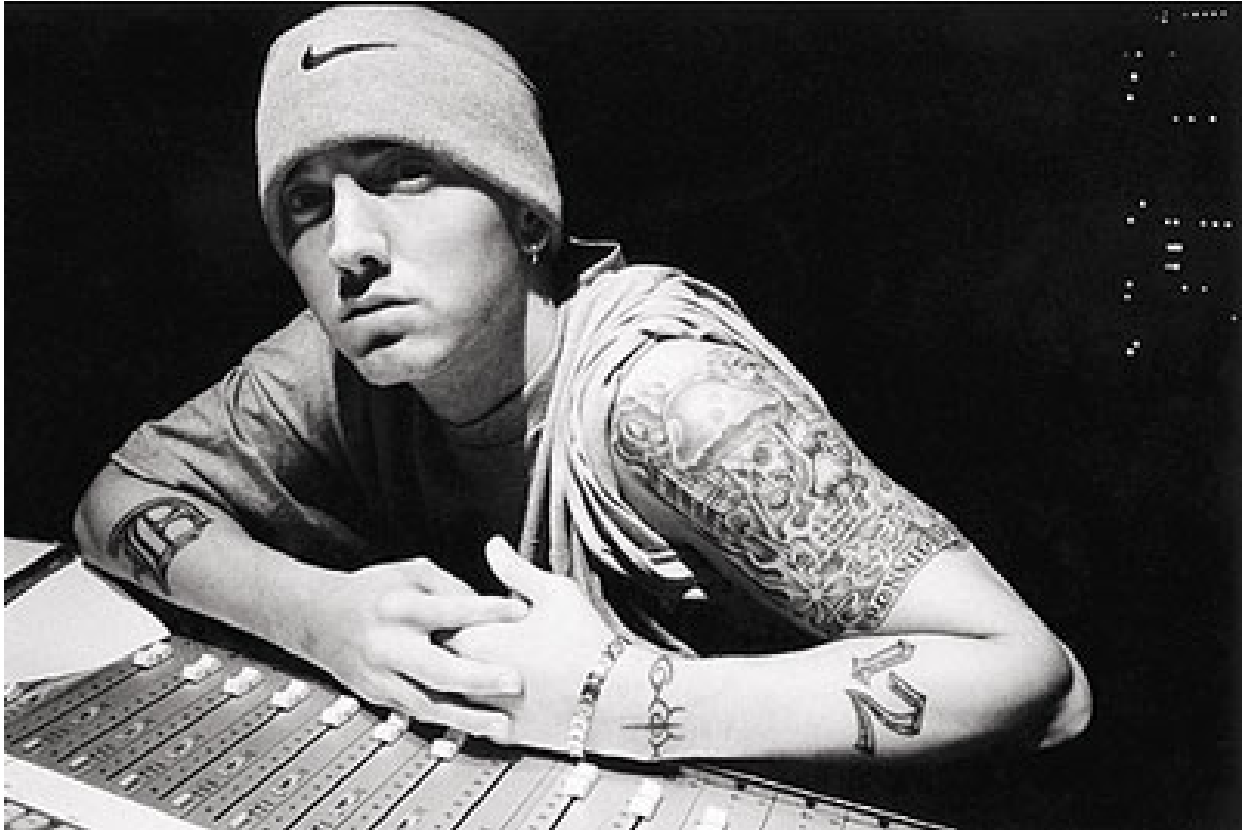
[Everywhere that I go  
Ain't the same as befo' (The watcher)  
People I used to know  
Just don't know me no mo'  
But everywhere I go  
I got people I know (The watcher)

Who got people they know  
So I suggest you lay low (I watch)

Things just ain't the same for gangstas,  
Cops is anxious to put niggas in handcuffs.  
They wanna hang us, see us dead, enslave us,  
Keep us trapped in the same place we're raised in.  
Then they wonder why we act so outrageous,  
Run around stressed out and pull out gauges.  
Cause everytime you let the animal out cages,  
It's dangerous to people who look like strangers.  
But now we got a new era of gangstas,  
Hustlers and youngsters livin amongst us.  
Lookin at us, now callin us busters,  
Can't help but reminisce back when it was us.  
Nigga we started this gangsta shit.  
And this the motherfuckin thanks I get?  
It's funny how time fly,  
I'm just havin fun, just watchin it fly by. (The watcher)

Everywhere that I go  
Ain't the same as befo' (The watcher)  
People I used to know  
Just don't know me no mo'  
But everywhere that I go  
I got people I know (The watcher)  
Who got people they know  
So I suggest you lay low (I watch)

(The watcher)



## Eminem

White, Male, 31, born working class/poor

Born Marshall Mathers on October 17, 1972 in St. Joseph, Missouri, Eminem moved to a Detroit housing project at the age of 12, when he began his hip-hop journey. In the early '90s, Eminem battled other MCs on open-mike nights. He impressed Paul Rosenberg, who eventually became his manager. In 1995, Eminem released his first single with the group Soul Intent. The recording process introduced Eminem to another young rapper, Proof, who asked Eminem to join his six-member crew D12. The group would serve as a surrogate family for Eminem, as each rapper supported each other while working together - a situation that would remain in place even after Eminem achieved massive success.

With the infectious lead single "My Name Is," Eminem's album created a rap revolution. In spite of or perhaps because of his skin color, Eminem became the most-talked about figure in the industry. The record [The Slim Shady EP] went triple platinum. As fans gobbled up his stinging, hilarious raps, laced with violence, sexism and homophobia, critics were torn. They could not deny the talent but found his message distasteful, particularly the song "Kim," which outlined his desire to murder his wife.

The summer of 2000 was tumultuous, to say the least. Eminem released his follow-up, The Marshall Mathers LP. It sold close to two million copies in its first week of release and was nominated for several Grammy awards. In June 2000, Eminem was involved in fight at a club, where he allegedly pistol-whipped a man for kissing Kim. In August, Eminem filed for divorce. As the 2001 Grammy Awards approached, women's organizations, along with leaders in the gay and lesbian community, demanded a boycott of Eminem's music. In an effort to quell the criticism, Eminem performed the emotionally-poignant "Stan" with Elton John standing in for Dido.

Eminem was sentenced to two years probation in April, 2001, stemming from the weapons charge. The same year he reconciled with Kim; however, the reunion would only last a few months. This time, it was Kim who filed for divorce in August.

In 2002, Eminem branched out into the world of acting, filming with esteemed director Curtis Hanson. It would also be the year that the controversy died down to a simmer. Eminem revealed a more mature, slightly subdued side on The Eminem Show. The album had some of its usual attacks on the likes of Limp Bizkit and Moby; however, the public response to his work was a quiet, steady respect for the man who had resisted expectations and evolved into a caring father and an impressive actor. The reviews for his big-screen debut, 8 Mile, were overwhelmingly positive. The soundtrack to the film dominated the charts, while "Lose Yourself" became the underdog anthem of the year.

The Eminem Show won the Grammy for Best Rap Album in 2003, and "Lose Yourself" won the Oscar for Best Song. In addition, Eminem signed another controversial rapper, 50 Cent, to his label Slim Shady Records. 50 Cent's record, Get Rich or Die Tryin', debuted at number one on Billboard's album charts.

## White America (The Eminem Show - 2002) 12 instance of **fuck**

(Prelude)

America! We love you! How many people are proud to be citizens of this beautiful country of ours? The stripes and the stars for the rights that men have died for to protect / The women and men who have broke their necks for the freedom of speech the United States government has sworn to uphold. (Yo I want everybody to listen to the words of this song) or so we're told..

(Verse 1)

I never would've dreamed in a million years I'd see, so many motherfuckin' people who feel like me/who share the same views and the same exact beliefs, it's like a fuckin' army marchin' in back of me/So many lives I touch, so much anger aimed in no particular direction, just sprays and sprays and straight through your radio waves that plays and plays, till it stays stuck in your head for days and days/who woulda thought, standing in this mirror bleachin' my hair, with some peroxide, reachin for a t-shirt to wear/that I would catapult to the forefront of rap like this? How could I predict my words would have an impact like this/I must've struck a chord, with somebody up in the office, cuz Congress keeps telling me I ain't causin' nuthin' but problems/and now they're sayin' I'm in trouble with the government, I'm lovin' it, I shoveled shit all my life/and now I'm dumping it on...

White America!

I could be one of your kids

White America!

Little Eric looks just like this

White America!

Erica loves my shit

I go to TRL, look how many hugs I get

(Verse 2)

Look at these eyes, baby blue, baby just like yourself, if they were brown Shady lose, Shady sits on the shelf/but Shady's cute, Shady knew Shady's dimples would help, make ladies swoon baby, ooh baby! Look at my sales/Lets do the math, If I was black I would've sold half, I ain't have to graduate from Lincoln High School to know that/but I could rap, so fuck school, I'm too cool to go back, gimme the mic, show me where the fuckin' studio's at/When I was underground, no one gave a fuck I was white, no labels wanted to sign me almost gave up, I was like/Fuck it, until I met Dre, the only one to look past, gave me a chance, and I lit a fire up under his ass/helped him get back to the top, every fan black that I got was probably his in exchange for every white fan that he's got/Like damn, we just swapped. Sittin' back lookin' at shit, wow, I'm like my skin is it starting to work to my benefit now?

White America!

I could be one of your kids

White America!

Little Eric looks just like this

White America!

Erica loves my shit

I go to TRL, look how many hugs I get

(Verse 3)

See the problem is I speak to suburban kids who otherwise would of never knew these words exist/whose moms probably woulda never gave two squirts of piss, till I created so much motherfuckin' turbulence/straight out the tube, right into your living room I came, and kids flipped when they knew I was produced by Dre/That's all it took, and they were instantly hooked right in, and they connected with me too because I looked like them/that's why they put my lyrics up under this microscope, searchin' with a fine tooth comb, its like this rope/waitin' to choke, tightening around my throat, watching me while I write this, like I don't like this (Nope)/All I hear is: lyrics, lyrics, constant controversy, sponsors working round the clock, to try to stop my concerts early/surely hip hop was never a problem in Harlem only in Boston, after it bothered the fathers of daughters starting to blossom/so now I'm catchin' the flack from these activists when they raggin', actin' like I'm the first rapper to smack a bitch, or say faggot/shit, just look at me like I'm your closest pal, the posterchild, the mother fuckin' spokesman now for...

White America!

I could be one of your kids

White America!

Little Eric looks just like this

White America!

Erica loves my shit

I go to TRL, look how many hugs I get

(Verse 4)

So to the parents of America / I am the derringer aimed at little Erica, to attack her character / The ringleader of this circus of worthless pawns / Sent to lead the march right up to the steps of Congress / And piss on the lawns of the White House and replace it with a Parental Advisory sticker / To spit liquor in the faces of in this democracy of hypocrisy / Fuck you Ms. Cheney! Fuck you Tipper Gore! Fuck you with the freest of speech this divided states of embarassment will allow me to have, Fuck you! I'm just kiddin' America, you know I love you...



## Limp Bizkit

Fred Durst: White, Male, 32, born working-class.

Led by self-confessed "freak" Fred Durst (b. William Frederick Durst, 20 August 1971, Jacksonville, Florida, USA), the son of a policeman, hard rock/hip-hop fusion band Limp Bizkit were formed in 1994 in Jacksonville, Florida. Completed by Wes Borland (b. Richmond, Virginia, USA; guitar), Sam Rivers (b. 2 September 1977, Jacksonville, Florida, USA; bass) and John Otto (b. 22 March 1977, Jacksonville, Florida, USA; drums), the band were further augmented in 1996 by the

services of DJ Lethal (b. Leor DiMant, 18 December 1972, Latvia) when his former employers [House Of Pain](#) ran aground. The band made its debut with Three Dollar Bill, Y'all\$ in 1997, a record that went on to notch up sales in excess of 1.5 million as it was adopted by a new generation of [MTV](#) rock fans. The band's striking live shows, complete with breakdancers and garish backdrops, also earned them high-profile slots on the Ozz-Fest, Warped and Family Values tours.

Limp Bizkit returned in July 1999 with Significant Other, with production work by [DJ Premier](#) and a guest rap from [Method Man](#) affirming the band's hip-hop credentials. The album debuted at number 1 on the US album chart, confirming the band as one of the leading alternative acts in America. The following year they achieved a big transatlantic hit with "Take A Look Around", the theme song for the Tom Cruise movie Mission: Impossible 2. They capitalised on their high profile with the release of Chocolate Starfish And The Hot Dog Flavored Water, which went straight to number 1 on the US charts. The band also spearheaded the "nu-metal" breakthrough in Europe, with "Rollin'" topping the UK singles chart for two weeks in January 2001. Borland, who had earlier recorded an album with his side-project Big Dumb Face, left the band in October. He was eventually replaced in April 2003 by former [Snot](#) guitarist Mike Smith.

- VH1.com

Limp Bizkit is largely removed from the central Rap network (and Dre). DJ Lethal is a DJ who began with House of Pain, a group of Irish-American Rappers. House of Pain's first album featured DJ Muggs, the DJ for Cypress Hill. Dre has worked with DJ Muggs on the latter's "Soul Assassins" album. Cypress Hill has also appeared on Dre's "Aftermath" album. Fred Durst rapped with Method Man on the single "N2Gether Now." Method Man appeared on the Notorious B.I.G.'s first album and with Tupac on the album "All Eyez on Me," produced by Dr. Dre. Limp Bizkit is however, associated more with Metal/Rock groups like Korn than with Rappers.

Limp Bizkit is an outlier in this data set as they are not black, are barely connected to the Dr. Dre network, and are by no means considered Gangsta. My intuition is that their extreme use of fuck is a sort of hypercorrection, but I have no statistical means of proving this.

### Hot Dog (Chocolate Starfish and The Hot Dog Flavored Water - 2001) - 46 instances of **fuck**

ladies and gentlemen  
introducing the chocolate starfish and the hot dog-flavored water  
bring it on get the fuck up yeah check one,  
two listen up listen up here we go it's a fucked up world  
a fucked up place everybody's judged by their fucked up face  
fucked up dreams fucked up life a fucked up kid  
with a fucked up knife fucked up moms and fucked up dads  
a fucked up cop with a fucked up badge fucked up job  
with fucked up pay and a fucked up boss is a fucked up day  
fucked up press and fucked up lies while lethal's in the back  
with fucked up eyes hey, it's on everybody knows it's on hey,  
it's on everybody knows it's on ain't it a shame

that you can't say fuck fuck's just a word and it's all fucked up  
like a fucked up punk with a fucked up mouth  
a nine-inch nail - get knocked the fuck out fucked up aids  
from fucked up sex fake-assed titties on a fucked up chest  
we're all fucked up so, what cha wanna do?  
with fucked up me and fucked up you you wanna fuck me  
like an animal you like to burn me on the inside you  
like to think i'm a perfect drug just know that nothing you do  
will bring you closer to me ain't life a bitch a fucked up ditch  
a fucked up sore with a fucked up stitch a fucked up head is  
a fucked up shame swingin' on my nuts  
it's a fucked up gamejealously thrills up a fucked mind  
it's real fucked up like a fucked up crime  
if i say fuck two more times that's 46 fucks in this fucked up rhyme hey,  
it's on everybody knows it's on hey,  
it's on everybody knows it's on you wanna fuck me like an animal  
you like to burn me from the inside you like to think  
i'm a perfect drug just know that nothing you do will bring you closer to me  
you can't bring me down i don't think  
so you better check yourself before you wreck yourself kiss my starfish my,  
chocolate starfish, punk kiss my starfish my,  
chocolate starfish you want to fuck me like an animal you want  
to burn me from the inside you like to think i'm a perfect drug  
just know that nothing you do will bring you closer to me

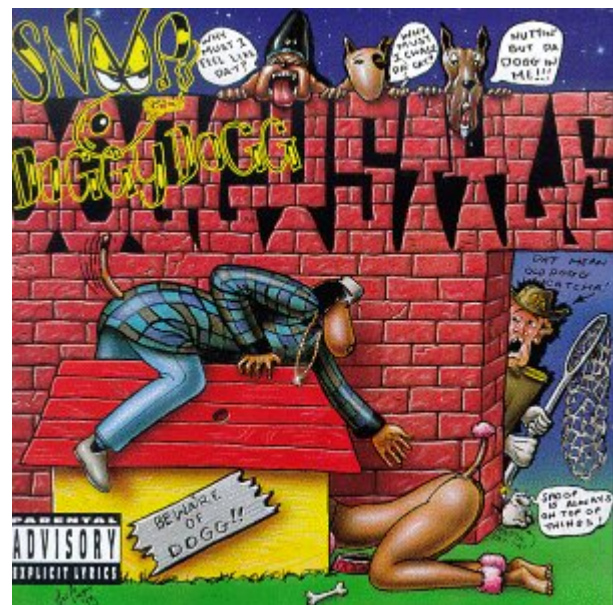


## Snoop Dogg

Black, Male, 31, born working-class/poor

b. Calvin Broadus, 20 October 1972, Long Beach, California, USA.

Rapper Snoop Doggy Dogg (born Calvin Broadus in 1972) grew up in a broken home in a poor section of Long Beach, Calif. Nicknamed "Snoop Dogg" as a toddler because of a resemblance to Snoopy from the Peanuts, Snoop began rapping as a teenager, in the group with 2-1-3 with his friend Warren Griffin, later known as Warren G and Nate Dogg. Despite doing well in school and excelling at football, Snoop ended up joining the Crips street gang and leading a life of crime. Shortly after high school he was arrested



and jailed for dealing cocaine; he spent the next few years in and out of prison for various petty crimes.

Deciding to leave the streets and pursue a career in music, Snoop Dogg sent a demo tape to his old friend Warren G., who passed it on to his brother, N.W.A.'s Dr. Dre. Dre saw promise in Snoop and invited him to appear as a guest rapper on his 1992 solo album *The Chronic*. The album soon went double-platinum, and the single "Ain't Nuthin But A 'G' Thang," which featured Snoop's rhymes, shot to No. 1 in the charts.

While recording his debut album in 1993, Snoop was arrested in connection with the shooting of a rival gang member, 20-year-old Philip Woldemariam, by Snoop's bodyguard, McKinley Lee. The much-anticipated album, *Doggystyle*, was released in November, and became the first-ever debut album to enter the charts at No. 1; it eventually sold over five million copies and spawned several hit singles.

Using the controversy surrounding his arrest to his advantage, Snoop released the single "Murder Was the Case," in 1995. Most of the rest of the year was spent preparing for his trial, which concluded in February 1996 with both Snoop and his bodyguard being acquitted of all charges.

In late 1996 Snoop Dogg released his second album, *Tha Doggfather*. The album contained the same uncompromising rap style as *Doggystyle*, yet only sold half as well, possibly due to the backlash against gangsta rap following the shooting of fellow rapper Tupac Shakur (which happened only weeks before *Tha Doggfather* was released).

In June of 1997 Snoop Dogg married his long-time girlfriend Shantay Taylor, who is the mother of his two children. Also that summer Snoop was a featured performer on the annual Lollapalooza tour.

Snoop dropped the "Doggy" from his name and jumped to Master P's No Limit label to record *Da Game is to Be Sold, Not to be Told* in the summer of 1998.

- RollingStone.com

Snoop has since diversified into Adult DVDs, including *Girls Gone Wild Doggystyle* and his MTV show *Doggy Fizzle Televizzle*. He appeared prominently on Dre's "Chronic 2001" and released "Paid Da Cost To Be Da Boss" in 2002.

### Murder Was The Case (Doggystyle - 1994) - 6 instances of **fuck**

[Intro: (Mista Grimm's "Indo Smoke" plays in the background)]

Ay ay Jaycee  
Sup Aron?  
Ain't that Snoop Dogg over there?  
That that nigga with that blue coat on?  
Yeah  
Yeah oh yeah that's that nigga

Nigga roll up on the side of him man  
Roll your window down  
Man hand me my motherfuckin Glock man gimme another clip  
Cuz I'm gonna smoke this fool  
Yeah roll the windows down  
Yeah, OK there you go  
Ay man, you Snoop Dogg?  
Snoop?  
Huh?  
Snoop Doggy Dogg?  
Man he's Snoop Dogg  
Man fuck that nigga!!  
[gun shots]  
Nigga man!  
Get that nigga man!  
Man get up fool man, get up man, don't be tryin to run man  
Get up on that fool man, I don't give a fuck  
What set you got now? Fuck you nigga!  
Yeah nigga, whassup?  
Nigga?  
Yeah motherfucker  
Yeah nigga, one less nigga  
Yeah nigga, youse a dead motherfucker now

[Verse One:]

As I look up at the sky  
My mind starts trippin, a tear drops my eye  
My body temperature falls  
I'm shakin and they breakin tryin to save the Dogg  
Pumpin on my chest and I'm screamin  
I stop breathin, damn I see deamons  
Dear God, I wonder can ya save me  
I can't die Boo-Boo's bout to have my baby  
I think it's too late for prayin, hold up  
A voice spoke to me and it slowly started sayin  
"Bring your lifestyle to me I'll make it better"  
How long will I live?  
"Eternal life and forever"  
And will I be, the G that I was?  
"I'll make your life better than you can imagine or even dreamed of  
So relax your soul, let me take control  
Close your eyes my son"  
My eyes are closed

[Chorus:]

Murder... murder was the case that they gave me  
Murder... murder was the case that they gave me

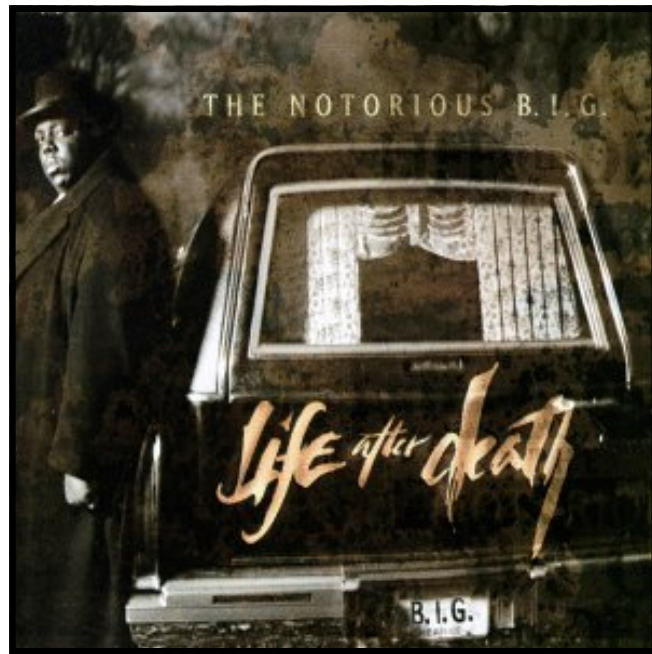
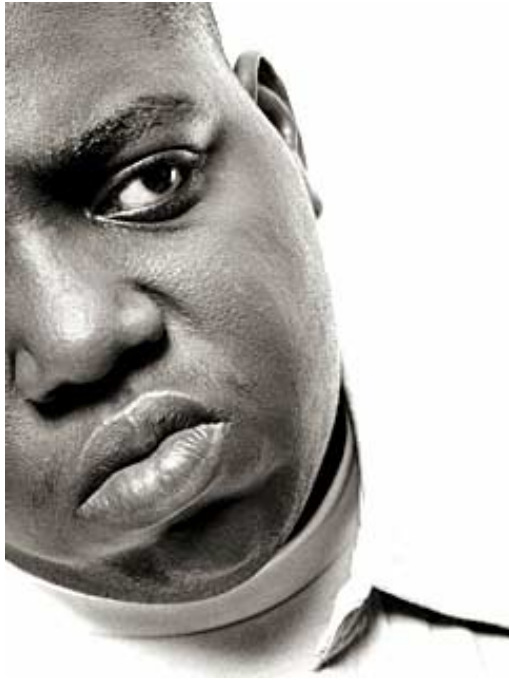
[Verse Two:]

I'm fresh up out my coma  
I got my momma and my daddy and my homies in my corner  
It's gonna take a miracle they say  
For me to walk again and talk again but anyway  
I get, fronted some keys, to get, back on my feet  
And everything that nigga said, came to reality  
Livin like a baller loc  
Havin money, and blowin hella chronic smoke  
I bought my momma a Benz, and bought my Boo-Boo a Jag  
And now I'm rollin in a nine-trizzay El Do-Rad  
"Just remember who changed your mind  
Cuz when you start set-trippin, that ass mine"  
Indeed, agreed proceed to smoke weed  
Never have a want, never have a need  
They say I'm greedy but I still want mo'  
Cuz my eyes wanna journey some more, really doe (check it out)

Now I lay me down to sleep  
I pray the lord, my soul to keep  
If I should die, before I wake  
I pray the lord, my soul to take

No more indo, gin and juice  
I'm on my way to Chino, rollin on the grey goose  
Shackled from head to toe  
25 with an izzl, with nowhere to gizzo, I know  
them niggaz from the other side recognize my face  
Cuz it's the O.G. D-O-double-G, L-B-C  
Mad doggin niggaz cuz I don't care  
Red jumpsuit with two braids in my hair  
Niggaz stare as I enter the center  
They send me to a leval 3 yard, that's where I stay  
Late night I hear toothbrushes scrapin on the floor  
Niggaz gettin they shanks, just in case the war, pops off  
Cuz you can't tell what's next  
My little homey Baby Boo took a pencil in his neck  
And he probably won't make it, to see twenty-two  
I put that on my momma, I'ma ride for you Baby Boo

Murder... murder was the case that they gave me  
Murder... murder was the case that they gave me



## Notorious B.I.G.

Black, Male, died age 27, born poor/working-class

b. Christopher Wallace, 21 May 1972, New York, USA, d. 9 March 1997, Los Angeles, California, USA. A large, imposing figure in contemporary rap before his murder in 1997, Wallace grew up in the tough district of Bedford-Stuyvesant, in Brooklyn, New York. He soon graduated to a life modeled on the activities of those around him, selling drugs and acting as a teenage lookout. He first rapped, under the name Biggie Smalls, as part of the neighborhood group the Old Gold Brothers.

His debut album followed in 1994. *Ready To Die* became a major hit thanks to the inclusion of singles such as "Juicy", "One More Chance" and "Big Poppa", the latter a US Top 10 hit which was voted Billboard's rap single of the year. He scooped a number of end-of-year awards in *The Source*, as the album achieved platinum sales. He went to the UK to support R. Kelly at Wembley Stadium in London, and also guested on Michael Jackson's *HIStory - Past, Present And Future Book 1*. However, despite his elevation to such exalted company, Notorious B.I.G. never left the ghetto behind. He formed M.A.F.I.A. with some of his former hustler colleagues, releasing an album, *Conspiracy*, in 1995. He was also involved in sundry episodes involving violence, such as a fracas with a promoter in New Jersey and his attempt to take a baseball bat to autograph hunters (for which he received a 100 hours" community service sentence).

He was also involved in a running feud with rapper 2Pac, who was convinced of B.I.G.'s involvement in a 1994 robbery in which he was injured. Their disagreement soon festered into a bitter feud between the east and west coast American rap scenes. When 2Pac was murdered, B.I.G.'s non-attendance at a rap peace summit in Harlem was widely criticized. Instead he began work on a second album, entitled, prophetically, *Life After Death*. Its cover featured the rapper standing next to a hearse with the number plate B.I.G. He never lived to see its official release. He was gunned down after leaving a party in California in March 1997.

Somebody's Gotta Die (Life After Death—1997) - 5 instances of **fuck**

[Verse One:]

I'm sittin in the crib dreamin about Leer jets and coupes  
The way Salt shoops and how they sell records like Snoop  
Oops!  
I'm interrupted by a doorbell  
3:52, who the hell  
Is this?  
I gets up quick  
Cocks my shit  
Stop the dogs from barkin  
Then proceed to walkin  
Its a face that I seen before  
My nigga Sing, we used to sling on the 16th floor  
Check it  
I look deeper  
I see blood up on his sneakers  
And his fist gripped a chrome four-fifth  
So I dip  
Nigga, is you creepin or speakin?  
He tells me C-Rock just got hit up at the beacon  
I opens up the door, pitiful  
Is he in critical?  
Retaliation for this one won't be minimal  
Cuz I'm a criminal  
Way before the rap shit  
Bust the gat shit  
Puff won't even know what happened,  
If it's done smoothly  
Silencers on the Uzi  
Stash in the hooptie  
My alibi, any cutie  
With a booty that don't fuck the Pop  
Head spinnin, reminiscin bout my man C-Rock

[Chorus: repeat 2X]

Somebody's gotta die  
If I got, you gotta go  
Somebody's gotta die  
Let the gunshots blow  
Somebody's gotta die  
Nobody gotta know  
That I killed yo ass in the mist, kid

[Verse Two:]

Fillin clips he explained our situation  
Precisely, so we know exactly what we facin  
Some kid named Jason  
In a highway station, raggin  
Was braggin  
About how much loot and crack he stackin  
Rock had a grip so they formed up a clique  
Small crew  
'Round the time I was locked up with you  
True indeed  
But yo nigga let me proceed  
Don't fill them clips too high  
Give them bullets room to breathe  
Damn where was I?  
Yeah  
One night in town  
Blew the fuck up  
D-Rock went home  
And Jay got stuck the fuck up  
Hit 'em twice  
Got 'em right for the virgin white  
Pistol whipped his kids  
And taped up his wife  
He said "Yo Rock, set em up", no question  
Wet em up no less  
Than 50 shots in his direction  
How many shots?  
Man nigga, I seen mad holes  
What kinda gats?  
Hitch links, Cocks, and Calicoles  
But fuck that  
I know where all them niggas rest at  
In the buildin hustlin  
And they don't be strapped  
Supreme in black  
Is downstairs, the engine runnin  
Find a bag to put the guns in  
And c'mon if yo comin

[Chorus]

[Verse Three:]

Exchanged hugs and pounds before the throw down  
How its gonna go down  
Lay these niggas low-down

Slow down  
Fuck all that plannin shit  
Run up in they cribs  
And make em catch the man n shit  
See niggas like you do ten year bids  
Miss the niggas they want  
And murder innocent kids  
Not I  
One niggas in my eye  
That's Jason  
Ain't no slugs gonna be wasted  
Revenge I'm tastin at the tip of my lips  
I can't wait to feel my clip in his hips  
Pass the chocolate  
Thai  
Sing ain't lie  
There's Jason with his back to me  
Talkin to his faculty  
I start to get a funny feelins  
Put the mask on in case his niggas start squealin  
Scream his name out  
Squeeze six knuckles shorter  
Nigga turned around holdin his daughter

# Why? - Covert Norms

The gang members of Labov's 1968 *Study of the Non-Standard English of Negro and Puerto Rican Speakers in New York City* have grown up and taken over the pop charts. The African-American gang members Labov studied espoused a set of Covert Norms which gave them Local Prestige within their small community. Gangsta Rappers seem to espouse those Local Prestige values on a national scale, even though those values are considered "bad" by mainstream society (to the point that all these albums must display a PARENTAL ADVISORY sticker). Labov identified 6 areas of "bad" behavior peers could excel in. Modern day Gangsta Rappers seem to excel in these very same areas, with the recent addition of money.

**Labov** (1968) - *A Study of the Non-Standard English of Negro and Puerto Rican Speakers in New York City*:

"The Patterns of verbal interaction in the peer-groups—what they actually say to each other—cannot be understood without referring to a permanent, implicit opposition of "good" and "**bad**" values. The verbal play, insults, challenges, and jokes of the Jets and Cobras [Gangstas] take much of their meaning from this frame of reference.

There are 6 main "bad" areas of behavior in which peer group members may excel:

## 1) **Fighting** (Eminem, *Kill You* : 2000)

I invented violence, you vile venomous volatile bitches  
vain Vicadin, vrinnn Vrinnn, VRINNN! [\*chainsaw revs up\*]  
Texas Chainsaw, left his brains all  
danglin from his neck, while his head barely hangs on  
Blood, guts, guns, cuts  
Knives, lives, wives, nuns, sluts

## 2) **Stealing** (Biggie, *Playa Hater* : 1997)

Playahh, open the door  
Lay on the floor, you've been robbed  
Wake up (Puffy: wake your ass up), take off your jewels  
You fuckin fools, you've been robbed (this is a robbery nigga)  
Playahh playahh (Ladies: hater), Playahh playahh (Ladies: hater)

## 3) **Cursing** (Limp Bizkit, *Hot Dog* : 2001)

bring it on get the fuck up yeah check one,  
two listen up listen up here we go it's a fucked up world  
a fucked up place everybody's judged by their fucked up face  
fucked up dreams fucked up life a fucked up kid  
with a fucked up knife fucked up moms and fucked up dads  
a fucked up cop with a fucked up badge fucked up job  
with fucked up pay and a fucked up boss is a fucked up day  
fucked up press and fucked up lies while [DJ] Lethal's in the back  
with fucked up eyes hey,

4. Drinking (Dr. Dre, *The Next Episode* : 2000)

Get my drink on, and my smoke on  
Then go home with, somethin to poke on (whassup bitch?)

5. Drugs (Ludacris, *Saturday* : 2002)

I gotta big weed stash, pocket full of cash  
Just seen a big ol' ass, it's Saturday  
Sticky, icky, icky, icky  
Sticky, icky, icky, icky  
System on blast, cops just pass  
Just seen a big ol' ass, it's Saturday  
Sticky, icky, icky, icky  
Sticky, icky, icky, icky [sticky weed]

6. Sex (Snoop Dogg, *Bitches Ain't Shit* : 1993)

Bitches ain't shit but hoes and tricks  
Lick on deez nutz and suck the dick  
Get's the fuck out after you're done  
And I hops in my ride to make a quick run...

... Someone who is “bad” is a dangerous and effective fighter: he pays no attention to the rules of a fair fight; he is a daring and successful thief; he pays no attention to any taboos on language, even in front of older women, and he has a good command of invective; he can handle large amounts of whiskey [Courvoisier?], and will drink anything else in sight including port [Cristal?]; he gets high on reefer, heroin and cocaine [ecstasy?]; gets all the women he wants by a bold and direct approach, but has no personal regard for women at all.”

Gangsta rappers of today seem to espouse the same values that Labov identified in New York gang members in 1968. I have studied the spectrum of Cursing, but further research into the words ‘gun’ (gat, 3 pound, piece, tek, etc), ‘rob’ (stick-up, jack, etc), ‘drink’ (Cristal, Moet, Gin, Hennessy, etc), ‘weed’ or ‘crack’ (numerous synonyms), and ‘bitch’ could shed some light on the other dimensions of these covert norms.

## Who is listening?

The Top Ten fuck Artists have sold over 100 million albums. The primary market is Males, 13-35. Females and consumers 36-50 also consume a significant amount of fuck lyrics. The NPD data at right doesn't include race, but only about 12% of the US population is black, meaning that many of these consumers are white, and most likely suburban.

Table: Total YTD CD Sellers by Age/Gender (As of 6/30/03)

	13-17	18-25	26-35	36-50	Over 50	Male	Female
<b>Biggest Seller</b>	50 Cent Get Rich Or Die Tryin' (8.7)	50 Cent Get Rich Or Die Tryin' (12.1)	50 Cent Get Rich Or Die Tryin' (5.7)	Norah Jones Come Away With Me (7.2)	Norah Jones Come Away With Me (7.2)	50 Cent Get Rich Or Die Tryin' (8.5)	Norah Jones Come Away With Me (5.6)
<b>Second Biggest Seller</b>	Eminem The Eminem Show (5.1)	Linkin Park Metemora ECD (3.9)	Norah Jones Come Away With Me (3.9)	50 Cent Get Rich Or Die Tryin' (3.9)	Original Soundtrack Chicago (7.8)	Eminem The Eminem Show (4.2)	50 Cent Get Rich Or Die Tryin' (5.4)
<b>Third Biggest Seller</b>	Simple Plan No Pads No Helmet (4.6)	Eminem The Eminem Show (3.8)	Eminem The Eminem Show (3.8)	Eminem The Eminem Show (3.2)	Josh Groban Josh Groban (4.1)	Norah Jones Come Away With Me (3.9)	Justin Timberlake Justified (2.6)

This demographic data comes from the Market Research firm NPD. NPD Group runs a MusicWatch survey of around 2000 consumers per month, with statistics updated monthly. I have also included RIAA data from "Peter Hart Research [which] conducts a national telephone survey of past month music buyers (over 3,000 per year). Data from the survey is weighted by age and sex, and then projected to reflect the U.S. population age 10-and-over. The reliability of the data is +/- 1.8% at a 95% confidence level." From these statistics I have concluded that the key Rap demographic is Males 13-35 because this group buys the most 50 Cent and Eminem. 50 Cent was not in my sample because year-end charts for 2003 have not been released. He will be on this years Top Ten and he has certainly said fuck often (80 instances in "Get Rich or Die Tryin'" and 48 on the G-Unit album "Beg For Mercy"), so I consider him representative of a fuck artist.

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	
<b>ROCK</b>	30.2	35.1	33.5	32.6	32.5	25.7	25.2	24.8	24.4	24.7	
<b>RAP/HIP-HOP<sup>1</sup></b>	9.2	7.9	6.7	8.9	10.1	9.7	10.8	12.9	11.4	13.8	
<b>R&amp;B/URBAN<sup>2</sup></b>	10.6	9.6	11.3	12.1	11.2	12.8	10.5	9.7	10.6	11.2	
<b>10-14 YEARS</b>	8.6	7.9	8.0	7.9	8.9	9.1	8.5	8.9	8.5	8.9	%
<b>15-19 YEARS</b>	16.7	16.8	17.1	17.2	16.8	15.8	12.6	12.9	13.0	13.3	
<b>20-24 YEARS</b>	15.1	15.4	15.3	15.0	13.8	12.2	12.6	12.5	12.2	11.5	
<b>25-29 YEARS</b>	13.2	12.6	12.3	12.5	11.7	11.4	10.5	10.6	10.9	9.4	
<b>30-34 YEARS</b>	11.9	11.8	12.1	11.4	11.0	11.4	10.1	9.8	10.3	10.8	
<b>35-39 YEARS</b>	11.1	11.5	10.8	11.1	11.6	12.6	10.4	10.6	10.2	9.8	
<b>40-44 YEARS</b>	8.5	7.9	7.5	9.1	8.8	8.3	9.3	9.6	10.3	9.9	
<b>45+ YEARS</b>	14.1	15.4	16.1	15.1	16.5	18.1	24.7	23.8	23.7	25.5	
<b>FEMALE</b>	49.3	47.3	47.0	49.1	51.4	51.3	49.7	49.4	51.2	50.6	
<b>MALE</b>	50.7	52.7	53.0	50.9	48.6	48.7	50.3	50.6	48.8	49.4	

## Why are Americans Listening?

This is an open research question. It is most likely that Americans say fuck frequently in their own vernacular speech. The British National Corpus data which shows Males using fuck in 1% of utterances has not been replicated in the United States or Canada, but I suspect that it would be. I would further hypothesize that vernacular use of the word fuck would show **marking** and **style-shifting** similar to the BNC data (reproduced here). American Males 13-35 most likely use it in casual speech, and it isn't surprising that they have no problem listening to it. As to whether the American public agrees or empathizes with the other 'badness' criteria—violence, stealing, drinking, drugs, and sex—requires further sociological study. Studies by Peter Trudgill and Jenny Cheshire have shown that British children do give respect for 'toughness.'

Cheshire reported that "Toughness' was an important aspect of the boys' culture: those boys who were good fighters, who carried impressive weapons (usually chains), who stole, and performed well in confrontations with the police were admired and respected." (1978).

I suspect that this Covert Norm encouraging 'toughness' holds in American adults as well, but this hypothesis requires further research into speech relating to violence, stealing, drinking, drugs and sex.

The ghetto dialect which Labov was describing is now very mainstream. It would interesting to speculate on what this implies about American culture, and the state of the world in general. It is my impression the world is far less civilized than it appears on the surface and that Gangsta Rappers may be closer to Vernacular Norms than the Politicians. This remains a personal impression until further research is conducted.

British Corpus Data

Form	Male	Female
Root	1.61	0.43
-ing	8.21	1.27
-ed	0.15	0.07
-er	0.06	0.01
-s	0.02	0.01
-ers	0.01	0
Total	10.06	1.79

Form	AB	C1	C2	DE
Root	1.5	0.12	0.84	1.03
-ing	2.9	0.67	5.58	5.51
-ed	0.29	0	0.07	0.06
-er	0.02	0	0.02	0.06
-s	0.04	0	0.02	0.008
-ers	0	0	0.02	0.008
Total	4.75	0.79	6.55	6.676

word forms: occurrences per 1000 utterances  
10/10,000 = 1% ; 300/40 = 7.5

**Table 5.** Social class - word forms: occurrences per 1000 utterances

Form	under 15	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-60	over 60
Root	2.16	2.53	1.04	0.05	0.73	0.02
-ing	3.55	13.30	7.68	0.65	2.69	0.13
-ed	0.23	0.45	0.12	0	0	0
-er	0.05	0.19	0.01	0	0.02	0
-s	0.08	0	0.01	0	0.02	0
-ers	0	0.03	0	0	0.02	0
Total	6.07	16.5	8.86	0.7	3.48	0.15

**Table 6.** Age - word forms: occurrences per 1000 utterances

## Conclusion

Use of the word *fuck* has increased dramatically on the Billboard charts. The word is spoken by mostly lower-class black youth—almost all somehow connected to Dr. Dre—and heard by over 100 million Americans, especially males age 13-35.

The producers of the word *fuck* seem to subscribe to a set of covert norms described by Labov which value violence, stealing, cursing, drinking, drugs, and sex. This study confirms the emphasis on cursing, but further research needs to be done into other covert norms.

The consumers of the word *fuck* most likely curse frequently themselves, but the British National Corpus data must be replicated in the United States and Canada in order to prove this. This is another venue for further research. Deciding whether or not they subscribe to the other covert norms requires further sociological research.

In the early 80s there was almost no cursing on the Top Ten, but now there are hundreds of instances. This implies the *fuck* is a Sociolinguistic variable in motion over time, gradually becoming accepted in new contexts, like the Top Ten. Work on the British National Corpus has already shown that *fuck* is a sociolinguistic variable with significant marking and style-shifting. My research shows that it is also a variable in motion. If the music they listen to is any indication, Americans are getting more comfortable with *fuck*.

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