

Sexual Objectification in Music Videos and Acceptance of Potentially Offensive Sexual Behaviors

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Little is known about how adolescent and college-aged women interpret music media or how their perceptions of music media are related to their acceptance of physical or nonphysical forms of sexual behavior by male peers. Adolescent and emerging adult women ($n = 259$) viewed and responded to randomly selected music videos. Results from MANCOVA indicate that viewers' perceptions of women in music videos differed by age/social context and, after accounting for their perceptions of the videos' entertainment value and realism, differed within the music video sets. College women were more likely than high-school-aged women to perceive women in music videos as attractive and powerful. Viewers were more likely to perceive women in music videos to be attractive when they also perceived them to be sexual objects but not when they perceived the women in music videos to be powerful. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that participants who accepted sexual objectification and who were entertained by the music videos were less likely to be offended by nonphysical potentially offensive sexual behaviors (POSB) such as dirty jokes or cat calls. Women who accepted sexual objectification of women and perceived the music videos to be realistic were less likely to be offended by physical POSB (e.g., being touched or grabbed, unwanted sexual advances). Results suggest that personal attitudes and finding music videos to be entertaining or realistic may together inform attitudes that normalize the acceptance of POSB.

Keywords: adolescents and media, harassment, sexual objectification, sexual violence, gender issues

Scantly clad women in music videos often gyrate around a single male musician, essentially as props without agency, to communicate that the male musician is sexually desirable (Wallis, 2011). In such videos, women commonly seduce men through their physical appearance, and sexual conquest defines the men's masculinity (Ward, 2003). Sexually objectifying imagery, in which women are narrowly constructed as powerless physical bodies to be used or consumed by others (Frederickson & Rob-

erts, 1997), are pervasive in music videos (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Hust, Rodgers, & Ran, 2013; Wallis, 2011; Ward & Friedman, 2006; Wright, 2009). In fact, content analyses of music videos indicate that the sexual objectification of women is observed across genres and among videos featuring female and male artists (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Hust et al., 2013). Further, sexually objectifying imagery is more prevalent than other traditional gendered depictions, namely, female subordination and male aggression (Wallis, 2011). Indeed, women's sexualization has been increasingly presented in music media as a form of personal female empowerment, thus providing viewers contradictory messages about the cultural meaning of the objectification of women (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Cato & Carpentier, 2010).

Sexually objectifying content is particularly troubling because consuming music is an integral part of youth culture, being the second most popular media activity among young people

This article was published Online First May 1, 2017.

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(Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). At the same time, a growing body of research indicates linkages between stereotypic sexualized media and viewers' acceptance of violence toward women (Aubrey, Hopper, & Mbure, 2011; Johnson, Adams, Ashburn, & Reed, 1995; Kalof, 1999; Kaestle, Halpern, & Brown, 2007; Kistler & Lee, 2009; van Oosten, Peter, & Valkenburg, 2015). For example, adolescents who accepted gender-stereotypic scripts that women are sexual objects and that men are driven to fulfill sexual desires were at higher risk for victimization and perpetration of physical and nonphysical (harassing) sexual behaviors (Jewell et al., 2015). What is unclear is how perceptions of objectified women in music media (i.e., as powerful or demeaned) may inform viewers' own conceptions of what is normative or acceptable behavior of men toward women in real-life situations.

Objectification of women in today's media normalizes sexual harassment of girls and women. In reporting teen girls' experiences of pressure to accept harassing behaviors, Tolman, Spencer, Rosen-Reynoso, and Porche (2003) have argued that the pervasiveness of sexual harassment among young women from their male peers may make sexual harassment appear more acceptable, which in turn could normalize dating violence among young teens. In fact, sexually harassing behavior has become so normative that adolescents and young adults do not recognize them as a form of sexual violence (Hill & Kearl, 2011; Hlavka, 2014; Jewell, Brown, & Perry, 2015; Lacasse, Purdy, & Mendelson, 2003; Tolman et al., 2003). The acceptance of such sexual behaviors as normative speaks to the need to investigate how cultural messages in media inform adolescent and emerging adult women's understanding of these behaviors.

With this in mind, we explore adolescent and emerging-adult women's perceptions of music-video portrayals of women as sexual objects, attractive, and powerful to illuminate how young women make meaning of female sexualization in music videos that simultaneously present women as sexual objects and as powerful through their sexuality (Cato & Carpentier, 2010). We also consider young women's perceptions of music videos as entertaining and realistic, in conjunction with their own attitudes about sexual objectification, as factors that may

inform perceptions of music-media content. Finally, we examine the association of these beliefs and perceptions of portrayals of women in music media to participants' tolerance of physical and nonphysical forms of sexual behavior by male peers. We use the term potentially offensive sexual behaviors (POSB) to define reported physical and nonphysical sexual behavior from males. POSB captures the range of experiences that young women may experience (e.g., from sexual jokes to touching or grabbing of body parts) while also acknowledging that for some young women these behaviors may not be necessarily unwanted or offensive (Liss, Erchull, & Ramsey, 2011; Lerum & Dworkin, 2009).

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

According to social cognitive theory, mass media provide symbolic modeling of behaviors that, when attended to, influence a viewer's attitudes and behaviors about that which is observed (Bandura, 2001). Perceived realism and the entertainment value of media are two mechanisms through which media may influence viewers' understanding and interpretation of gender roles in media (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Realistic media present models who viewers can easily relate to, whereas unrealistic portrayals will likely earn less attention from viewers (Ward, Gorvine, & Cytron-Walker, 2002). Viewers who perceive that sexually objectifying music media portray women as powerful, attractive, and realistic may be more likely to retain those messages as accurate symbolic representations of male-female relationships (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). These symbolic representations are thus used to interpret gendered or sexual experiences in one's life (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Perceived realism of sexual content has strong potential to influence attitudes and expectations for one's sexual experiences and romantic relationships. For example, college men and women who perceived TV clips with romantic/sexual content to be realistic were more likely to watch TV to learn about relationships than those who perceived less realism (Ward et al., 2002). Individuals are also more likely to pay attention to media they find entertaining

(Bandura, 2002). Sexualized, gender stereotypic, and sexually objectifying images of women in music media inform viewers' understanding and interpretation of sexualized behaviors, especially if such content is viewed positively (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). For example, adolescents who perceived gender-stereotyped music videos to be entertaining held more gender-stereotyped attitudes (Ward & Friedman, 2006; Ward, Hansbrough, & Walker, 2005).

Sexual Objectification or Sexual Empowerment?

Several scholars have questioned whether sexualized portrayals of women in music videos—as the musician or as a media character (e.g., a background dancer)—are perceived by viewers as empowered or disempowered (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Cato & Carpentier, 2010). Oware (2009) argued that female artists, and in particular Black female Hip/Hop musicians, present lyrical messages of female empowerment that contradict visual scripts of objectification, thereby presenting a contradictory message of empowerment and disempowerment within a singular music video. Examining portrayals of Black women in Hip Hop music videos, Ross and Coleman (2011) determined a prominent script is one in which women gain power or access to success through their sexuality. They contend that although these music-video portrayals were particular to women gaining access to success in the music industry, African American college women in their sample identified with this script, finding it to be relevant to their lives. The general picture across main stream music media, however, is that women are more often portrayed as sexual objects or gaining some form of power through sexualization or self-objectification.

So how is it that some individuals perceive sexualized media portrayals of women as empowering, whereas others perceive such content to be degrading or objectifying of women? The difference may be explained by lived experiences and the gender role beliefs held by adolescent and emerging adult women. One's interpretation of media messages is in part a function of their lived experiences, age, and attitudes (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, 2002; Manganello et al., 2010; van Oosten et al., 2015; Ward, 2003). For example, college

students preexisting attitudes about sex were the strongest predictors of their perceptions of content across four TV clips. Those with more permissive sexual attitudes (i.e., sex as recreational) were more likely to approve of gender stereotypic behaviors in relationships portrayed by male characters in TV clips viewed (e.g., that men are sex driven and will have sex when given the opportunity; Ward et al., 2002). Among college women, those who enjoyed watching reality TV shows held more traditional female gender role beliefs and were more likely to perceive sexualized and objectified behavior in a reality TV show (*Girls Next Door*) as sexually empowering (Cato & Carpentier, 2010).

Given the pervasiveness of highly sexualized and objectifying music-media content (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Wallis, 2011), and the normalization of sexualized behavior toward girls in high school (AAUW, 2001; Tolman et al., 2003), sexual objectification of women in music videos may be perceived by some young women as normative or desirable. In several studies with college women, those who enjoyed male sexual attention in response to self-objectifying behavior tended to have a traditional gender role orientation (Liss et al., 2011) and viewed their sexuality as means to gain power over men (Erchull & Liss, 2013, 2014). For some girls and young women, self-objectification may be a way for women to assert power or to exercise sexual empowerment (Lerum & Dworkin, 2009; Liss et al., 2011). Observed sexualization of women in music media may be perceived as empowering, particularly if the viewer finds the video content to be entertaining. Conversely, young women who perceive sexual objectification of women in music media to be demeaning may dislike such media. In her qualitative work with high school girls, Tolman (2002) noted that girls who were perceived to be too sexually active were criticized or shamed by their peers (i.e., slut shamed). The way a girl dresses can be enough to become a target of slut shaming regardless of whether she is sexually active. Young women who hold the mindset that sexualized dress or self-objectification earns a girl a negative reputation may perceive sexual objectification of women in media to be demeaning.

Portrayals of Women in Music Videos

Analyses of music videos and lyrics have identified that the dominant content in music videos overrepresents men as aggressors and women as victims of violence (Rich, Woods, Goodman, Emans, & DuRant, 1998; Wallis, 2011), portrays women as sexual objects (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Hust et al., 2013; Wallis, 2011), and refers to women in derisive terms (Hust et al., 2013; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009). Rap music, a mainstream genre for youth today, typically presents male artists and messages of misogyny and materialism (Conrad, Dixon, & Zhang, 2009), and includes more violent content than Rock or R&B (Smith & Boyson, 2002). R&B/Hip Hop contain the highest percentage of women portrayed as decoration and dancing provocatively in the background (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011). Additionally, female musicians are more often presented in self-objectifying ways than male musicians (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Wallis, 2011), and female Pop artists are particularly presented in this way over other mainstream genres (Aubrey and Frisby, 2011).

Music Media and POSB

Several experimental studies with college students indicate that attending to music videos is associated with attitudes about women, gender roles, and violence in relationships. Exposure to Hip Hop music videos with high levels of female sexualization was associated with greater acceptance of sexual objectification, gender stereotypes, and rape myth acceptance among college men and women (Kistler & Lee, 2009). Similarly, exposure to a highly sexually stereotyped music video was associated with college women's acceptance of physical interpersonal violence (Kalof, 1999).

Experimental studies with high-school-age students suggest that exposure and involvement with music videos has an impact on gender attitudes and understanding of sexual behaviors in dating relationships. Among a large multiracial sample of 7th and 8th grade students, exposure to music videos and pro-wrestling programs was associated with boys' belief that it is ok to force someone to have sex (Kaestle et al., 2007). In more recent longitudinal research with Dutch adolescents, van Oosten, Peter, and Valk-

enburg (2015) examined self-reported consumption of sexualized music videos, and feelings of arousal or pleasure while watching music videos, in relation to girls' and boys' beliefs in token resistance (i.e., the sexual script that female resistance to male sexual overtures really means "yes"). In their sample of teens, acceptance of token resistance was differentially associated with the gender of the music video artist. Of importance to the current study, adolescent girls' consumption of sexualized music videos by a male artist was positively associated with their acceptance of the token resistance script. Collectively, these studies indicate that effects of sexualized and aggressive media on adolescents' understanding of appropriate dating behaviors may be a function of the viewers' personal attitudes, their perceptions of the media content, and the gender of the music artist. Examining individuals' acceptance of the sexual objectification of women in society and perceptions of how women are portrayed in music media can further illuminate associations between personal beliefs, perceptions of media content and acceptance or rejection of POSB.

Viewers' Perceptions of Women in Music Media

Content analyses (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Wallis, 2011) and studies of viewers' perceptions of sexualized content (Cato & Carpentier, 2010; Oware, 2009; Ward et al., 2002) suggest that the way in which female objectification is presented may make a difference in how it is perceived by adolescent and emerging adult women. For example, music videos with female artists who self-objectify may be perceived differently from those videos in which there is greater objectification from men, as is more typical for male music artists (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Wallis, 2011). Similarly, music videos that portray women as gaining power through their sexualization may be perceived differently than music videos that portray women simply as objectified props for male pleasure.

Research Question

Previous literature and social-cognitive theory suggest that viewers' perceptions of women—whether as powerful, as sexual objects, or as attractive—may be a function of their age/social

context, acceptance of the sexual objectification of women in society, perceptions of music videos as realistic and entertaining, and the music videos to which they are exposed. We propose the following research question as a step toward understanding these associations.

RQ. How do participants' perceptions of women in music videos (as powerful, sexual objects, and attractive) differ by their age/social context, their acceptance of sexual objectification of women in society, their perception of the videos as entertaining or realistic, and their exposure to different music videos?

Hypotheses: Perceptions of Women in Music Media and POSB

The reviewed literature collectively supports the argument that portrayals of female sexual objectification in music videos informs the development of adolescent and young adults' attitudes regarding behavior that is sexually aggressive. POSB are sexually objectifying behaviors that are frequently portrayed in music videos—staring at body parts, sexual jokes, gestures or comments, touching or grabbing legs or other body parts. Young women who are not bothered by female objectification may not perceive such behaviors in music videos to be objectifying and may also not be offended by POSB in real life. Conversely, it is reasonable to assume young women who perceive sexualized portrayals of women in music videos as sexual objects (i.e., objectified *without* power) may be more offended by POSB.

To further our understanding of music video content and its association with the acceptance of unwanted sexual behavior, we examine young women's perceptions of women in music videos as powerful, as sexual objects, and as attractive in relation to the degree to which they are offended by POSB (Jewell, Brown, & Perry, 2015; Lacasse et al., 2003). We controlled for age/social context, acceptance of sexual objectification of women in society, and viewers' perception of music videos as entertaining or realistic because these variables are likely to influence both the outcomes and perceptions of women in the music videos. We also account for the music videos that participants viewed because music videos differ in their portrayals of women. Furthermore, studies that have examined associations between music media and

attitudes toward violence in relationships (Kallof, 1999; Kistler & Lee, 2009) have not differentiated between physical and nonphysical violence. POSB that are nonphysical (e.g., sexual jokes, comments, or gestures) are qualitatively different from behaviors that are physical (e.g., touching or grabbing). We therefore test the following hypotheses for each POSB type separately but do not propose specific hypotheses for the POSB type.

H₁: Individuals who perceive that women in the music videos are powerful will be more offended by POSB.

H₂: Individuals who perceive that women in the music videos are attractive will be less offended by POSB.

H₃: Individuals who perceive that women in the music videos are sexual objects will be less offended by POSB.

Method

Sample

The data are derived from a larger study of college and high school students' perceptions of alcohol and portrayals of men and women in music media. For this study, we analyze data from 50 high school women and 209 college age women ranging in age from 15 to 25 years old ($M = 20$, $SD = 1.87$) who were enrolled in Healthy Living classes at three high schools in the Northwestern region of the United States or in three lower-level general education courses offered at a university in the same region. The combined participation rate was 74% in the larger study. We specifically focus on female students who are in their mid to later adolescent years (i.e., emerging adults), excluding males ($n = 72$) because women are more likely to be the recipients of POSB (Black et al., 2011; Halpern, Oslak, Young, Martin, & Kupper, 2001), and we are specifically interested in young women's perceptions. The majority of our convenience sample was White (82%) followed by Asian (12%), Hispanic (7%), Black (2%), Native American (2%) and other ethnic minority (3%). Most reported their family income to be "middle income" (64%). Thirty percent of participants reported their family of origin

income to be “high”, 4% reported they were from a low-income family, and 2% reported they were from a “very high” income family.

Procedure

Data were collected within one classroom period for both high school and college students using a paper and pencil assessment. Teachers in the participating high school classes were trained to collect the data following protocol developed by the first author (described below). Data from college students were collected by the first author and a research assistant in three general education classes. Following protocol approved by the University Institutional Review Board, parental consent and student assent was obtained from high school students, and consent was obtained from participating college students. After obtaining assent and consent, students in each of the participating classes viewed one of three sets of music videos (described below); each video set was viewed by one high school and one college class. That is, each high school classroom viewed a different set of the music videos; each college class saw a matched set to those viewed by the high school class. Music videos from MTV Hits were recorded over a 1-week period between 3:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. daily. Nine music videos were randomly selected, and were then randomly divided into the three music-video sets. Each music video set depicted current music artists with at least one top-ten song as listed by genre on the Yahoo Music Video website at time of random selection. Four genres were represented: Pop, Rock, R&B, and Rap.

Measures

Participants were exposed to one of the three music video sets. Each music video set contained at least one female performer. To differentiate the music video sets viewed by students, we created a categorical variable for participants' exposure to each music video set (1 = *music video set 1*; 2 = *music video set 2*; 3 = *music video set 3*). Below we provide a brief description of artists/songs featured in each music video set in the order of exposure.

Music video set 1. This music video set contained an R&B group with female musicians (Pussycat Dolls, *Stick Wit You*), a Rock band (Fall Out Boy, *Dance Dance*), and a Pop singer

(Jesse McCartney, *She's No You*). In the first video, the female performers dance provocatively wearing tight fashionable clothing that is not overly revealing. They demonstrate power by signing autographs for young adoring female fans and the lyrics suggest self-assuredness. The Rock and Pop videos featured male performers in which women are generally featured as sexual objects of desire as they dress or dance sexually for the pleasure of men in the videos.

Music video set 2. This music-video set contained three Rap music videos: Bow Wow featuring Ciara (*Like You*), Kanye West featuring Jaimie Fox (*Gold Digger*), and Pretty Ricky (*Your Body*). In the first video a male and a female artist sing about their romantic relationship. Women in the video wear tight-fitting clothing with bare midriffs; the female singer is portrayed as the object of desire. The Kanye West music video presents a stereotyped gold-digger storyline in which women are scantily dressed and seductively posed while simultaneously presenting lyrical messages of a woman who deceptively seduces a man for his money. The Pretty Ricky video similarly presents close camera shots of lips, breasts, and buttocks, and women in scant clothing and provocative poses who admire the men in the video.

Music video set 3. This music video set, containing an R&B (Missy Elliot, *Teary Eyed*), a Rock (All American Rejects, *Dirty Little Secret*), and a Pop music video (Brittney Spears, *My Prerogative*) is the most diverse in terms of content. Missy Elliot is featured in a storyline in which she exacts revenge by killing her cheating partner. The All American Rejects video features the band with intermittent images of men and women holding flash cards that contain personal secrets. Several cards portray women with self-deprecating messages such as “I hate people who remind me of myself.” Britney Spears demonstrates self-objectification and sexual power through highly sexualized imagery. The images and lyrics suggest she is taking control of her sexuality and life decisions. In the first and last videos, the women are also portrayed as mentally unstable.

We intentionally showed randomly selected music videos because we wanted participants to respond to a scope of music and content that was most representative of music videos available in popular culture. Our goal was to gain an assessment of viewers' perceptions of women

as sexual objects, attractive, and as powerful across a range of popular genres. As a result, our video sets are not exactly the same. This systematic selection of music videos, however, offers messages that represent typical pop-culture music that the young women in our sample would likely be exposed to in public or private settings (e.g., in shopping malls, airports, advertisements).

Viewers' Perceptions of Music-Video Content

Using a Receiver Oriented Message Analysis (ROMA) approach (Austin, Pinkleton, Hust, & Miller, 2007), students completed a brief one-page opinion assessment of the video. For all ROMA items, participants were asked to choose a response that "that best describes your thoughts about the video" on a 4-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, and 4 = *strongly agree*). Participants were first prompted for their opinion of the video with "This video was . . ." followed by each of the following prompts: entertaining, realistic, funny, annoying, stupid. In this study, we use participants' perceptions of each music video as *realistic* or *entertaining*. To assess perceived music-video content, participants were prompted with "Women in this video were . . ." followed by eight descriptors. These descriptors had been identified in four pilot-study focus groups in which adolescent girls and boys viewed and discussed their perceptions of music-video content. Content identified in the focus groups was consistent with that identified in music video content analyses (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Hust et al., 2013; Rich et al., 1998; Wallis, 2011). For this study, we selected three descriptors (women as "sex objects," "powerful," and "attractive") because they have been identified in the literature as commonly featured sexualized portrayals of women in music media and because they reflect aspects of measures that have been associated with attitudes toward intimate partner violence in earlier research (Aubrey et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 1995; Kaestle et al., 2007; Kalof, 1995; Kistler & Lee, 2009; van Oosten et al., 2015).

Because participant groups viewed different sets of music videos, and thus potentially different levels of the content of interest, viewer's responses to each ROMA item (video as realis-

tic, video as entertaining, women as sex objects, women as attractive, and women as powerful) were standardized (z-scored) for each music video viewed. Each of these Zed ROMA items were then averaged across the three songs within a music set. These test scores reflect each individual's perception of the three videos and content they viewed within the music video set. Higher test scores indicate viewers' attitudes that the music videos within a set were entertaining and realistic, and viewers' perception that the music videos contained greater portrayals of women as sex objects, powerful, and attractive. For ease in interpretation, raw mean scores, ranges, and standard deviation scores for variables within each music video set, are presented in Table 2; these are further discussed in the analysis and results section.

Potentially offensive sexual behaviors. We assess the degree to which young women find sexual behaviors toward them to be offensive following the example of Lacasse et al. (2003). Six items that tapped into POSB were adapted from earlier studies (AAUW, 2001; Lacasse et al., 2003) that reported the most common types of harassment experienced by adolescents. Participants indicated on a 4-point scale how offended they would be "if someone your age did this to someone of the opposite sex" (1 = *not at all*, 2 = *some*, 3 = *quite a bit*, and 4 = *very*). Mean test scores were calculated for nonphysical POSB items (told dirty jokes, made sexual comments, and stared at body parts; $M = 2.25$, $SD = .66$, $\alpha = .78$) and physical POSB items (kept inviting them out even after refusal, made unwanted romantic or sexual advances, or touched or grabbed legs or other body parts; $M = 3.23$, $SD = .71$, $\alpha = .77$). Internal reliability for these variables was adequate. Higher test scores indicate being more offended by these sexualized behaviors.

Sexual objectification of women. Three statements from Kistler and Lee's *Sexual Objectification scale* (2009) assessed participants' attitudes toward the sexual objectification of women: "It is ok for men to whistle or call out to attractive women they don't know," "It is ok for men to evaluate women's bodies as they pass by on the street," and "It is ok for men to think of women as 'eye candy' at a dance, party, or club." These statements were selected because they were most relevant to the experiences of high school women who are part of our

sample. Mean test scores were calculated from responses on a 4-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, and 4 = *strongly agree*); scores ranged from 1 to 3.33, $M = 1.73$, $SD = .60$, and demonstrated adequate internal reliability ($\alpha = .77$). Higher test scores indicated greater acceptance of sexual objectification.

Age/social context. A categorical variable was created for age within the school setting because developmental and social experiences differ for high school and college students and may therefore inform how they perceive music-media messages. Participants who were in high school at the time of data collection were coded as 1 ($n = 50$). College students were coded as 2 ($n = 209$).

Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive analyses were run for viewers' perceptions of women (as powerful, sexual objects, and attractive) and of the videos as entertaining and realistic for each music video within the three music-video sets. Table 1 indicates the percentages of those who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about the music videos. As can be seen in this table, within music video sets there is some variability in viewers' perceptions, as we would expect (Austin et al., 2007). All videos were rated as entertaining by >33% of participants. Perceptions of music videos as realistic varied more widely. In regard to perceptions of women, women were most commonly viewed as attractive with one exception (Missy Elliott in "Teary Eyed," in which she is violent toward a former lover). Similar to realism, participants' perceptions of women as sex objects varied, but in some videos, the overwhelming majority agreed that women were sexual objects. Table 2 shows mean scores for perceptions across the three videos within each set. As can be seen, participants who viewed music video set 2 had the highest mean scores for "women as sex objects" and "women as attractive," whereas viewers of music video set 3 had higher mean scores for "women as powerful."

Perceptions of women in music videos. Our research question asked: How do participants' perceptions of women in music videos (as powerful, sexual objects, and attractive) differ by their age/social context, their acceptance

Table 1
Participants' Perceptions of Music Videos

Music video set and artist	Song	Genre	Viewers' who agreed or strongly agreed. . . .											
			MV entertains		MV is realistic		Women are sex objects		Women are powerful		Women are attractive			
			%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n		
Music video set 1														
Pussycat Dolls	Stick Wit U*	R&B	76	71	42	38	75	70	50	45	88	83		
Fall Out Boy	Dance Dance*	Rock	84	79	37	34	50	57	18	17	74	69		
Jesse McCartney	She's No You	Pop	45	42	32	30	55	52	61	53	66	63		
Music video set 2														
Bow Wow Ft. Ciara	Like You*	Rap	63	62	51	50	34	50	48	47	84	82		
Kanye West Ft. Jamie Foxx	Gold Digger*	Rap	78	76	22	21	96	94	50	51	88	86		
Pretty Ricky	Your Body	Rap	60	58	23	22	94	92	32	31	90	88		
Music Video Set 3														
Missy Elliott	Teary Eyed*	R&B	41	27	24	16	42	34	46	30	26	17		
All American Rejects	Dirty Little Secret*	Rock	95	63	91	58	9	6	79	52	50	33		
Brittney Spears	My Prerogative	Pop	74	49	15	10	98	64	79	52	94	62		

* Denotes a top 10 song listed on Yahoo Music Video Web site by genre.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Participant Perceptions of Music Videos

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Music video set 1					
Entertaining	95	1.33	3.67	2.76	.50
Realistic	95	1	4	2.17	.58
Women are sex objects	95	1	4	2.71	.60
Women are powerful	95	1	3.67	2.30	.54
Women are attractive	95	1	4	2.88	.67
Music video set 2					
Entertaining	98	1.33	4	2.73	.55
Realistic	97	1	3.67	2.09	.61
Women are sex objects	98	1.67	4	3.25	.51
Women are powerful	98	1	3.67	2.36	.59
Women are attractive	98	1.33	4	3.17	.54
Music video set 3					
Entertaining	66	1.67	3.67	2.75	.41
Realistic	66	1.33	3.33	2.35	.46
Women are sex objects	66	1	3.33	2.54	.45
Women are powerful	66	1.67	3.33	2.70	.45
Women are attractive	66	1	3.67	2.61	.48

of sexual objectification of women in society, and their exposure to different music videos? To answer this question, we conducted a MANCOVA in which the three perceptions of women in the music videos (as powerful, attractive, and sexual objects) were entered as the dependent variables. Acceptance of objectification of women in society, perception of the music videos as entertaining, and perception of the music videos as realistic were all entered as covariates and age/social context and exposure to music video set were entered as a fixed factor.

As shown in Table 3, the MANCOVA results indicate that acceptance of sexual objectification of women in society was not significantly associated with participants' perceptions of women in the music videos, but there was a significant multivariate effect for perceptions of the music video as entertaining, ($F(3, 249) = 17.33, p < .01; V = .173$, partial $\eta^2 = .173$), and perceptions of the music video as realistic, ($F(3, 249) = 9.27, p < .01; V = .100$, partial $\eta^2 = .100$).

After accounting for acceptance of the sexual objectification of women in society and the perceptions of the videos as entertaining and realistic, the results indicated there was a significant multivariate affect for age/social context, ($F(3, 249) = 9.59, p < .01; V = .104$, partial $\eta^2 = .104$). Tests of Between-Subjects Effects indicate high school women and college women

differed significantly in their perceptions of women as attractive and women as powerful. Pairwise comparisons indicate college women had a significantly higher adjusted mean for perceiving the women in the music videos as attractive ($M = 2.96$) than high school women ($M = 2.55$). College women also had a significantly higher adjusted mean for perceiving the women in the music videos as powerful ($M = 2.49$) than high-school aged women ($M = 2.25$).

Music video set exposure was also significantly associated with perceptions of women in music videos, after accounting for perceptions of the videos as entertaining and realistic, ($F(6, 500) = 20.35, p < .01; V = .393$, partial $\eta^2 = .196$). Tests of Between-Subjects Effects indicated music video set exposure was associated with viewing women in the videos as attractive, powerful, and sexual objects. Pairwise comparisons indicate participants exposed to music video set two had significantly higher adjusted mean scores ($M = 3.05$) for women in the music videos being attractive than those who watched music video set one ($M = 2.79$) and music video set three ($M = 2.42$), as shown in Figure 1. Participants who watched music video set two also had higher adjusted mean scores ($M = 3.20$) for perceiving women as sexual objects than those who viewed music video set one ($M = 2.25$) and music video set three ($M =$

Table 3
MANCOVA Differences in Perceptions of Women in Music Videos

Measure	Women in the videos were . . .	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Partial eta squared
Intercept	Attractive	13.86	1.00	13.86	52.19	.17
	Powerful	9.03	1.00	9.03	36.60	.13
	Sex objects	68.87	1.00	68.87	252.09	.50
Age/Social context	Attractive***	6.28	1.00	6.28	23.64	.09
	Powerful***	2.22	1.00	2.22	9.02	.03
	Sex objects	.30	1.00	.30	1.11	.00
Exposure to music video set	Attractive***	14.82	2.00	7.41	27.91	.18
	Powerful***	4.01	2.00	2.00	8.12	.06
	Sex objects***	20.80	2.00	10.40	38.06	.23
Sexual objectification of women ^a	Attractive	.00	1.00	.00	.00	.00
	Powerful	.03	1.00	.03	.12	.00
	Sex objects	.09	1.00	.09	.33	.00
Music videos were realistic ^a	Attractive	.73	1.00	.73	2.76	.01
	Powerful***	3.45	1.00	3.45	14.01	.05
	Sex objects***	1.32	1.00	1.32	4.83	.02
Music videos were entertaining ^a	Attractive***	7.73	1.00	7.73	29.12	.10
	Powerful***	3.09	1.00	3.09	12.53	.05
	Sex objects	.62	1.00	.62	2.27	.01
Error	Attractive	66.66	251.00	.27		
	Powerful	61.90	251.00	.25		
	Sex objects	68.57	251.00	.27		

^a Indicates variable was entered as a covariate.

*** $p < .001$.

2.57). Thus, participants who viewed music-video set two, which contained three Rap songs, perceived women in the videos to be attractive and as sexual objects. In contrast, participants exposed to music video set three had significantly higher adjusted mean scores for perceiving women as powerful ($M = 2.57$) than those exposed to music video one ($M = 2.25$) and

music video two ($M = 2.30$). Music-video set three featured two songs with women artists who both demonstrated power over men in the video.

Factors associated with finding POSB offensive. To test the hypotheses, two hierarchical OLS regressions were conducted. Non-physical POSB and physical POSB were re-

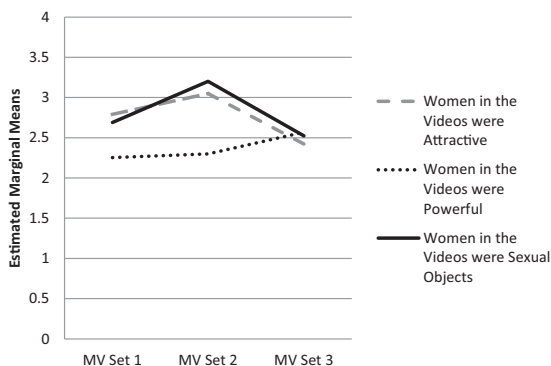


Figure 1. Estimated marginal means of perceptions of women by music video set. *Note:* Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Sexual Objectification of Women = 1.73, Perceived Realism = 2.19, and Perceived Entertainment = 2.75.

gressed separately on acceptance of female objectification in society, age/social context, exposure to music video sets, and perceptions of music videos as entertaining and realistic in the first block. Exposure to music video set was dummy coded with music video set 1 as the referent group. All three perceptions of women in music videos (as attractive, powerful, and sexual objects) were entered in the second block.

Our hypotheses proposed that participants who perceived women in the music videos to be powerful would be more offended by POSB (H1), and those who perceived that women in the music videos to be attractive or as sexual objects would be less offended by POSB (H2 and H3, respectively). As indicated in Table 4, none of the hypotheses were supported after controlling for age/social context, attitudes about sexual objectification, and perceptions of music videos as entertaining or realistic. The strongest predictor of acceptance of nonphysical and physical POSB was participants' acceptance of the sexual objectification of women in society (explaining 31% and 22% of the variance respectively). Participants' perceptions of the videos as entertaining or realistic were also

associated with POSB. Individuals who perceived greater entertainment value in the music videos reported being less offended by nonphysical POSB, and individuals who perceived the videos to be more realistic were less offended by physical POSB. The regression models suggest that young women's attitudes toward sexual objectification, together with the degree to which they are entertained by music videos and find them realistic, are predictive of both nonphysical and physical POSB. The model fit for nonphysical POSB explained 14% of the variance in identifying nonphysical sexual behaviors as offensive. The final regression model for physical POSB is not as strong, explaining only 9% of the variance.

Discussion

Individuals' lived experiences, age, and attitudes affect their interpretation of media messages (Brown et al., 2002; Mangelino et al., 2010; van Oosten et al., 2016; Ward, 2003). Existing experimental studies focused on the effects of music media's sexualization of women, however, have relied on the research-

Table 4
Multivariate Regression Results for Nonphysical and Physical POSB

Predictor variables	Nonphysical POSB		Physical POSB	
	Block 1 B (SE)	Block 2 B (SE)	Block 1 B (SE)	Block 2 B (SE)
Sexual objectification of women	-.31 (.07)***	-.31 (.07)***	-.22 (.07)***	-.22 (.07)***
Age/Social context	-.03 (.10)	-.08 (.11)	-.05 (.11)	-.09 (.12)
Music video set 2 ^a	.02 (.09)	-.03 (.10)	.09 (.10)	.10 (.11)
Music video set 3 ^a	.01 (.10)	.02 (.11)	.08 (.12)	.09 (.12)
Perceptions of MVs as entertaining	-.12 (.08)	-.16 (.09)*	-.03 (.09)	-.09 (.10)
Perceptions of MVs as realistic	.032 (.07)	.01 (.08)	-.12 (.08)	-.15 (.08)*
Perceptions of women in MVs as attractive		.08 (.08)		.13 (.09)
Perceptions of women in MVs as powerful		.11 (.08)		.07 (.09)
Perceptions of women in MVs as sexual objects		.07 (.08)		-.08 (.09)
R ²	.115	.138	.076	.092
Adjusted R ²	.094	.106	.054	.059
F	5.44	4.39***	3.46	2.79**

Note. n = 257; POSB = potentially offensive sexual behaviors.

^a Compared to music video set one.

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

ers' selection of music videos that include a predetermined, researcher-developed operationalization of women's sexualization. Although these studies contribute significantly to our understanding of how such portrayals affect women's acceptance of interpersonal violence (Kalog, 1999) and rape myth acceptance (Kistler & Lee, 2009), it is unclear how viewers perceive such music media content. Austin et al. (2007) identified that viewers have varied perceptions of music media content, and that viewers' perceptions can differ widely from a predetermined, researcher-developed operationalization. In an extension of Austin and her colleagues' work, the current study first identified how adolescent and emerging adult viewers' age/social context, attitudes toward the sexual objectification of women in society, perceptions of music videos as entertaining and realistic, and exposure to various sets of music videos was associated with their perceptions of the portrayal of women in music videos (as powerful, as attractive, and as sex objects).

Female viewers' perceptions of women in music videos were partially explained by their age/social context and the music video set they viewed, after accounting for their attitudes about societal sexual objectification of women and their perception that the videos were realistic and/or entertaining. Although viewers' perceptions of the music videos as realistic and entertaining were associated with their perceptions of women in the videos, attitudes about societal sexual objectification of women was not associated with viewers' perceptions of women.

The results indicate some differences in perceptions of music video content for high school and college women. College women were more likely than high school aged women to perceive women in music videos as attractive and powerful. This result may reflect developmental differences between young women in high school versus college. High school and college students have unique developmental and social contexts and thus different lived experiences that are likely to influence their interpretation of media (Arnett, 2002). For example, college women might more easily identify with the celebrities because they are closer in age and because of their experiences in college. Within the context of a college setting, young women may have freedom to explore their sexuality without the social constraints that were present

in high school. As such, sexual expression through behaviors that were present in the music videos observed in this study (e.g., sexual dancing, provocative dress) are likely to be rewarded by the male gaze and possible pursuant sexual encounters. This concept is consistent with existing research results that college-age women perceived sexualized portrayals of women as sexually empowering (Cato & Carpentier, 2010). Thus, it is possible that college women's perceptions of women in the videos as attractive and powerful, even when these portrayals included sexual objectification, may have been interpreted as sexually empowering. In contrast, the social norm around provocative dress and sexualized behavior is more constrained for high school girls. Tolman (2002) has noted that social norms for sexuality keep girls "in check," and that high school girls who are considered to be promiscuous risk being "slut shamed." It is therefore possible that the high school girls in our study perceived the portrayals of women in the videos to be disparaging rather than empowering.

Well established in the literature on music-video content is the pervasive presentation of women as sexual objects to be used or consumed by others (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Hust et al., 2013; Wallis, 2011; Ward & Friedman, 2006; Wright, 2009), but less is known about whether viewers perceive sexually objectified women as powerful or attractive. In this study, individuals who viewed music video set two, which included three music videos from the Rap genre, perceived women as attractive and as sexual objects at a higher rate than those who viewed the other videos. Perceiving women in Rap as attractive and as sex objects is consistent with content analyses that indicate this is a typical portrayal of women for this genre (Conrad et al., 2009; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009). In contrast, individuals who viewed music video set three, which featured one female musician exerting nonsexual power over men, and another who self-objectified, reported viewing women as powerful at a higher rate than the others. These viewers, however, were less likely to view the female characters as attractive. Thus, the results indicate that female attractiveness and sexual objectification in music videos go hand in hand. Participants in our study perceived women in music videos to be attractive when they also

perceive them to be sexual objects, but they were less likely to perceive women in music videos to be attractive or objectified *and* powerful (see Figure 1). It is plausible that young women may be less inclined to view portrayals of powerful women as attractive when the artist is female. Further testing of individual music videos featuring female artists is needed to more fully understand the intersection of perceived power and attractiveness in music videos.

Of concern is the potential for the sexual objectification of women in media to negatively influence girls' and young women's sense of self, sexuality, and attitudes about gender roles and violence within intimate relationships (American Psychological Association Task Force on The Sexualization of Girls, 2007). Existing research has identified that exposure to music media is associated with the acceptance of interpersonal violence, but how viewer's perceptions of music-media content—particularly portrayals of women—is related to such attitudes is unclear. Therefore, we tested if participants' perceptions of women in music videos were associated with their acceptance of a continuum of potentially offensive sexual behaviors.

Our test of the association between perceptions of music videos and POSB revealed no support for the proposed hypotheses. Participants' perceptions of women in music videos were not significantly associated with POSB. Considering multiple variables together, the regressions indicate that young women in our sample who held more accepting attitudes about sexual objectification and who were entertained by the music videos were less likely to be offended by nonphysical POSB (dirty jokes, sexual comments or staring at body parts). Young women who were accepting of the sexual objectification of women in real life and who perceived the music videos to be realistic were less likely to be offended by physical POSB (e.g., being touched or grabbed on the buttocks). The results collectively suggest that attitudes about sexual objectification and the entertainment value or realism of music videos may be most relevant to young women's acceptance of potentially offensive sexual behaviors that range from telling dirty jokes to physical sexual aggression. Current scholarly discussion suggests that for some young women, sexualization may be empowering because sexual objectification from men (e.g., whistles, gazing) is enjoy-

able and affirming of their attractiveness (Liss et al., 2011) or because it provides them opportunity to use their sexuality to assert power (Erchull & Liss, 2014; Lerum & Dworkin, 2009). This may also be the case for the young women in our sample. Those who are not offended by sexual objectification of women may relate to such portrayals in music media as they may represent realistic experiences. Of interest and some concern, is that the young women in our study who held accepting attitudes about sexual objectification and who perceived the music videos to be realistic were less likely to be offended by physical POSB (touching or grabbing, unwanted sexual advances or nonacceptance of refusal).

Limitations and Strengths

Our study advances current literature by exploring high school and college women's perceptions of women in music media, a medium that highly sexualizes women. Similar to Ward and colleagues' approach (Ward et al., 2002), participants in our study were shown different sets of music videos that were randomly selected and assigned. This approach was an attempt to simulate a naturalistic situation where popular music may be viewed. We assessed participants' perceptions within three sets of randomly selected music videos from a mainstream media outlet to determine the degree to which participants' perceived portrayals of women as sexual objects, powerful, and attractive. The music videos represented different genres and contained imagery in which women were objectified by male artists, female artists objectified themselves, and women were presented in positions of dominance. Thus, we were able to capture a snapshot of viewer perceptions across music videos that might typically be seen in public and private venues.

We were interested to know if perceptions of the music videos and their content were associated with adolescent and emerging-adult women's acceptance of POSB. That perceptions of women in music videos were not directly associated with POSB in the multiple regression analysis might be because of the media stimuli. It is possible that the mix of different genres within the music video sets weakened potential effects of content to the POSB outcomes. That entertainment and realism were differentially

associated with nonphysical and physical POSB is of importance and suggests utility in examining different types of POSB. Earlier research on media and relationship violence has largely relied on a measurement of rape myth acceptance as their outcome (Kalof, 1999; Kistler & Lee, 2009; Lee, Hust, Zhang, & Zhang, 2011). Our POSB measure captures potentially offensive sexual behaviors (Lacasse et al., 2003) and sexual harassment experiences identified in AAUW reports (AAUW, 2001; Hill & Kearl, 2011). Thus, our measure allows us to examine more specifically the contribution of attitudes and media toward potentially offensive behaviors along a continuum of violence.

The model fit of the regressions, although adequate, indicate that additional factors need to be considered in relation to POSB. Earlier research suggests that attitudes about sexual stereotypes (Ward et al., 2002; Ward et al., 2005) and enjoyment of sexualization (Liss et al., 2011) might be important personal characteristics to include in future research. Further, it is possible that participants' attitudes lead them to focus on images within the video. Because we assessed participants' attitudes about sexual objectification after participants viewed the music-video stimuli, it is possible that priming occurred. That we are missing information on the regular use of music media by our participants is a limitation. Such information can help to reveal how time engagement with music media interacts with other characteristics.

An additional limitation is our inability to distinguish the sexual orientation of participants in our sample because such information was not collected. It is possible that perceptions of media content may differ among gay or lesbian participants. Based on national estimates that 3.8% of the US population identifies as GLBT (Newport, 2015), it is unlikely that the number of GLBT persons in our sample would change the results. Future research to include a large enough sample of GLBT participants would expand understanding of perceptions of sexual scripts in media among this population of young adults.

Conclusion

Music media are strong cultural entities that provides symbolic representation of sexual norms and sex role expectations. Our study sug-

gests that when young women have accepting attitudes toward sexual objectification, enjoy music media, and perceive it to be realistic, they may be more vulnerable to believing that nonphysical and physical forms of violence against them is normative or acceptable. The findings further indicate a need to explore the interactions of social context, developmental characteristics, and exposure to particular media messages over time, in order to understand how adolescent girls come to make meaning of sexual objectification in media and in their own lives as they develop into young women. Engaging young women in dialogue and critical thinking about sexualized content in music videos can help them to create consciousness about the link between cultural messages that objectify women, attitudes that endorse sexual objectification, and sexualized violence on a continuum from harassment to assault. Our results support existing efforts to create interventions aimed at teaching young women how to critically evaluate the sexually stereotyped messages that are prevalent in music media while also being mindful to foster healthy sexual empowerment.

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Received June 30, 2015

Revision received October 26, 2016

Accepted October 27, 2016 ■