

The Influence of Non-Misogynous and Mixed Portrayals of Intimate Partner Violence in Music on Beliefs About Intimate Partner Violence

Violence Against Women

2017, Vol. 23(2) 243–257

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DOI: 10.1177/1077801216637473

journals.sagepub.com/home/vaw

Renae Franiuk¹, Jill Coleman², and Bethany Apa³

Abstract

In this study, we investigated the effect of songs that offer non-misogynous and ambivalent portrayals of intimate partner violence (IPV). Participants ($N = 103$) were exposed to a misogynous song about IPV, a song critical of IPV, and a song that offered an ambivalent portrayal of IPV. Our results showed positive effects of the anti-IPV song, and both positive and negative effects of the ambivalent portrayal on participants' beliefs about a violent relationship. These findings suggest that the context in which IPV is portrayed should be considered when evaluating the impact of media depicting IPV.

Keywords

intimate partner violence, music, media

There has been much research investigating the effects of media violence on subsequent cognitions, affect, and behavior (see Anderson et al., 2003a, for a review). While most of this research has focused on non-gendered violence, a subset of this research has focused on media that portrays gendered violence, predominantly violence committed by men against women. Much of this research has focused on the effects of

¹Aurora University, Aurora, IL, USA

²Roosevelt University, Chicago, IL, USA

³Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, IL, USA

Corresponding Author:

Jill Coleman, Roosevelt University, 18 S. Michigan Ave., Gage Building 405J, Chicago, IL 60603, USA.

Email: jcoleman@roosevelt.edu

sexual violence against women in television, movies, and pornography (see Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2000, for a review). A few studies have investigated the impact of portrayals of non-sexual violence against women in movies and television (Bleakley, Jamieson, & Romer, 2012; Palazzolo & Roberto, 2011), but most research on non-sexual violence against women in popular media has focused on music. Furthermore, most research on violence against women in the media has focused on the negative impact of this media on views of women (see Malamuth et al., 2000, for a review). Thus, research investigating music and violence against women has generally focused on music with misogynous lyrics (e.g., Barongan & Nagayama Hall, 1995; Fisher & Greitemeyer, 2006; Gourdine & Lemmons, 2011). While it is important to investigate the impact of misogynous music on listeners given its prevalence, no empirical research has investigated the impact of non-misogynous music about intimate partner violence (IPV). A great deal of music about IPV is from a misogynous male lens, but many performers have offered a critical view of IPV, a sympathetic view of the victim, and/or a critical view of the perpetrator. Therefore, the central aim of the present research was to investigate responses to music that offers a message that is non-misogynous and anti-IPV and music that offers a more ambivalent portrayal of non-sexual IPV. Although research on misogynous music and violence against women has shown negative effects of exposure to such music, we also investigated whether or not non-misogynous portrayals of IPV can have prosocial effects on its listeners.

Music and Violence Against Women

A complete discussion of patriarchal and cultural factors that maintain and promote violence against women is beyond the scope of this article, but numerous studies have investigated the impact of violence against women in popular media. It is important to note that media more often portrays IPV that is male to female than female to male, especially where sexual violence is depicted (Bleakley et al., 2012; Linz & Donnerstein, 1994) and, thus, most research on music and IPV has investigated violence committed by men against women. Reviewing four decades of music, Cooper (1985) found that 96% of songs contained common stereotypes of women (e.g., as sex objects, as possessions). Furthermore, in an analysis of the 20 most popular songs on Billboard's "Hot 100" from 1998 to 2003, Bretthauer, Zimmerman, and Banning (2006) found men and power, the objectification of women, and sexual violence against women to be three common themes. Given these themes in popular music, it is not surprising that most research on music and violence against women has focused on the negative impact of music with misogynous content.

Although empirical research on music and violence against women is relatively scant, a brief review of the literature shows support for the negative impact of exposure to misogynous music on one's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. A few studies have found that male and female respondents were not disturbed by misogynous lyrics and lyrics depicting IPV (Gourdine & Lemmons, 2011; Hernández, Weinstein, & Muñoz-Laboy, 2012), but most research in this area has focused on the impact on a male audience. Experimentally manipulating participants' exposure to music, several researchers

have found that male participants expressed more negative attitudes toward women after exposure to sexually violent music in the heavy metal and rap genres (St. Lawrence & Joyner, 1991; Wester, Crown, Quatman, & Heesacker, 1997) and non-erotic violent rock music videos (Peterson & Pfof, 1989). Finally, a few researchers have found that male participants were more likely to behave aggressively toward a female confederate after exposure to misogynous music than after exposure to non-misogynous music (Barongan & Nagayama Hall, 1995; Fisher & Greitemeyer, 2006). Furthermore, Fisher and Greitemeyer (2006) found that male participants were more aggressive than female participants who listened to misogynous music. In summary, the research on music and violence against women, although somewhat limited to male participants and rap music, is fairly consistent in showing greater negative attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors toward women after exposure to sexually violent or misogynous music.

Although some have cautioned against the over-interpretation of lab research on the negative impact of media violence on consumers (see Ferguson, 2009, for a review), most experimental, cross-sectional, and longitudinal research has supported Anderson and colleagues' (2003a) conclusions that research "reveals unequivocal evidence that media violence increases the likelihood of aggressive and violent behavior in both immediate and long-term contexts" (p. 81). There are a few mechanisms through which it has been proposed that media impact individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. One commonly proposed mechanism is that those exposed to violence in the media will learn to imitate the violence in their lives (Bandura, 1977). Numerous empirical studies have demonstrated observational learning through watching others behave aggressively (see Anderson et al., 2003a, for a review). Furthermore, Berkowitz (1984) suggested that the context in which an aversive event occurs plays a role in an individual's interpretation of that event and, subsequently, the individual's response to that event. Synthesizing various domains of research, Anderson and colleagues proposed a general aggression model that predicts aggression after exposure to violent media from observational learning among other cognitive and emotional mechanisms such as priming, excitation transfer, and desensitization (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Anderson et al., 2003a). Given that the current research investigates exposure to music lyrics, it is important to note that past research has demonstrated an increase in aggressive thoughts and feelings after exposure to music videos and music lyrics (with an audio but no video component; Anderson et al., 2003b). Essentially, repeated exposure to violent media creates neural networks where aggressive thoughts are triggered with subsequent exposure leading to affective desensitization and greater likelihood to respond aggressively (Anderson et al., 2003a).

Just as exposure to violent media may influence neural networks related to violence, it is reasonable to assert that exposure to prosocial media might also lead to observational learning of prosocial thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Buckley & Anderson, 2006). In a meta-analysis of 34 studies involving the impact of prosocial messages on children, Mares and Woodard (2005) found positive effects on children's mood and behavior toward others. Furthermore, researchers have shown that playing prosocial video games increases positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Greitemeyer, 2011a; Greitemeyer & Mügge, 2014). With regard to music, Greitemeyer (2011b) found that

after exposure to prosocial music (relative to neutral music) participants had reduced aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Finally, Greitemeyer, Hollingdale, and Traut-Mattausch (2012) showed that college students who were exposed to music with lyrics supporting gender equality had more positive attitudes and showed more prosocial behavior toward women (than students exposed to neutral lyrics).

Most past research has investigated the negative impact of explicitly violent content or the positive impact of explicitly prosocial content, but we were interested in examining whether or not exposure to a non-misogynous portrayal of IPV or an ambivalent portrayal of IPV can have potential benefits. One such investigation of television media was conducted by Lee, Hust, Zhang, and Zhang (2011) who exposed participants to "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (SVU)," a television show that depicts sexual violence but is known for countering rape myths and offering messages to prevent such violence. They found that participants exposed to television clips with sexual violence against women were less likely to endorse rape myths than participants exposed to clips with physical violence against women. Lee and colleagues were cautious in their interpretation of these beneficial effects, but suggested that the focus of "SVU" on sexual violence as a crime and the more graphic depictions of physical violence than sexual violence may have influenced participants to view sexual assault more negatively than when exposed to more victim-blaming or perpetrator-rewarding violent content. Also suggesting beneficial effects of exposure to certain types of sexually violent media, Ferguson (2012) showed that male participants only had more negative attitudes toward women when exposed to sexually violent media with submissive female characters (as opposed to strong female characters), and female participants had less anxiety after exposure to sexually violent media with strong female characters than submissive female characters. Although there has not been much research on the potential beneficial effects of exposure to violence against women in the media, this research suggests that the objectifying and misogynous portrayals noted earlier may be central to the negative views of women that often result from exposure to this media. Thus, the current research seeks to add to this literature by investigating the potential benefits of an anti-IPV message and an ambivalent portrayal of IPV in popular music.

"Love the Way You Lie" (LTWYL)

Hip-hop artist, Eminem, is well known for controversial and violent lyrics targeting many groups, most notably women. In 2010, Eminem paired with R&B artist, Rihanna, and released the song LTWYL. Some have suggested that LTWYL is not only a narrative of the abuse in Eminem's relationship with ex-wife, Kim, but that it also contains elements that hint at singer Chris Brown's public abuse of then-girlfriend Rihanna in 2009 (Clark-Flory, 2010; Doyle, 2010). According to Billboard.com, LTWYL was No. 1 on the Billboard "Hot 100" chart for 8 weeks in 2010. The content and popularity of this song, a departure from Eminem's violent and misogynous offerings, led to speculation in the popular press about the impact of this song on listeners. LTWYL depicts the relationship of a man and a woman with a destructive pattern of violence ("Next

time? There won't be no next time!/I apologize even though I know it's lies") that likely does not have a happy ending ("If she ever tries to fucking leave again/I'm'a tie her to the bed and set this house on fire"), made more explicit by the images provided by the music video (da Kid & Mathers, 2010). Rihanna has been quoted as saying that the song "pretty much just broke down the cycle of domestic violence" (Noveck, 2010, para. 9). Although not excusing Eminem for his past lyrics and admitted abuse against his ex-wife, some have written favorably about the song's potential to open up dialogue about the realities of or serve as a warning message about IPV (Doyle, 2010; Thomas & Murphy, 2010). However, other writers wondered whether LTWYL offered a pro- or anti-IPV message and about young listeners' ability to recognize the realities of IPV portrayed in the song (Clark-Flory, 2010; Noveck, 2010). Given the publicly mixed response to LTWYL, we chose this song as an ambivalent portrayal of IPV, recognizing the potential for this song to reinforce myths about IPV while also offering an honest portrayal of the cycle of violence.

Finally, recognizing the simultaneous praise and critiques offered for this song, a few researchers have offered content analyses of the song. Enck and McDaniel (2012) conducted a conjunctural critique of the music video for LTWYL in the context of IPV and relevant social factors (e.g., race, gender, class). They concluded that the song is likely to reinforce problematic messages about IPV that excuse the male perpetrator and silence the female victim (Enck & McDaniel, 2012). However, looking exclusively at myths about IPV, Thaller and Messing (2014) concluded that the song lyrics endorsed myths that victim-blame and minimize IPV but also accurately portrayed aspects of IPV (e.g., women's risk of IPV increases when they try to leave the relationship). These content analyses support that LTWYL may reinforce and break myths about IPV and, thus, a central aim of the present research is to empirically assess the impact of an ambivalent portrayal of IPV.

Overview

In this study, we were interested in how participants would respond to a situation involving IPV following exposure to an ambivalent portrayal of IPV. We were also interested in how these responses would compare with those of participants who were exposed to one of two other songs about violent relationships. One of the comparison songs had a more straightforward, misogynous message that violence against women was acceptable. The other comparison song had a message critical of violent relationships and highlighted the benefits of ending such a relationship.

After being exposed to one of the relevant songs, participants read a brief segment of an interview with a woman who had been in an abusive marriage. Some participants read a segment where the woman has decided to leave the marriage while others read a segment where she has decided to stay.

Hypothesis 1a: We predicted that participants in all three conditions would have more sympathy for a woman who left her abusive husband than for a woman who remained with him.

Hypothesis 1b: However, we predicted that this effect would be more pronounced for participants who were exposed to LTWYL or the anti-IPV song than the misogynous song.

Hypothesis 2a: Similarly, we predicted that participants would evaluate a woman who leaves her abusive husband more favorably than a woman who stays with him.

Hypothesis 2b: We predicted that participants in the LTWYL and anti-IPV song conditions would show more pronounced effects than participants who heard the misogynous song.

Regarding the abusive husband being described in the interview,

Hypothesis 3: We predicted that participants in the misogynous song condition would have more sympathy for the husband than participants in the other two song conditions and that this would not be affected by his wife's decision to stay or leave.

Hypothesis 4: We also predicted that the abusive husband would be evaluated more favorably by participants in the misogynous song condition than participants in the other two conditions, regardless of his wife's decision to stay or leave.

Method

Participants

One hundred three students (80 female) from a private, Midwestern university participated in the study. They received either a US\$5 payment or extra credit toward one of their psychology courses in exchange for their participation. Approximately 49% of the participants ($N = 50$) identified as White, 26% ($N = 27$) identified as Black or African American, 5% identified as Asian or Asian American, and 15% ($N = 15$) identified as Hispanic or Latino/a. Five participants identified as being multiracial or as belonging to another racial/ethnic group. The average age of the participants was 23.84 years.

Procedure

The study was run with groups of varying size who were informed that the study was about reactions to popular media. After participants read and signed consent forms, the experimenter informed them that the first part of the study involved listening to a song. The participants were asked to listen to the song carefully and were told that afterward they would be asked to complete a series of attitude questionnaires. The experimenter then played a song to the entire group of participants. Three songs were used in this study: the target song LTWYL by Eminem and Rihanna, a song that explicitly highlighted violence against women and did so in a misogynous manner ("Slap Dat Bitch" by Snoop Dogg), and a song that advocated against dysfunctional, violent relationships ("No More Drama" by Mary J. Blige). These songs were selected for their

similarity to LTWYL in terms of genre, content, and understandability. After the song ended, the experimenter distributed a packet of materials to each participant.

The first component of the packet was an “impression formation” task (Grandon & Cohen, 2005). Participants were given a one-page transcript of an interview with a woman talking about a conflict she had with her husband that turned violent. In one version of the transcript, the woman stated that she had left her husband, while in a second version, she stated that she was staying with her husband. Participants were asked to report their sympathy for the two parties and evaluate both the woman and her husband on a series of characteristics. After finishing this task, participants completed the other questionnaires in the packet. Participants were given a debriefing sheet explaining the nature of the study before being compensated and thanked for their time.

Measures

Sympathy. Twelve statements were used to assess participants’ sympathy for the characters being interviewed. Six of these statements assessed sympathy for the abused wife (e.g., To what extent do you sympathize with her behavior? To what extent does her behavior seem reasonable to you?). Following these items, the six statements were repeated to assess sympathy for the abusive husband. Participants reported their agreement with these statements using a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) Likert-type scale. Each of the two, six-item scales showed a high degree of internal consistency ($\alpha = .95$ for wife sympathy; $\alpha = .80$ for husband sympathy).

Perceptions of wife and husband. Following Grandon and Cohen’s (2005) method, participants rated both the wife and her husband on three personality dimensions: strength, intelligence, and warmth. We used four bipolar characteristics to assess these dimensions. Two of these characteristics (secure-insecure and strong-weak; $r = .54, p < .01$) concerned the characters’ strength. The other characteristics of interest were warmth (warm-cold) and intelligence (intelligent-unintelligent). Several other unrelated characteristics served as filler items and were not included in the analyses.

Song characteristics. Participants reported how familiar they were with the song they heard during the research session, using a 1 (*not at all familiar*) to 7 (*very familiar*) Likert-type scale. Participants also reported how difficult the lyrics of the song were to understand, using a 1 (*not very difficult*) to 7 (*very difficult*) scale.

Manipulation Check

Two groups of participants ($N = 28$, 12 female) listened to “Slap Dat Bitch” and “No More Drama” to validate the misogynous and anti-IPV content of the comparison songs. The first group of participants listened to one song, answered questions about the song’s content, listened to the second song, and then answered the same questions about the second song’s content. The order of songs was reversed for the second group

of participants. Participants were asked general questions about the song's content (e.g., "Please rate the extent to which you believe the song is misogynist [i.e., endorsing hatred, dislike, mistrust, or mistreatment of women]," "Please rate the extent to which you believe the song would empower victims of domestic violence," "Please rate the extent to which you believe the artist intended the song to help solve the problem of domestic violence"). All questions were answered on a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*) scale. Overall, paired sample *t* tests show that participants rated "No More Drama" as significantly less justifying and excusing of IPV than "Slap Dat Bitch" ($t_s > 3.5$, $ps < .01$). For example, on the item asking participants to rate "the extent to which you believe the song is misogynist (i.e., endorsing hatred, dislike, mistrust, or mistreatment of women)," $M = 1.43$, $SD = .74$ for "No More Drama" and $M = 5.93$, $SD = 1.65$ for "Slap Dat Bitch," $t = -14.1$, $p < .001$. On the item asking participants to rate "the extent to which you believe the artist intended the song to excuse men's domestic violence," $M = 1.46$, $SD = 0.64$ for "No More Drama" and $M = 4.11$, $SD = 2.51$ for "Slap Dat Bitch," $t = -5.24$, $p < .001$.

Results

Prior to running analyses to test our hypotheses, we conducted a one-way ANOVA to look for differences in participants' familiarity with the three songs used in the study. The results showed a significant difference, $F(2, 97) = 34.98$, $p < .001$. Post hoc tests revealed the participants were significantly more familiar with LTWYL ($M = 6.20$, $SD = 1.62$) than they were with the anti-IPV song "No More Drama" ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 2.61$) and the misogynous song "Slap Dat Bitch" ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 1.79$). Post hoc tests also showed that participants were significantly more familiar with the anti-IPV song than with the misogynous song. These findings were not surprising, given the recent popularity of LTWYL.

Furthermore, post hoc tests also revealed that participants found the lyrics of the misogynous song to be more difficult to understand ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 2.09$) than the lyrics of the other two songs (anti-IPV $M = 2.03$, $SD = 1.74$; LTWYL $M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.91$), $F(2, 100) = 10.41$, $p < .01$. To account for this difference, participants' familiarity with the song they heard and the difficulty understanding the lyrics were included as covariates in all of the analyses described below.

Hypothesis 1

When we examined participants' sympathy for the abused wife, a 3 (song) $\times$ 2 (stay or leave) ANOVA yielded a significant main effect for the wife's decision to stay or leave, $F(1, 95) = 589.69$, $p < .001$. In all three of the song conditions, participants reported more sympathy for the woman when she left her abuser than when she stayed with him (see Table 1 for means). This result supports Hypothesis 1a. There was also a main effect for song condition, with participants in the anti-IPV song condition showing the greatest sympathy for the wife, $F(2, 96) = 5.04$, $p < .01$.

The main effects described above were qualified by a significant interaction between the two variables, $F(2, 95) = 5.53$, $p < .01$. There were no significant song

Table 1. Sympathy for the Wife and Evaluation of Wife's Strength and Intelligence by Song Condition and Decision to Stay With or Leave Her Husband.

	Song condition	Leave husband	Stay with husband
Sympathy	Love the Way You Lie	6.55 _a	2.24 _b
	Misogynous	6.52 _a	2.07 _b
	Anti-IPV	6.50 _a	3.23 _b
Strength	Love the Way You Lie	3.83 _a	1.59 _b
	Misogynous	2.53 _a	2.16 _a
	Anti-IPV	3.97 _a	1.75 _b
Intelligence	Love the Way You Lie	5.22 _a	3.06 _b
	Misogynous	4.41 _a	2.63 _b
	Anti-IPV	5.26 _a	4.19 _b

Note. Means in the same row that have different subscripts are significantly different at the $p < .05$ level. IPV = intimate partner violence.

condition differences in participants' sympathy for the wife who left her abuser, with participants in all three conditions reporting high levels of sympathy for the wife. However, participants who heard the anti-IPV song had significantly more sympathy for the wife who stayed with her abusive husband than did participants in the LTWYL condition and the misogynous song condition, $F(2, 44) = 6.56, p < .01$ (see Table 1). This result does not support Hypothesis 1b.

Hypothesis 2

When we examined the perceived personality characteristics of the characters in the interview segment, a 3 (personality dimension: strength, warmth, intelligence) $\times$ 3 (song) $\times$ 2 (leave or stay) MANOVA yielded significant main effects for the wife's decision to stay or leave on evaluations of her strength, $F(1, 103) = 31.90, p < .001$, and her intelligence, $F(1, 103) = 27.01, p < .001$. Participants in all three conditions evaluated the wife as stronger and more intelligent when she chose to leave her abusive husband than when she chose to stay with him (see Table 1 for means). These results support Hypothesis 2a.

Analyses also revealed a significant multivariate Song $\times$ Leave/stay decision interaction, $F(6, 188) = 2.81, p < .05$. This multivariate interaction was driven by a significant between-subjects interaction on the strength dimension, $F(2, 95) = 4.95, p < .01$. Follow-up analyses indicated that participants in the LTWYL condition rated the wife as significantly stronger when she left her abusive husband than when she stayed with him, $t(33) = 4.51, p < .01$; see Table 1. Participants who heard the anti-IPV song also rated the wife as significantly stronger when she left her abused husband than when she stayed with him, $t(33) = 4.85, p < .01$; see Table 1. However, there was not a significant difference in the wife's perceived strength when participants heard the misogynous song, $t(31) < 1, p = .38$. This result supports Hypothesis 2b.

There was a significant main effect of song condition, $F(2, 95) = 6.07, p < .01$, on the wife's perceived intelligence. Participants who heard LTWYL found the wife to be marginally less intelligent ($M = 4.17, SD = 1.96$) than participants in the anti-IPV song condition did ($M = 4.77, SD = 1.40$), but they found her to be marginally more intelligent than participants in the misogynous song condition did ($M = 3.55, SD = 1.68$). Furthermore, participants believed her to be significantly more intelligent in the anti-IPV song condition than in the misogynous song condition. There was not a significant interaction of song condition and decision to stay or leave on the wife's perceived intelligence, $F(2, 95) = 1.49, ns$. The results for evaluations of the wife's intelligence provide some additional support for Hypothesis 2b.

Participants' evaluations of the wife's warmth were not significantly affected by song condition, decision to stay or leave, nor the interaction of the two variables. This result does not support Hypothesis 2b. Overall, support for Hypothesis 2b was mixed.

Hypothesis 3

Participants' sympathy for the abusive husband was not affected by the song they heard nor by the decision the wife made to stay or leave. The 3 (song) $\times$ 2 (stay or leave) interaction was not significant. This result does not support Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4

Similarly, a 3 (song) $\times$ 2 (leave or stay) ANOVA performed on the strength, warmth, and intelligence of the abusive husband revealed no significant interactions or main effects. It appears that while the song participants heard influenced how they perceived the female character in the interview scenario, it did not significantly influence how they perceived her husband. These results do not support Hypothesis 4.

Discussion

The purpose of the current research was to explore the impact of non-misogynous and ambivalent portrayals of IPV in music, given that most past research on violence against women in music has focused on misogynous media. The results generally support the idea that anti-IPV and ambivalent portrayals of IPV might have some positive effects on listeners. Participants' evaluations of partners in an abusive relationship were relatively similar when they responded after listening to LTWYL or an anti-IPV song. Participants in both of these conditions showed higher levels of sympathy for a woman who left her abuser than for a woman who did not leave. Participants in both conditions also evaluated the woman who left her abuser as stronger than a woman who did not leave. However, participants who heard LTWYL did not show the same amount of sympathy for a woman who stayed with her abusive partner as participants in the anti-IPV song condition did. Furthermore, this relative lack of sympathy was more consistent with perceptions of participants who were in the misogynous song condition.

The results suggest that listeners can be positively affected by songs about IPV, depending on the portrayal of IPV. However, we intentionally chose a song that did not portray IPV in a clearly anti-IPV or misogynous way to assess the impact of a potentially mixed message about IPV. LTWYL offers a depiction of the cycle of abuse that involves a victim of violence returning to her (or his) abuser after apologies for previous abuse (Walker, 1979). However, the song lyrics also endorse myths about IPV (Peters, 2008) that suggest the victim actually wants to be dominated by a partner, "But that's alright because I like the way it hurts"; that minimize and normalize IPV, "Maybe our relationship isn't as crazy as it seems/Maybe that's what happens when a tornado meets a volcano"; and that excuse the perpetrator for losing his (or her) temper, "So lost in the moments when you're in them/It's the rage that took over it controls you both" (da Kid & Mathers, 2010). The current research suggests that participants not only recognize the violent content and are rejecting of some myths (e.g., they favorably evaluate a woman who leaves an abusive relationship) but also believe some of the myths endorsed by the song (e.g., they show low sympathy for a victim who stays with her abuser). These findings are consistent with Thaller and Messing's (2014) content analyses of the song lyrics and suggest that the song may not promote exclusively problematic messages about IPV as some have suggested. Alternatively, it is possible that participants' greater sympathy for a woman who leaves a violent relationship after listening to LTWYL is related to IPV myths about the notion that a woman does not deserve sympathy or is not a real victim unless she leaves a violent relationship. Although we do not measure this distinction between victim sympathy that is myth-breaking and that which might be myth-reinforcing, it seems that participants likely equate leaving a violent relationship with victim empowerment (e.g., they rated the woman as stronger), even if that sentiment does not fully acknowledge the complications of leaving a violent relationship. Furthermore, that participants exposed to the anti-IPV song endorsed sympathy for both the woman who stays and leaves a violent relationship suggests that participants intend sympathy in this regard as supportive of the victim. Thus, we cautiously interpret our results as suggesting that exposure to an ambivalent message about IPV may lead to ambivalence with regard to IPV myths, but we encourage future researchers to further investigate the meaning of participants' sympathy for a victim who leaves an abusive partner.

Furthermore, the present research does not address whether or not attention to the message, especially an ambivalent message, is necessary for individuals to critically process the message instead of relying on myths about IPV that may be triggered with only superficial processing. Most research on the effects of exposure to music has assessed participants after being instructed to explicitly attend. However, individuals are not always explicitly attending to music when they are exposed in various settings. People who are not explicitly attending to the message in a song might be less critical of the message and more influenced by superficial cues offered by the song. Therefore, we are cautious to suggest that exposure to LTWYL or other songs that present an ambivalent portrayal of IPV always have a positive impact on their audience. Positive effects from songs like LTWYL might be limited to conditions in which the listener is motivated and able to carefully attend to the message. Otherwise, listeners' thoughts

and feelings might be influenced by the song's melody, most noteworthy lyrics, and/or the performers. Future research should investigate the effects of subtle and explicit exposure to songs about IPV.

Another limitation of this research is that we have only assessed beliefs and attitudes after exposure to varying portrayals of IPV. Researchers have noted that participants can recognize the problematically violent messages in music while also finding their own violent responses against a relationship partner acceptable (Hernández et al., 2012). Thus, even though participants in the current research may recognize some of the problematic violence in the song, this belief may not translate to the individual's behavior in his or her life. Furthermore, this may be especially true if most media messages offer misogynous portrayals of IPV. Many researchers have noted the difficulties with assessing behavioral consequences of exposure to media violence (see Ferguson, 2009, for a review), but it is important to offer empirical evidence of behavioral effects after exposure to music about IPV even within the ethical constraints posed by such research.

Finally, the present research was conducted using a college student sample. Although our participants ranged in age from 18-51 years and were more racially and ethnically diverse than many other samples of college students, future studies should get broader samples of participants from a variety of different backgrounds to ensure the present results were not specific to college students. Future researchers should also strive to get more gender-balanced samples to examine whether men and women respond similarly to various representations of IPV in music.

In sum, this research adds to the existing literature on media and violence against women by investigating media without overt misogynous tones and more ambivalence toward IPV than has been investigated thus far. The current research suggests that exposure to non-misogynous and anti-IPV lyrics can have prosocial benefits especially with regard to increasing sympathy for victims of IPV. The current research also suggests that an ambivalent portrayal of IPV may have some of the negative effects of misogynous music about IPV, but may also have some prosocial benefits not seen in misogynous music. It is important to acknowledge that the effects in the current research may be limited to the songs used in this experiment, but we believe this research is an important step in investigating potentially beneficial effects of exposure to violence against women in the media and that it argues that less misogynous portrayals of violence against women could contribute to cultivating a reality that punishes perpetrators for and attempts to reduce IPV.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Author Biographies

Renae Franiuk is a professor of psychology and chair of the psychology department at Aurora University. She received her PhD in social psychology from the University of Illinois–Urbana/Champaign in 2002 and spent 3 years as an assistant professor in psychology at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point before coming to Aurora University in 2005. Her research mainly focuses on media portrayal and impact of gendered violence.

Jill Coleman is an associate professor of psychology at Roosevelt University. She is an affiliated faculty member of both the Women's and Gender Studies program and the St. Clair Drake Center for African and African American studies. She received her PhD in social psychology from the University of Illinois–Urbana/Champaign in 2005. Her current program of research focuses on (a) the intersectional influence of race and gender stereotypes on social judgment and (b) attitudes toward gender-related violence.

Bethany Apa received her Master's degree in clinical professional psychology from Roosevelt University in 2011. She is currently a student at the Illinois Institute of Technology, pursuing a PhD in clinical psychology with a concentration in rehabilitation. For the last 7 years she has volunteered as a crisis counselor with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), assisting survivors of sexual assault who are treated at emergency rooms in several low-income neighborhoods in Chicago.