

2006

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Audience Interpretations of the Representation of Women
in Music Videos by Women Artists

by

Libby McKenna

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
School of Mass Communications
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:
July 21, 2006

Keywords: cultural studies, feminism, mass media, popular culture, MTV music videos,
women's studies

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost thanks are due to my mentor, advisor, and thesis chair, Dr. Kim Golombisky, without whose guidance and encouragement this thesis would not be what it is today. Many thanks to Dr. Derina Holtzhausen, whose pioneering work aided my focus groups, and to Dr. Larry Leslie, grammar extraordinaire, who performed one of the first studies on MTV music videos. I was extremely fortunate to have such a committee, with all the experience and know-how, that without their aid this thesis would not be.

My sincere appreciation goes to all of the participants in this study, Rebecca Hagen who generously provided me with access to those participants, Steve Mutimer who set up all of the equipment for the focus groups, Dr. Tim Bajkiewicz, for teaching qualitative methods and editing help, Maria Paul for her interest and input, and Marcia Watson for all of her support throughout my academic career. Finally, my gratitude goes to my family and friends for all of their support throughout this project.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how young women audiences may make sense of music videos and how they relate music video messages to their own femininity. Studies of the representation of women in music videos mostly have focused on critiquing content, rather than audience interpretations. This study, using focus groups, looked at how young women interpret music videos featuring women artists and showed that young women perceive sexist and/or stereotypical depictions presented in the videos.

During six focus groups, three music videos were reviewed by 49 college students, mostly consisting of young women in their early 20s. The researcher found themes emerging from the discussions recorded during the focus groups. Such themes reaffirmed previous critical scholarship on the content of music videos that women are presented as sex objects and objectified body parts in music videos, that portrayals of women function as unrealistic masculine fantasies, and that the videos contain narratives about cultural expectations for femininity.

The results did support prior critical work, but they also uncovered interpretations filled with irony, contradiction, and paradox. This study examined women audience members' interpretations of feminine stereotypes in music videos and found that the women participants felt pressure to meet an impossible standard of an ideal feminine form, as defined by men. The results revealed the participants' concern about their own inadequacies in comparison. Participants generally observed that the women

artists in the treatment music videos are not real women, but participants demonstrated a wistful desire to be more like the artists.

The present study adds interpretive audience research to the literature on music video content analysis and supports prior conclusions based on content analysis.

Chapter One

Introduction

Music Television (MTV) was launched in 1981 as a 24-hour cable program service presenting an endless stream of music videos as the visual productions of current pop and rock songs (Banks, 1996). Christenson and Roberts (1990) claim that music is important to identity and helps define important social and sub-cultural boundaries. Since MTV contributes to defining social roles and expectations, MTV becomes an important site for examining social and cultural understandings of gender. Previous research has focused on critiquing the construction of gender within the content of music videos. While such research is important, few have investigated the ways audiences, particularly women audiences, interpret such messages. Previous research on gendered content in music videos also assumes men control sexualized images of women, but little has been written about women artists portraying themselves as sexual beings.

The purpose of this study is to examine how women perceive images of women artists on MTV. Previous scholarship suggests MTV presents a heterosexual male ideal of women, consisting of aesthetically pleasing body parts whose only usefulness is their sexual appeal. This study examines how young adult women interpret portrayals of women by women in MTV. The question driving this research is this one: Do young women read and interpret the gender expectations communicated in music videos differently than the critical scholars who have written about this topic predict?

MTV is popular among young people and directly targets youth culture. Sex appeal is often used in MTV to gain popularity. The images presented in music videos are often loaded with sexual content and feature highly sexualized women. Thus, MTV's messages regarding gender are logical artifacts for analysis.

However, while it is important to scrutinize the messages featured on MTV, it is equally important to look at both who is delivering the messages and how audiences interpret those messages. Women artists presenting women-as-objects in music videos suggest that women accept and are willing to perpetuate gender stereotypes and gender roles. This may communicate to young female audience members that their feminine role models are adjusting their talent and presentations to conform to wider socio-cultural productions of masculine fantasy.

This study used focus groups to elicit young women's interpretations of music videos featuring women artists and then analyzed themes that emerged from the focus groups using critical-cultural and feminist frameworks. Critical approaches to cultural studies provide the analytic tools necessary for examining popular culture. The purpose of this study is to compare the ways women audiences interpret gender in music videos with the literature on gendered content in music videos.

The researcher chose focus groups as the method because the intention of this study is to explore audience interpretations. Focus groups allow people to voice opinions and piggyback ideas, which yield powerful discussions not possible using other methods. The groups consisted of mostly women, and the music artists were women performers. An additional dimension of this study is the use of music videos featuring women artists, who seem to represent themselves in the same sexualized manner that previous critical

content analysis describes of the music industry, which is dominated by men as artists and producers.

Music videos represent a driving force in popular youth culture, and, as such, become a valid site for examining cultural definitions of gender. Studying audience interpretations of gender in music videos comprises an important new field of inquiry. In what follows, Chapter Two provides a brief history of MTV as a contemporary force in popular culture in order to set up the background for the present study. Chapter Three reviews the literature on previous approaches to studying the phenomenon of music video as well as issues of gender representations within music videos. Chapter Four lays out the critical, cultural, and feminist theoretical frameworks driving the analysis of the present study. Chapter Five explains and justifies the methodology used for this study. Chapter Six reports the results, Chapter Seven provides an analysis of those results, and Chapter Eight provides the conclusion for the study.

Chapter Two

Background

This chapter provides a brief background of MTV as a contemporary force in popular culture and argues to justify the current research. A brief history is presented that observes how and why MTV was started, and what that means to society. This chapter will end by tying gender and music into the MTV experience as a whole. MTV has grown to be a pervasive part of youth culture, and the popularity of such programming indicates the need for mass communication research to examine this phenomenon. Since the beginning, MTV has been a catalyst for social change, demonstrated by imitation, trends, and record sales. As a driving cultural force, MTV warrants scholarly exploration.

MTV is the oldest and most influential American cable network specializing in music-related programming. It was launched on August 1, 1981, with the words “Ladies and gentlemen, rock and roll,” spoken on camera by John Lack, one of the creators of MTV. This introduction was immediately followed by the Buggles’ “Video Killed the Radio Star.” The title proved somewhat prophetic as MTV transformed the nature of music industry stardom over the next several years, and, at the same time, MTV became a major presence in the cable/TV industry and in fact in the overall American cultural landscape (Burns, 1995).¹

Prior to the airing of the very first video, the record industry was starving for a new, economical, and efficient mode of promotion to make its products stand out from

the pack (Lewis, 1990). In a visually saturated entertainment arena, the strategies of record promotion, radio play, and concert performance, were beginning to look outdated (Lewis, 1990). Sales had been stagnant, and people in the industry needed to regroup; thus, the birth of MTV.

MTV was used to save the music industry. It was started and implemented as a channel of music video distribution, used primarily as a promotion vehicle. MTV, like any business, was motivated by the commercial imperatives of profit, market control, and corporate growth (Lewis, 1990). Expanding on the general movement in media industries toward categorizing lucrative audience groups, MTV's originating company sought to target a youth audience, known for its expendable income and liberal consumption patterns (Lewis, 1990). The target audience, 12- to 34-year-olds, makes up the majority of the music buying market and makes for a dynamic cultural group.

MTV had successfully convinced the record companies to start making what amounted to television advertisements for records and performers. The reason MTV was initially so successful was because of low-cost programming in the form of music videos, since they were originally provided for free by record companies. MTV presented one video after another in a constant "flow" that contrasted with the discrete individual programs found on other television networks (Burns, 1995). Clips were repeated from time to time according to a light, medium, or heavy "rotation" schedule, and in this respect, MTV was like Top 40 radio. Moreover, it soon became apparent that MTV could "break" a recording act (move it into prominence, even star status), just as radio had done for decades. Today's musicians are usually only successful if they use MTV to promote themselves and their music, for MTV now dictates the industry.

MTV exemplifies its influence on popular culture by prescribing fashion trends, fan imitation, and fan clubs. MTV became a money maker in the popular culture industry playing on the youth culture's desire to be both rebellious and conformist—to reject the trappings of parental existence and the high school culture while at the same time craving the prosperity and affluence which they delivered (Mundy, 1999).

Viacom, the company that owns MTV, claims to reach 320 million households on five continents 24 hours a day (Mundy, 1999). A study in San Jose, CA, reported that 80 percent of 600 high school students surveyed watched MTV, averaging two hours a day viewing music videos (Goodwin, 1992). MTV has gained popularity and audience size, and despite self-reporting flaws, the increase is noticeable especially in attendance among stars walking the red carpet at MTV's annual video awards.

Perhaps Goodwin (1992) outlines the history of MTV most succinctly by identifying phases in the history of MTV, starting at the beginning when test markets began airing the program. MTV became widely available in Manhattan and Los Angeles in 1983, and, in 1986, MTV had started to diversify its musical offerings, most notably into rap, dance music, and heavy metal. To some extent these genres have been segregated into their own program slots (Yo! MTV Raps, Club MTV, and Headbangers' Ball, respectively).² At the same time, the move toward discrete programs has increasingly become a move away from music video. In the process, MTV has become more like a full-service network, offering news, sports, sitcoms, documentaries, cartoons, game shows, and other traditional TV fare. Although MTV is no longer the only network premiering music videos, it has been the successful pioneer of music on television. MTV has found an international market and broadcasts worldwide.

Moving from history and content to the role of gender in music videos, Lewis (1990) draws a connection between textual signs of patriarchal discourse in music videos and the position of girls and women as the objects of male voyeurism. MTV has catered to the rock ideology, the exclusion and devaluation of female musicians and female audiences—and reveals a design intent on perpetuating the social condition of gender inequality.

By selecting rock music as the programming resource and youth as the target audience, MTV presented the ideology of rock, adolescence, white heterosexual male privilege, and expressed the underlying social goal of maintaining women in an underprivileged position (Lewis, 1990). The content of music videos would be minimal without the scantily clad women dancing around performing thinly disguised pantomimes of sex acts.

When examining the history of MTV, especially regarding gender, it is difficult not to mention Madonna. The redundant theme of overt sexuality also is apparent in Madonna's videos, in which she frequently portrays herself as a sex object. Madonna has been one artist who has stood the test of time and has been a feature on MTV since its inception in the 1980s (Brown & Shulze, 1990). However, her tactics in music videos seem to suggest that she always has the upper hand in controlling her sexual persona.

Madonna has been a trendsetter and idol on MTV and has shown the most conflicted and “controversial images of women: bad girl, virgin, pregnant teen, glamour queen, and stripteaser” (Lewis, 1990, p. 105). The sexual edge to all of her characters resulted in interpretations that Madonna operates in collusion with the industry, especially the patriarchal ideology to reproduce the standard of female representation

(Lewis, 1990). Although Madonna and other trend-setting women artists may say that they are in control and liberated, they are still subjecting themselves to the patriarchal mold that has been a part of MTV, perpetuating the stereotypes apparent on the network's programming.

In its development, MTV has come a long way and has done a fine job of catering to trends of what is acceptable to the current audience. The format has kept in touch with youth and constantly attempts to outdo itself by presenting something more controversial, more entertaining, and more shocking. Producers at MTV push the boundaries as far as possible. Although a constant flow of music videos is no longer the sole content of MTV programming, the videos that do air on MTV have that same constant element of sex appeal as always.

With its global audience and worldwide appeal, MTV has been successful thus far in tapping into the youth culture. MTV defines what is popular among young people and serves as a guide to what is fashionable. MTV is a powerful culture force packed with messages intended for consumption. The main motivation behind MTV is making money, and ethical standards may be compromised in order to make a profit. From a more scholarly point of view, Chapter Three will review literature that has examined the messages presented by MTV.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

Music is a means of sexual expression, and a mode of sexual control denying the concept of feminine respectability; it has confirmed traditional definitions of what constitutes masculinity and femininity and has defined a satisfying heterosexual relationship as one that provides male sexual freedom and spontaneity (Frith & Goodwin, 1990). People identify with popular music and use it as a personal form of expression (Frith, 1998). A review of relevant literature suggests that scholarly interest in gender and MTV mostly has been limited to content analysis, and studies of female artists' representations of gender and women are virtually nonexistent.

If it is important to look at the cultural entertainment aspect of MTV, then it is important to mention Adorno. In much of his work, Adorno took an elitist attitude toward popular culture. Contemporary scholars now understand that popular culture is a significant part of culture and society, not "low art" of little importance, as he suggested. Adorno saw the effects of modern media in a negative light, stating that mediated popular culture manipulate and limit individual development (Adorno, 1991). Adorno held Marxist views regarding capitalism, especially regarding capitalism's tendency to destroy the individual's ability to make sense of the world. The culture industry is one of anti-enlightenment and mass deception. He argued that popular music is limited, repetitious, and controlled by ruling capitalist elites in the music culture industry.

Scholars have studied MTV since its inception in the early 1980s and agree that

the content of music videos is replete with images containing sexual imagery and gender stereotypes (Brown, 2002; McKee & Pardun, 1999; Seidman, 1992; Sherman & Dominick, 1986). The majority of such studies have employed content analysis to count the number of sexual images (McKee & Pardun, 1999). Sherman and Dominick (1986) analyzed 166 videos and found 81 percent of videos on MTV included sexual imagery. They found that videos are mostly sexual and/or violent. Their claims of sexism hold that video clips provide few role models for young women and present offensive stereotypes.

Sherman and Dominick (1986) charged that music videos presenting offensive stereotypes do not provide positive role models for young women. In their study, the women who appeared in the videos were dressed provocatively and were portrayed as sex objects meant for a man's sexual conquest. They claimed that the messages portrayed in music videos are chauvinistic and suggested interpersonal physical contact should be devoid of any commitment or emotional involvement.

Baxter et al. (1985) examined 62 music videos for 23 content categories and found that MTV stressed sexual content. This study asked four questions: (a) What are the major categories of content which emerge from observation of music videos and can these categories be analyzed systematically? (b) Do specific content categories, such as those centered on sex and violence, appear with great frequency in music videos? (c) Do music videos focus on bizarre, unconventional representations? (d) Do symbols dealing with government, politics, and American culture and lifestyles appear with discernible frequency? These questions were answered after participants viewed the videos.

The physical structure of the music videos studied reveals that producers rely heavily on special camera techniques, film imagery, and special effects in creating music

videos. The intent may be to dazzle the eye and thus to hold the attention of a largely adolescent audience. The study found the only content category occurring more than sex was visual abstraction—the use of special effects to produce odd, unusual, and/or unexpected representations of reality.

In the sex content category, the following categories were coded as possible sex occurrences in the videos: provocative clothing, embrace or other physical contact, dance movements of a sexually suggestive nature, non-dance movements of a sexually suggestive nature, heterosexual date or courtship rituals, kissing, men chasing women or vice versa, use of musical instrument in sexually suggestive manner, sadomasochism, gay and lesbian date or courtship rituals, and sexual bondage. Not only did Baxter et al. (1985) find frequent occurrences of these categories, they also found that white adult males appeared in 96 percent of the videos studied and were most frequently represented on MTV videos.

While the above studies identify sexual content in music videos, the method in each is mainly content analysis. Content analysis is useful in its yielding support of themes, but it lacks the main component that this study aims to investigate: audience interpretation. The following studies look at audience interpretation, but none look at women's interpretations of women artists in music videos.

Interested in age, race, and gender, Berry and Shelton (1999) conducted focus groups in order to investigate individual audience interpretations. They found that individuals control the final interpretations of music videos and that the audience members were active, not passive. This interpretive research shows that the focus group participants interpreted images in music videos according to their personal experiences,

particularly in terms of how gender and race influences personal relevance and understanding.

Berry and Shelton (1999) referred to social relevancy, cultural relevancy, and personal relevancy in their discussion. Each clip was shown, and the discussion was broken down into those themes in order to uncover how the participants made sense of the videos. They incorporated age, race, and gender when relaying the different levels of relevancy.

The study found that many different interpretations could exist for the same video clip, which leads to the conclusion that the meaning is socially negotiated according to age, race, and gender. This study is significant because it shows that people have their own interpretations, but more importantly, they draw from personal experiences to relate to the videos. While Berry and Shelton (1999) showed that people interpret based on their own backgrounds and experiences, they did not look at how women interpret the way women present themselves in music video. Additionally, they did not focus on the presentation of gender roles and stereotypes.

Differing from Berry and Shelton (1999), Kalof (1999) does look specifically at gender roles, but instead of looking at the way women interpret the stereotypes and stories told about femininity, Kalof (1999) attempts to link music videos to sexual violence. While this is a considerable accomplishment, the current research is not interested in causality; the focus of this study is interpretation.

Kalof's (1999) research on gender roles and stereotyping found that exposure to traditional sexual imagery had a significant effect on participants, who first watched music videos and then completed a questionnaire. The questionnaire asked participants to

provide basic demographic information and to answer 60 randomly ordered statements measured on a Likert-type scale with answers ranging from agree to disagree. The statements measured perceptions of body satisfaction, personality satisfaction, influence of close friends and unfamiliar setting on behavior, and locus of control. Included in the questions were measurements of beliefs consistent with a cultural support of sexual assault. Seven items measured rape myth acceptance, and five items measured acceptance of interpersonal violence. These items were used to assess the influence of stereotypical images of gender and sexuality on sexual attitudes.

Kalof (1999) used the results of the questionnaire to report that music videos influence attitudes, moods, and sexual beliefs. Kalof (1999) found women who were exposed to traditional images not only had greater acceptance of interpersonal violence than women not exposed to stereotyped imagery, but also had scores higher than the men in the experimental group. This research suggests that women may be more receptive to such messages and more tolerant of sexual mistreatment.

Although Kalof (1999) did speculate on effects of music videos, the findings in this study may have been more enlightening if the method had been qualitative, allowing for more open-ended responses. If the women participants had been invited to explain why they felt unwelcome advances were acceptable, the researchers may have been able to locate the rationale for acceptance within wider cultural myths. Also, bias in the questionnaire and the researchers' interpretations and conclusions may have been reduced by allowing the participants to answer in their own words.

Although previous research has identified the existence of sexual content of and influence from music videos, researchers have not examined women's interpretations of

videos performed by female artists from a critical-cultural standpoint. This study will examine women's interpretations of images already shown to exist in music videos.

While there are many other studies that focus on music, television, fandom, and other related topics, the existence of research specifically on gender in music video is scarce. This is a fairly new area of study, and its blend of gender with pop culture, both non-traditional forms of mass communication scholarship, is sometimes marginalized. Topics such as gender, sex stereotypes, and women in MTV, however, are important social forces guiding popular culture.

Some studies aim to look at MTV from an advertising perspective, others from a technical television paradigm, but only a few have touched on the present topic. Additionally, there are scholars who have looked at MTV as a cultural force, but the material is largely outdated. The only consistent interest in MTV's content and its possible effects has been parental groups concerned about the content. Research has proven its content, and it is time to explore audience interpretations of the content of music videos.

Chapter Four

Theoretical Framework

Representation theory offers a way to explore what is being represented on MTV. Narrative theory is a way to understand what cultural stories and myths are being told through music videos, and visual rhetoric examines how music video messages are communicated visually. This thesis ties these theoretical perspectives together with cultural studies and feminist theory, which seek to understand how cultural ideologies of gender are “constructed, maintained, repaired, and transformed” (Carey, 1989).

Emerging from critical theory, cultural studies examines mass media’s role in promulgating ideology and power relations in broader society through images and representation. Hall (1997) proposes that communication is always linked with power and that those groups who wield power in a society influence what gets represented through the media. Messages work in complex ways, but they are connected with the way that social power operates. Media as a cultural force produce shared social meanings and provide guidelines for how to make sense of the world (O’Donnell, 2005).

Similarly, narrative theory and visual rhetoric theory argue that the media represent stories with signs and symbols representing reality. Barbartis (2005) writes that storytelling is a universal human behavior, and people understand their lives in terms of narrative. Humans have the ability to influence each other’s thinking and behavior through the messages portrayed on television. Thus, while cultural studies locate

dominant ideologies in mass culture, narrative theory analyzes the kinds of story formulas that circulate in culture.

Moving from text to image, visual rhetoric theory allows scholars to understand what meaning images are likely to have for an audience (Foss, 2005). Visual rhetoric theory is a relatively new area of study that begs to fit in the rhetorical discipline as a verbal or nonverbal sentiment that evokes attention, perceptions, attitudes, or behavior. Visual rhetoric is “used to mean both a visual object or artifact and a perspective on the study of visual data” (Foss, 2005, p. 143).

Visual rhetorical scholars are interested in symbols as forms of communication such as music videos, film, commercials, and advertisements. This theory allows scholars to make sense of visual information. It is similar to cultural studies because symbols under scrutiny are produced within particular cultural contexts and become artifacts of the culture. The difference between visual rhetoric and cultural studies is that while visual rhetoric looks at the meaning of the symbol or visual message, cultural studies’ expressed political agenda asks questions about power relations regarding such visual productions. If MTV tells stories or narratives, then visual rhetoric says that the images also contain stories, thus meaning for audiences. Critical theory and cultural studies go further to ask who has the power to produce meaning and how do audiences accept or resist such meanings.

Feminist scholarship has enriched all these approaches by focusing on the fact that women have less access to producing mediated representation and images, thus ideology, public rhetoric, or cultural narratives. Kalof (1993) argues that women bear the brunt of sexual exploitation via television representations that reinforce traditional views

of gender and power. She finds problems in “cultural preoccupation with female sexuality as a commodity to be bought, sold, and used in negotiation of power and status in a patriarchal culture” (p. 648).

Feminist scholarship also uncovers the ways male-dominated media institutions produce mediated representations of women that enforce an ideology of hetero-normative asymmetrical social relations in which women are both a subordinated class and also sexualized objects rather than subjects with agency. Men and boys monopolize traits that are prized in America and in business; girls and women, however, are portrayed as incompetent and fearful, often represented in domestic roles and frequently as victims of masculine hostility and degradation. This theme becomes apparent when analyzing mediated messages.

Kilbourne’s (2000) “Killing Us Softly III,” surveys contemporary advertisements critically to examine the images used to portray women and girls in advertisements. Kilbourne’s work has made important contributions to the field with her investigations of gender in the media. She sets mass media images of femininity against social reality and encourages people to consider the relationship between the stories the media tell about girls and women and the actual lives girls and women lead (Kilbourne, 2000). After breaking down advertisements, several frightening themes emerge: unrealistic goals of weight and appearance, portraying violence against women as sexually appealing, and encouraging women to be violent with one another for no apparent reason.

One of Kilbourne’s (2000) underlying arguments is that advertising, as a storyteller of culture, sets women up for inevitable failure by producing a desire for certain physical standards, defined by advertisers as cultural standards of “femininity,”

that eventually undermine the way girls and women see themselves, all while normalizing the violence done to them by men, or in some cases, other women. She argues that there is little that is natural about the stories advertising tells about women, and the only reason for the existence of such dangerous materials is for the profit of the sponsor.

Kilbourne (2000) explains that it is important to understand the distinctive and pervasive patterns of femininity portrayed in the media. Kilbourne sets mass media images of femininity against social reality, fantasy against the material experiences of girls and women, and encourages the viewer to consider the relationship between the stories told about girls and women and the actual lives girls and women lead. She further argues that mediated representations of gender are more dangerous when people are not paying attention to ideologies driving gender messages, which, in turn, reduces viewers' own agency and power.

Mulvey's (1975) theory of the male gaze posits that women are caught in an oppression rooted in a patriarchal culture that sets the rules as well as controls the production of film and, in the present case, music videos. Mulvey's theory of the "male gaze" argues that the camera lens, as a proxy for the audience's eye thus perspective, positions audiences within a masculine role of watcher while women on screen are positioned as objects meant to be watched. This masculine watchfulness—the power to see the feminine Other—is equivalent to the seer's power to control the seen/scene. According to Mulvey, women are presented in film as passive sexual objects by which men can live out fantasies and obsessions and that women are represented by the camera as objects not subjects. Pleasure, eroticism, and desire all cater to men's fantasies in

which women are sexual distractions that add little or no meaning to what is shown on the screen.

Women are oppressed and bound by an unconscious structure deep-rooted and as pervasive as language. “Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 59).

Mulvey’s (1975) first discussion of “the male gaze” sparked much controversy, which led to a follow-up article explaining her original rationale. Critics were curious about women in the audience, but Mulvey (1989) backed her original “visual pleasure” argument, explaining that while women in the audience exist, it is not a woman’s point of view that audience members identify with. Mulvey’s (1989) “male gaze” explored “the relationship between the image of the woman on the screen and the 'masculinisation' of the spectator position, regardless of the actual sex (or possible deviance) of any real live movie goer” (p. 12).

Jhally’s (1990) production of “Dreamworlds: Desire, sex and power in music videos” created controversy within the music industry. MTV threatened to sue Jhally for his work, but that did not stop him from continuing to educate people about the gender roles in music videos. Jhally’s content analysis of MTV videos offered a compelling argument that music videos are irresponsible gender advertisements promoting provocative sexual imagery. Jhally’s (1995) follow-up documentary, “Dreamworlds II: Desire, sex and power in music videos,” explores music videos in the same way, uses more recent videos and shows how the formulae for music videos have not changed much

from the past.

Jhally's (1995) theory of music television as a male dream world argues that women exist as objects of adolescent male fantasy where all men, including men viewers, are promised sexual gratification. Jhally notes that women artists are decorative sex objects; their representations in music videos are predictable and limited and consist of the same formula that has been successful in the past. In this formula, the norms of femininity portrayed in the videos are nymphomania and dependence on and subservience to men. In his documentary, Jhally, as narrator, intones: "In the dreamworld, women vastly outnumber men, attraction is instant, and sex happens without courtship."

Jhally (1995) argues that female artists are faced with a dilemma during the production of music videos: "The story told about women's bodies and female sexuality is not limited to videos of male artists—the story is a powerful influence on the image of female artists as well...because the same men are behind the cameras here as well." Jhally examines the gaze involved in music videos and compares violence against women in music videos to other cinematic footage of rape and violence against women. Turning the music off in Jhally's examples of violent music videos and juxtaposing them with, for example, the rape scene in the critically acclaimed 1988 film "The Accused" (starring Jodie Foster), about a young woman's struggle to prosecute the men who gang raped her, provides a chillingly similar visual spectacle for two productions with dramatically different purposes: music videos as harmless entertainment and a Hollywood film politicizing the difficulties women experience in taking their rapists to trial.

Combined, these theorists suggest that images of women, especially in music videos, portray women as sexual objects with insatiable appetites for sex, but who have no personalities, dreams, or individuality (Jhally, 1995; Killbourne, 2000; Mulvey, 1975). Most of this critical work, however, is just that, textual criticism, offering little empirical evidence of how audiences actually receive and make sense of these images and cultural narratives. On the other hand, Hall (1980) and Fiske (1987) emphasize active rather than passive audiences. Hall (1980) argued that the dominant ideology is typically inscribed as the preferred reading in a media text, but the preferred reading is not automatically adopted by viewers.

The social situations of viewers may yield different interpretations, hence the need for reception studies. Hall (1980) outlines three types of readings: dominant readings are the preferred reading that the producer intended; negotiated readings take into account individuals' social position; oppositional readings are in direct conflict with the preferred reading. Hall (1980) notes that reception is a struggle for meaning.

Fiske (1987) says that culture is a sense-making process, and mainstream culture makes mainstream sense. But Fiske (1987) also suggests that audience members make their own sense from mainstream culture, including mass media and popular culture. Like Hall (1980), Fiske (1987) advocates for an active audience and suggests that viewers make their own sense of the images they consume. Thus, the pleasure that audience members derive from viewing is due to their ability to participate actively in culture and meaning. Hall's (1980) dominant ideology and Fiske's (1987) mainstream sense-making seem to suggest that paying attention to messages may help people adjust to fit into dominant social norms.

Despite what producers intend, messages are ambiguous and even contradictory. Audiences also may read contradictory and different messages into producers' texts. Condit (1989) states that the content of any text is polysemous, suggesting a multiplicity of possible meanings. Furthermore, Condit (1989) suggests that polysemous texts are presented to polyvalent audiences, who can construct a variety of interpretations and, ultimately, different meanings.

Audience reception studies go further to examine real audiences via in-depth interviewing, participant observation, ethnography, and focus groups. Theories of audience reception suggest that audiences are active meaning makers in making sense of media content (Ang, 1985; Morley, 1980; Radway, 1984). Reception scholars attempt to understand mediated communication by focusing on production and reception. Reception analysis focuses on audiences making sense of the media and how this sense-making contributes to the social construction of reality (Barbatsis, 2005). So, for example, reception analysis may examine the way messages are produced, how they are portrayed in the media, or how produced messages are consumed and interpreted by audiences.

Following the critical-interpretive tradition of audience reception, this study seeks to understand how young women actually make sense of music videos containing sexualized images of women and narratives of a male fantasy "dreamworld" where women are devoid of any intellect or value besides the worth of their sex appeal (Jhally, 1995).

Cultural studies, narrative theory, and visual rhetoric theories support the idea that music videos present messages that contribute meaning to society. Music videos tell stories visually, and people interpret those messages based on their social contexts. In this

respect, encoding and decoding, and audience reception are helpful in examining the ways that the messages are understood.

After conducting focus groups in which participants view and discuss music videos, the researcher analyzed the participants' responses for themes predicted by critical and reception theories: Women are portrayed as objects or body parts (Kilbourne, 2000), fantasy women in music videos differ from the material experiences of ordinary women (Jhally, 1995), and gender portrayals suggest women's social use is tied to their gender and sexual identities (Mulvey, 1975).

The following research question guide this study. Do women view music videos critically in ways similar to that of critical scholars who have analyzed similar popular culture texts?

Chapter Five

Methodology

This study examined women's interpretations of the portrayal of women artists, specifically, and gender, generally, in music videos. In order to examine the women's interpretations, focus groups were employed. Focus groups were chosen to facilitate group conversation and to encourage women to talk freely about their interpretations. Participants were recruited from a large southeastern university's mass communications program. Three videos featuring women artists were shown to the mostly college-age participants who then wrote down and discussed what was occurring in the videos and how they felt about what they saw.

Focus groups are a valuable way to explore socially constructed meanings and interpretations because working with a small group provides opportunities for feedback and discussion empowering an audience (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). Focus groups are an excellent way to investigate interpretation because they allow for a diversity of individual responses (Berry & Shelton, 1999). Wimmer and Dominick (2003) explain that focus groups are advantageous since individuals feel less inhibited than in individual interviews, and that makes the results more complete. "One respondent's remarks tend to stimulate others to pursue lines of thinking that might not have been elicited in a situation involving just one individual" (p. 125). This may be especially useful in discussions relating to gender and MTV due to the controversial nature of gender and "feminism."

Frequently used in the social sciences, focus group methodology is particularly

useful when researchers seek to discover participants' meanings and ways of understanding. The focus group has been used, variously, to discover consumer attitudes and motivations and to reveal public discourses and interpretive communities (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). The researcher chose focus groups for this study because the intention of this study was to explore audience interpretations.

This study used six focus groups, each consisting of six to 12 mass communications undergraduate and graduate students, mostly women.³ This particular population is especially useful for a number of reasons. First, MTV started in the early 1980s, when most of these students were born. Most of the participants grew up watching MTV. They do not know the world without the existence of music videos. They also are the group who commonly views music videos. "Music videos are predominantly consumed by audiences within the college-age community" (Berry & Shelton, 1999). Second, these students may have a more heightened awareness of MTV since they are students of mass communications within the targeted age range. Finally, this group was ripe for yielding insight due to the visual courses from which they were recruited: a graduate course titled "Visual Media Communication" and undergraduate courses titled "Magazine and Newspaper Production," "Public Relations Design," and "Advertising Design."

Forty-nine participants (43 women and six men) viewed three videos from Total Request Live (TRL), which airs on MTV Monday through Friday from 5-6 p.m. ET/PT. TRL airs the 10 most popular videos daily, and MTV's audience believes that it has input in airing certain videos through a viewer voting process. TRL was chosen because the videos it airs are theoretically the most popular.

The videos for this study were selected the week of February 25, 2005. Only female artist videos were selected. As Jhally (1995) argues, in the “dreamworld,” women artists are encouraged to present themselves in a way that supports men and their fantasies and desires. Exploring how women artists represent themselves would be more valuable than reproducing well-documented claims that men portray women as sex objects in their videos.

During the week of February 25, three female artists premiered in the top 10 spots on TRL: Lindsay Lohan’s “Over,” Destiny’s Child’s “Soldier,” and Jennifer Lopez’s “Get Right.” Focus group participants saw the videos via a projected link through mtv.com and the TRL link.

In Lindsay Lohan’s “Over,” Lohan plays the main character. She has a boyfriend who is dealing with some serious issues which become her issues also. Her love interest is being abused by his father who may be angry at his son’s participation in rebellious activities with Lindsay. The scenes flash between Lindsay singing and scenes in which she and her boyfriend are getting into teenage-related trouble, including sexual relations.

Destiny’s Child’s “Soldier” is not plot-oriented. The focus is on the three singers. They dance in provocative clothing surrounded by men portrayed as street “thugs” and “gangstas.” The song’s lyrics, perhaps with purposive irony, argue that the singers want street “soldiers” to protect and support them.

Jennifer Lopez stars as all of the main characters in her video, “Get Right,” where she is in a nightclub dealing with the work and social aspects of a popular night club. Lopez portrays a bartender, a dancer, a disc jockey, and three customers in the club. The three customers include two women discussing their problems concerning men and an

intoxicated woman removing her clothing to indicate she is “letting her hair down” to have fun. The lyrics of all three videos appear in Appendix B.

For the focus groups, the students were recruited as a part of a class activity. They showed up at their normal class time on February 25, 2005, and were then asked to join the facilitator in a small conference room with a table that seated 12 comfortably. After taking their seats, the participants were told music videos would be shown during the study and if they became uncomfortable at any time during the study, they were welcome to leave.

After viewing the videos, participants were asked for their feedback in writing as well as in conversation facilitated by the researcher. Three sheets of paper were distributed to each of the students after watching the videos one at a time. The participants had five minutes to fill out each sheet before being asked to move on to the next sheets.

The three sheets were intended to represent three different scenarios, the first being two women talking; the second, two men talking; and the third represented a man and woman talking. The icons were cartoon figures with speech bubbles above the heads to indicate that they were engaging in conversation.⁴ The students then were asked to write what they thought the characters would be discussing if the characters had just viewed the videos. After the participants were given time to fill in their dialog sheets, they were asked a series of questions regarding their responses and their interpretations of the music videos. The participants were asked to refer to their responses and relay what the participants thought the female cartoon characters were saying, what the male cartoon characters were saying, and what the male and female cartoon characters were saying.

After that, the focus group conversations took on an interesting synergy regarding the participants' interpretations of the gender roles in the videos, how they felt about the videos, and what definitions of femininity the music videos provided. (See Appendix A for copies of the facilitation sheets that participants completed.)

Analysis focused on participants' responses and were analyzed for themes previously established in the literature by theorists: women as objects or body parts (Kilbourne, 2000), fantasy women in music videos versus the material lives of real women (Jhally, 1995), and "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1975). Additionally, new or unexpected themes emerged and were analyzed.

Additionally, during analysis, the men's responses, if applicable, were noted. Although the men provided valuable information, the focus of this study is on women audience members' interpretations. The majority of participants were women, and women provided the majority of responses.

Chapter Six

Results

A basic question guiding this study is do women view music videos critically in ways similar to that of critical scholars who have analyzed similar popular culture texts. Results from the focus groups indicate that participants to some extent did make observations about the three treatment music videos similar to the critical literature, although the degree to which participants interpreted the things they observed negatively varied.

Discussion themes included participants' observations that women in the treatment music videos were portrayed by camera angles as sexualized body parts (Kilbourne, 2000), depicted as objects of male fantasy (Jhally, 1995), and positioned as objects of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975). Additionally, two other themes emerged unexpectedly: a kind of third-person effect (Davison, 1983) on the effects of viewing negative images of women in music videos and a predilection to call the women performing in the music videos insulting names.

Based on the focus group transcripts, the results reported below fall into five thematic categories including: (1) women depicted in music videos as objects/body parts, (2) women portrayed as objects of fantasy, (3) narrative stories told about femininity, (4) participants' belief/degree of influence and comparison to self and personal experience, and (5) participants' name calling and judgment of the women portrayed in music videos. Student comments represent women focus group participants unless otherwise noted.

Women as objects/body parts

Kilbourne's (2000) critique of advertising images of women argues that women's bodies are atomized into discrete sexualized body parts. Focus group participants mirrored similar concerns about the presentation of women's bodies after viewing the three treatment music videos. Indeed, this theme represents one of the study's strongest findings.

Since the artists in the videos were all women, a number of participants speculated that the women artists had a fair amount of creative freedom in the production of the videos, which made the artists responsible for the videos' representations of women, including the artists themselves. For example, Focus Group 1, Student 1 noticed the women singers were dancing around scantily clad. She said that she would have expected men singers to portray the women as sex objects, but it was frightening that women would adopt the music industry's visual conventions to present women as sex objects (Focus Group 1, Student 1).

After participants wrote down their ideas about what a man and a woman would discuss upon watching the treatment music videos, one participant shared her imagined dialog:

Male figure: Did you see how hot those chicks in the video were? I was just watching them shake their asses in minimal clothing.

Female figure: Don't you think it is weird that women singers portray themselves as sex objects? Do you think it is the male sex's fault?

Male figure: Who cares, they are hot. (Focus Group 1, Student 8)

Another participant commented that the videos were "stereotypical, just flaunting their

bodies around” (Focus Group 1, Student 7). Students 1 and 3 (Focus Group 2) said this meant that women are “sex objects.” “Women are vulnerable” (Focus Group 2, Student 5). “They have nothing better to offer than their bodies’ images and sex, and without men, we would wither and die” (Focus Group 2, Student 1).

Participants did notice the use of close-up shots of women’s body parts in the videos. One participant said she noticed a lot of body parts in the videos (Focus Group 1, Student 2). Camera shots in the treatment music videos repeatedly zoomed in to focus on particular body parts of the performers, such as stomachs, rear ends, and breasts, although some camera angles were more prevalent than others. Several participants noted that the focal point was flat stomachs (Focus Group 1, Student 2; Focus Group 2, Student 8; Focus Group 5, Student 8; Focus 5, Student 1). Shots of Jennifer Lopez’s stomach were especially noticed. Jennifer Lopez performed in shirts that exposed her midriff, and participants had several things to say about it. For example, Student 4 (Focus Group 1) said, “I think that J-Lo was just showing her mid section...because she worked out for that video.”

Other participants noted the emphasis on breasts (Focus Group 1, Student 9, Student 10, Student 2, Student 6, Student 4; Focus Group 5, Student 8) and others noted rear ends (Focus Group 1, Student 8, p. 3; Student 9, p. 6). This was especially revealed when participants were asked what it takes to make a successful video. An overwhelming response was large breasts and short skirts (Focus Group 1, Student 2, p. 4; Student 9, Student 6, and Student 4).

One participant said that the videos were using the notion of sex to sell the artist, and that the bodies shown without clothing are the selling point (Focus Group 2, Student

4). For participants, this seemed to be stating the obvious. Each focus group came to some agreement that the music videos they watched were using sex as a tool to “sell” the video, artist, and music.

Kilbourne (2000) contrasts mediated images of femininity against social reality—advertising fantasy versus the actual experiences of girls and women—and encourages media consumers to consider the relationship between stories advertising tells about girls and women versus the actual lives girls and women lead. Focus group participants seemed to concur with Kilbourne’s (2000) critique without citing her work. The transcripts indicate that the focus group participants believe that women's bodies were objectified in the music videos they watched.

Women as fantasy

Jhally’s (1995) work explores heterosexual adolescent and young adult male sexuality in music videos. Jhally contends that women in music videos found on MTV serve no other function than objects of heterosexual male sexual fantasy. Music videos portray idealized women as objects of lust.

A second strong finding in the present study shows focus group participants agreeing with Jhally’s thesis. Focus group participants generally believed that the women in the treatment music videos were portrayed as sex objects (Focus Group 1, Student 1, and Student 5; Focus Group 2, Student 2, Student 6; Student 1 and Student 3 for example). When talking about the women in the videos, Student 7 said those aren’t real girls; the artists are just trying to sell records because that is what people want to see (Focus Group 1, Student 7).

Jhally (1995) also found disturbing similarities between women’s roles in music

videos and gang rape. After watching the videos, some participants noted both the sexual deviance and fantasy involved. When asked if the men figures on their discussion sheets had anything interesting to say about the videos, male Student 2 said that he wanted to be locked in the room with Destiny's Child. Student 9 said that the audience probably thought about "threesomes" after watching, and Student 6 said that the men would be "fantasizing about the women" (Focus Group 1).

One participant pointed out the difference between the women in these videos and "normal" women. "In Hollywood sex appeal and skinniness always sells and why can't normal average looking girls get on there and do the same thing" (Focus Group 6, Student 5). Thus, some participants noted instances where the women in these videos represent fantasy women. In addition, these fantasy women in the videos are not like "normal" women, according to some focus group participants.

The participants tended to notice that the women in the videos were fantasy women. For example, Student 4 (Focus Group 4) stated, "I think it plays into the male fantasy of how they want women to look." A male participant supported that student's statement by stating of the women in the videos, "These are our fantasy women" (Focus Group 6, Student 5).

According to Jhally (1995), women in music videos inhabit a fantasy landscape in which women are merely heterosexual male sex objects. Participants in the present study viewed music videos that featured women artists taking leading roles in the musical narratives. Yet participants noted the artists' participation in presenting roles with overt sexuality and, thus, supported Jhally's theory that music videos are overwhelmingly sexual, and that music videos feature a world of heterosexual male sexual fantasy.

Male gaze

Mulvey's (1975) critique of Hollywood film revealed the social conventions of sexual difference that influences ways of looking and cinematic spectacle. Mulvey's theory of visual pleasure theory occurs in the treatment music videos used in the present study by showing the female artists from a male perspective. The women are dressed in a sexually appealing way, their movements and gyrations are intended for a hetero-male audience.

Music videos have set style trends and may be considered a reflection of popular culture. One focus group participant said that MTV provides an indicator of how to dress, how less clothing is better, and how using sexuality in fashion is a way to get what you want (Focus Group 6, Student 4). This supports Mulvey's male gaze since the participant notes the women in the videos are dressing and acting in a way that satisfies male desire, thus gives men a reason to "watch."

Mulvey's central thesis states that film production privileges a male point of view, in other words, an active male gaze, and that women are positioned as passive objects of this male gaze. Focus group participants noticed this gaze, even though they did not directly acknowledge it as "male gaze." For example, Student 6 (Focus Group 6) added: "If these are women who don't want to be looked at as sex objects and these are their videos, then why wouldn't they be fully clothed and have camera angles at their faces; this is their music, do they want to be taken seriously for their music?"

Additionally, when asked who produces music videos, the response was always "men" (despite the fact that many participants believed that the women artists featured in the treatment videos had creative license in their own productions). To support this, an

excerpt has been taken from Focus Group 3:

Moderator: Who is making these videos?

Student 5: Men

Student 4: Young men in their 20s most of the men

Student 5: No women have ever won an Oscar for directing. And I think the film schools are graduating an equal number of men and women but there are no female directors. All the men are directors and you can kinda tell.

Participants also noted the purpose of such productions is “sex.” For example, when asked what stories these videos tell about femininity, several students responded “sex” (Focus Group 6, Students 1, 2, 5, and 8).

One student in particular said that, although the colleges are producing equal numbers of men and women graduates, women in the field are virtually non-existent (Focus Group 2, Student 2). This statement, regardless of its truth in fact, shows some support the notion that women may operate on the assumption that men produce these music videos from a male perspective.

Participants supported the notion that the gaze and production represent a man’s point of view, although the male gaze was never directly mentioned. Participants tended to support that men are producing the videos, and the productions are linked to sex. Camera angles were also mentioned. However, the male production of the videos, as well as the use of “male gaze” type camera angles, was not as prevalent as the mention of body parts and male fantasy.

Belief/degree of influence and comparison to self and personal experience

This section explores an unexpected result similar to third-person effect (Davison,

1983), which finds that people tend to overestimate the influence of mass communications on the attitudes and behavior of others. Specifically, individuals expect a persuasive message to have greater effects on others instead of themselves (Davison, 1983). Focus group participants in the present study seemed to feel that other people experience deleterious effects from music videos. Several participants felt that they were not influenced by music videos and the messages conveyed. Some voiced concern about the negative influence of music videos in general on younger people, while participants tended to dissociate themselves from the possibility of being influenced by music videos in general and the treatment music videos specifically.

Student 7 (Focus Group 2) said, “I think what I was trying to say when I wrote this was, even though it is nothing new with sex selling, maybe now it has a younger crowd watching this.” Student 6 (Focus Group 2) added, “They used to just hint at it (sex), but now it is just obvious. It is a younger audience watching these videos, and it gets younger and younger and I wonder what they are seeing.” Another participant said, “It just irritates me because if a 12-year-old girl sees this she would think that it is cool” (Focus Group 3, Student 5).

Other participants, however, related the effects of music videos on younger audiences to their personal experiences when they were younger viewers of music videos. For example, one participant said, “Another thing, when I was younger, I would try and relate songs to real life and with those songs it is like why don’t I have a boyfriend?” (Focus Group 2, Student 6). Student 3 (Focus Group 2) continued, “Well, if you go even younger...they just sing it. They can produce a whole song after hearing it a couple of times, and they don’t even know what they are saying.”

Other participants appeared to be referring to personal experience while speaking in third person. For example, Student 6 (Focus Group 2) said, “The people are looking at those bodies and saying, I wish I could be that. I wish I could have that.” Another participant switched from third-person to first person: “The guy in the first video was so cute or maybe I have to look like that to get a guy like that” (Focus Group 2, Student 10).

Name-calling and judgment of the women performing in music videos

Another finding had to do with participants judging the women in the treatment music videos rather harshly. Participants used a number of negative terms to describe the stars of the music videos, including “slut” and “whore.”

The use of words about promiscuous female sexual identities and roles was prevalent. Student 5 (Focus Group 1) had her discussion sheet characters talk about the videos: “My guy wanted the girl to buy those outfits, walk around the house like that. No, I am not a slut.” Participants said music videos make women look “slutty”: “it is getting worse every day” (Focus Group 3, Student 5). “They all looked the same. A lot of trashy hot looking chicks” (Focus Group 1, Student 1).

Student 5, (Focus Group 5) commented that “whether you said she was really pretty or that she looked like a whore is a matter of interpretation.” Student 6 (Focus Group 5) stated of the women in the videos, “she looks like such a whore.”

Participants described the women in the videos as “slutty” and “whores.” It is interesting to note that the only words the English language provides for indicating active female sexuality are negative terms. Men may be described as bucks or studs, for example, signifying positive connotations. But sexually active women are always described with insulting terminology.

Summary

The strongest findings from the focus groups were the notion that sex sells, the use of body parts, and male fantasy. Participants stated that the videos use sex to sell the artists and their music. In addition, the participants paid much attention to the use of body parts in the videos. The findings also showed that participants believed that the videos were used to engage a male fantasy world of how women should look.

There was also strong support of the third-person effect theory (Davison, 1983) and the use of name-calling. The participants did seem to relate to the videos and mentioned that they did not think it affected them, but the videos in their opinions, did affect others. The participants also commented on the women artists in the videos with negative language, calling them “sluts” and “whores.” Less strong findings include the use of the male gaze in the videos.

In general, focus group participants read the treatment videos as intended for a heterosexual male audience and as using idealized female bodies to play into male sexual fantasy in order to sell the music, artists, and videos. The focus groups were generally concerned about the effect videos have, especially on younger people. Participants noted that males produced the music videos, and participants tended to use derogatory language to describe the women in the treatment videos. Analysis breaks down these themes to look more deeply at the meanings behind them.

Chapter Seven

Analysis

In answer to the research question, the results of this study provide evidence that the women participants did read the treatment music videos in ways similar to critical theorists who have written about this topic. However, the women participants did not recognize the ironies, contradictions, and paradoxes generated by their own critical readings. Analysis supports an argument that, although focus group participants were motivated to critique the images of women they viewed in the treatment videos, focus group participants were not able to generate logical arguments to support their negative opinions of representations of women in the treatment videos. Focus group participants tended to criticize the individual women artists rather than the cultural values and practices that condoned and encouraged the women artists' on-screen performances.

I argue that the participants interpreted incongruous stories about the idealized forms of femininity represented by the treatment music videos but didn't seem to recognize the incongruities within their own interpretations: Some women in the focus groups said that the women in the treatment videos have fake body parts, are not real women, and lack authentic talent. Yet, despite these assessments, some women in the focus groups expressed a wistful desire to be like the women artists in the treatment videos. Additionally, even though some women in the focus groups expressed a desire to be more like the women in the treatment videos, women in the focus groups also tended

to believe that music videos in general have more influence on others than on themselves. Some of the women in the focus groups further speculated that the videos were produced by men for men, even as some focus group women believed that the women in the treatment videos had a degree of independence in how they represented themselves in the videos. In sum, women in the focus groups both recognized that the representations of femininity in the treatment music videos were unrealistic male fantasies and also yearned to be more like these unrealistic representations depicted by women artists choosing to perform male fantasies.

Condit (1989) writes that audiences do not simply receive messages; they decode texts. Audiences do not decode messages in uniform ways, and they do not necessarily interpret the same meaning that producers intend (Condit, 1989). If all texts are polysemic, i.e., capable of bearing multiple meanings, then the treatment videos in the present study are polysemic as well. Condit (1989) also argues that audiences create their own responses to mediated texts based on audiences' own backgrounds and situations. Not all audience members are capable of producing the same readings; each audience member brings her or his own life experience, worldview, and intellectual ability to bear in decoding mediated texts. Condit (1989) notes that members of minority or marginalized groups may have dramatically differing ways of decoding texts, particularly if the texts represent the values of dominant social groups. Such polysemy was apparent within this study's focus groups since the audience members interpreted the texts in many different ways. Nevertheless, as this study's results show, participants did tend to share interpretations on a number of themes and topics. For example, on several occasions, participants in the present study declared that the female artists were not real women, but

the participants failed to put together a persuasive argument to back the notion that the female artists are not real women. Similarly, one of Condit's (1989) participants noted that Condit's treatment television program did not represent "an average everyday American," but the same participant could not define "an average everyday American" (p. 109). Condit's (1989) participants exemplify the strains audiences may experience when attempting to interpret media, especially when trying to relate characters featured in the media to so-called "normal" people.

In addition, Condit's (1989) participants questioned if Condit's treatment television program was realistic, just as some participants in the present study questioned whether the treatment music videos represented reality. Condit (1989) writes, "The trade-off among what marginal audience groups want, what other audience groups want, and what the producers are willing to give them as a compromise may still retain a great deal of control for producers and dominant groups" (p. 110). The women focus group participants in the present study may represent a marginal group because they are women, and while they may find some pleasure in the music videos, music videos such as the treatment videos in the present study also may have a silencing effect on women because music videos are produced by and for masculine sensibilities. Thus, women audiences may find the content of such messages foreign to their own experiences and difficult to interpret. Women audiences also may have difficulty articulating the logical flaws they recognize within such texts (e.g., the women in the treatment videos are not real women; real women should be more like the unreal representations of women in music videos). Since the focus group participants in the present study were not able to articulate a logical counter-rhetoric in response to the treatment music videos, participants were not able

effectively to communicate their resistance to the messages that they were viewing.

“Only if a strong and pervasive response to dominant messages can be demonstrated can we assert that the limited repertoire of mass mediated messages really coexists with a semiotic democracy” (Condit, 1989, p. 111). The dominant ideology represented in the music videos may do oppressive work by addressing the dominant audience, promoting its interest, and largely ignoring marginal audiences’ interests.

Condit’s (1989) study demonstrated a marginalized audience’s ineffective attempts to articulate counter-arguments to mediated texts it found offensive. Condit’s work suggests that because marginalized audiences only have the cultural equipment for decoding messages that the dominant culture and media provide, marginalized audiences may have difficulty expressing their resistance to dominant ideology. At the same time members of dominant groups, who do not have the experiences of marginalized groups, may have difficulty decoding marginalized groups’ arguments. Radway (1986) suggests that although marginalized groups’ interpretations of dominant messages may be logically flawed (precisely because marginalized groups live in, with, and through dominant culture), these not yet fully articulated arguments become markers for locating early intuitive consciousness of and growing resistance to a dominant group’s oppressive ideologies and/or practices.

Radway (1986) describes “ideological seams” as places where discourse and practice join imperfectly to persuade women toward contradictory desires: being independent and respected versus being the object of male desire. This contradiction between what is possible and what is logically incongruent is apparent in the present study where women participants both had negative reactions to idealized representations

of women and also expressed desire to be more like those representations of women. Of Radway's (1986) concept of "ideological seams," Golombisky (1999) explains, "the significance of such a model calls our attention to junctions where pieces of the ideological worldview logically do not fit, but they become basted together anyway and naturalized through unexamined assumptions" (p 3). Golombisky suggests these junctions represent a nascent kind of feminism ripe for feminist intervention.

In the results of the present study, Radway's (1986) idea of "slippages and imperfect joinings" becomes apparent in focus group participant responses. "Encouraged to fill in the blanks, women never realize the whole enterprise is materially impossible within the very ideology, which tells them that it is not only possible but also should be their goal" (Golombisky, 1999, p. 4). The incongruous ideological seams exemplified in the responses of focus group participants demonstrated the conflicts among the unrealistic ideals of women the videos portray, participants' inability to achieve such ideals, participants' recognition that such ideals are unrealistic, and participants' desire to achieve such ideals because they are the ideals that the culture values. Condit's (1989) polysemy and Radway's (1986) ideological seams help to explain the ironies, contradictions, and paradoxes that focus group participants generated in their responses to the treatment videos.

Fake body parts (women as objects/body parts)

Focus group participants noticed the prevalence of body parts in the treatment music videos. The participants also recognized the women in the videos as idealized images of women's various body parts: rear ends, stomachs, and breasts. Kilbourne (2000) argues that advertising shows women's bodies as cropped/chopped pieces and

parts; Kilbourne's purpose is to increase audience awareness of this practice and its harmful message that seems to endorse violence against women. Participants in the present study did notice the use of body parts in the treatment music videos, but participants did not correlate the images of women's body parts to violence against women. Instead, participants questioned the authenticity of such body parts, even though the cropped close-up body parts that participants' questioned clearly were attached to real women's bodies.

For example, when referring to Lindsay Lohan's breasts, one student asks, "are her boobs real?" (Group 1, Student 9). In that same group, another said that some females "wished they look like Lindsay" (Group 1, Student 2). Another participant did not specify what artists she referred to when she pondered, "I wonder if her boobs are real" (Group 5, Student 6).

Kilbourne (2000) hypothesizes that if audiences are taught to recognize the practice in which camera angles in effect sever parts of women's bodies for viewing pleasure, then audiences may not accept so easily the notion that women are merely assemblages of sexualized body parts available for sexual gratification. Focus group participants in the present study did not indicate if they are aware of any dangers associated with the way the female artists were presented. Rather, participants questioned the authenticity of the artists' body parts.

The irony here lies in the notion that cropped and sexualized women's body parts are faked body parts. Participants directed their criticism at the mediated women detached from their own body parts, not the production technique that effected the amputations. Via Radway's (1986) theory of ideological seams, the urge to critique such

images, however ineffectively, represents women having located an ideological seam—these are not typical women; I am being urged to look like these atypical women. Via Condit's (1989) theory of polysemy, then, participants may need more critical equipment than simple awareness of the practice of cropping women's sexualized body parts before participants can direct well articulated criticism to the widespread and routine aesthetic practices of media production technique rather than at the individual women featured in such practices. It becomes a case of blaming the messenger for the message.

Female artists - not real women (male fantasy)

The women featured in the videos appeared to be used as sex objects, according to some focus group participants. Some participants reasoned that the women artists portrayed themselves as sex objects because sex sells. According to Jhally (1995), women in music videos represent a masculine sexual fantasy world where every woman is sexually ideal and sexually available. As idealized heterosexual masculine fantasies, women in music videos are not valid representations of typical women. Thus, we can reason, women in music videos are not representative of real women.

In several instances, focus group participants questioned the authenticity of the women artists in the treatment videos but then also expressed longing to be more like these somehow inauthentic representations of women. Here the contradiction lies in believing that achieving ideal in-authenticity is both acceptable and doable. Participants justified the notion that typical women have the ability to look like the women artists in the videos by reasoning that the artists work out all day and have personal trainers and nutritionists assisting and guiding them toward their ideal unreality. If participants had personal trainers and could watch what they eat, they seemed willing to think that they

also could have the same (inauthentic) bodies as the artists in the videos. One participant explained, “If I had someone fixing all my nails and all I had to do is sit there, and work out all day, if I had all that money, someone doing my hair and makeup I would look like that, too” (Group 6, Student 7).

Several others voiced contradictory statements regarding the women in the music videos. Some participants said that the women artists are not real women, but the “ideological seam” became apparent when those same participants said they themselves have the ability to look like the female artists. For example, one participant said:

The women were not realistic, how realistic is that? How can the women look like that? But at the same time, they wish that they...look like the women in the videos. (Group 1, Student 3)

The concept of “real women” was voiced on several different occasions: “Those aren't real girls, they are just trying to sell records, that is what people want to see (Group 1, Student 7). Another expressed concern about the scandalous clothes the women artists were wearing: “When other people might put them on, you know, real world people... normal people who don't have personal trainers and stuff like that wouldn't look good in them” (Group 3, Student 2). Still another said, “Any of us could probably look like that too. We could all look like artificial trash” (Group 5, Student 6). Yet another said, “If I were a triple size zero, I could look like that” (Group 2, Student 6).

Ironically, while criticizing the in-authenticity of the women in the treatment videos, participants never questioned their own desire to be like those inauthentic images. While a number of participants agreed that the women artists in the treatment videos are not real women, the participants still believed that they have the ability to look that way. In

addition, the women artists featured in the music videos are indeed real women, so focus group participants' definitions of real women remain somewhat unclear.

In this study, participants also seemed to understand and concur with Jhally's (1995) critique that women in music videos function as sex objects, but the same participants never questioned their own desire to be sex objects themselves. Once again, rather than criticizing the production practice, focus group participants criticized the women who participated in the practice even as the same participants expressed desire to be more like those they criticized. Again, participants' interpretations underscore their recognition of an ideological seam (Radway, 1986), but participants seemed ill equipped to articulate an adequate "reading" or logical critique of the media texts (Condit, 1989).

Lack of talent (the story told about femininity)

The story told about femininity in this study says much about the ironies and paradoxes that typical women face in everyday life. From these focus groups, the story told about femininity paints a bleak portrait of the role of women (to become the object of heterosexual male gaze and desire) and the work women need to do to succeed in that role (embody unnatural ideals of beauty). Furthermore, if the women represented in the treatment music videos portray womanly ideals of male fantasy, then ideal women are sluts who lack talent, according to focus group participants.

Participants noted that the women artists in the treatment videos tended to have big breasts, large rear-ends, and flat stomachs. Participants, however, also commented that the female artists are all very thin. For example, one participant said that "she (the artist) looked unusually skinny" (Group 5, Student 4), and another said that "all the girls...are skinny and beautiful" (Group 5, Student 8).

The truth of the matter is if they were up there and they weren't skinny or thin and pretty and beautiful or whatever, they wouldn't be up there making all that cash probably. We wouldn't idolize them anymore. (Group 5, Student 7)

The women in the videos had such large breasts that participants commented on the size and also doubted their authenticity. The women artists in the treatment videos are also known for their voluptuous bottoms, particularly Jennifer Lopez whose backside has inspired urban legends on the amount of insurance she carries on this feature that makes her famous. The curvy nature of the idealized female form presented by the female artists, and noted by the participants, is at the same time impossibly thin. Since the message is to have no fat, but at the same time to have voluptuous breasts and rear ends, the achievement of such a physical standard may be difficult, and is not common among most women, sans cosmetic surgery. Participants did not seem to question this contradiction between the requirement of generous amounts of body fat in some areas of the physique and its lack in others.

While participants acknowledged the female artists' ideal—but inauthentic—looks, participants were quick to note that the artists do not have any talent: “we have to remember they (the female artists) are not very talented” (Group 1, Student 5). “She is definitely less talented so you would think that she would resort to other means of (less clothing) of attracting an audience” (Group 4, Student 2). One participant noted the way artists are successful despite their lack of talent, “even if the talent is not there, she is still hot” (Group 4, Student 9). “Good thing they are all cute or else they would be on the street begging somewhere” (Group 1, Student 4).

Kilbourne (2000) found advertisements encouraging women to be violent with other women—for no apparent reason. The harsh criticism and cruel language that focus group participants used to describe the women artists in the treatment videos may relate to Kilbourne's (2000) observation. In the present study participants' mean-spirited evaluations of the women artists may be a reflection of cultural values that authorize women's competition with women for the approval of men.

For a third time, participants directed their criticism toward personal attacks on the women artists in the music videos instead of on the cultural values that prize women for their beauty and encourage women to achieve fame and wealth based on what they look like rather than what they can do. This once again may indicate participants' recognition of the presence of an ideological seam (perfection is required but impossible), but in their readings of the treatment videos, participants were unable to isolate and articulate the paradox itself.

Belief/degree of influence & comparison to self & personal experience

Even though focus group participants responded to the difficult physical standards presented by the treatment videos by criticizing the women artists, focus group participants also questioned themselves by lamenting the inadequacies of their own bodies. Since the majority of the focus group participants were in the 20s, the age group most closely associated with cultural ideals of women's bodies, it is troubling that such young women find themselves lacking.

Participants did express dissatisfaction with their own bodies in comparison to the women in the treatment videos. Participant comments included: "I want to be like that" (Group 5, Student 3), "I wish I looked like that" (Group 5, Student 8), and "I have to look

like that to get a guy” (Group 1, Student 10). Women participants frequently compared themselves, or what the participants referred to as real women, to the female artists: “I remember when I was in high school thinking I wish I could wear an outfit and look like that” (Group 2, Student 8). Another continued, “Stomach, chest, everything, oh wow, she has such a great body. She is looking really good, I want mine to look like that” (Group 2).

Participants did not seem to recognize any danger in comparing themselves to “unreal” women and finding themselves lacking, but they did mention concern for younger music video viewers by providing examples of their own youth or by citing their own children. For example, one participant explained: “when I was younger I would try and relate songs to real life and with those songs it is like why don't I have a boyfriend?” (Group 2, Student 6). Another voiced concern about the youthfulness of the audience, stating that there is “nothing new with sex selling, maybe now it has a younger crowd watching this” (Group 2, Student 7). “It is a younger audience, watching these videos and it gets younger and younger and I wonder what they are seeing” (Group 2, Student 6). “If you go even younger, like seven or eight, they just sing it, absorb it. They can produce a whole song after hearing it a couple of times and they don't even know what they are saying” (Group 2, Student 3).

The irony here lies within participants’ concern for the youthful audiences watching music videos. The participants worry that younger audiences of women are absorbing the messages and images without knowing what it all means. Focus group participants did mention their own experiences as young audience members, but they did not connect those experiences with possible influences on their own lives. One statement

demonstrates this flip-flop between self-observation and concern for a younger audience:

I was just thinking, maybe not necessarily girls our age, but younger girls, would be thinking, because I have a younger girl, like my daughter is 12, so I guess I think of what they think when they watch that type of thing. I just put, wow, I wish I looked like that. Really I just wish I had their money. Um, it must be a lot of fun to make that video, yeah it's better than school. (Group 5, Student 8)

Because of the use of the first person in this statement, it is unclear whether the participant is identifying more with the video as herself or her daughter.

The third person effect theory came up unexpectedly and was an interesting way to look at the personal beliefs of the participants about the dangers of music videos. The music videos seemed to be acceptable for the mature audiences, such as the participants, because they are aware of the messages and are not as impressionable. However, participants did admit to watching these types of videos when they were younger, and they generally did not think it was as bad then as it is now. For example, when discussing sexually graphic material in music videos, one participant said that “before it was less obvious what they were doing and now it is obvious. They used to just hint at it, but now it is obvious” (Group 2, Student 6).

Participants, while admitting that their own bodies seemed inadequate in comparison to women in the treatment music videos, seemed to believe that such images have greater influence on others, especially younger women. Ironically, participants did not seem aware of any connection between their dissatisfaction with their own bodies and exposure to unrealistic images of women’s bodies. Yet, in their concern for these images’ effects on younger women, participants clearly believed causal relationships between

what women view and how women feel about themselves are possible. In this case, it may be argued that participants are unaware of the slippage or ideological seam that encourages others but not themselves to strive toward impossible body image ideals.

Produced by men for men (Male gaze)

The results showed focus group participants generally believe that men are responsible for the production of music videos. Some participants stated that the artists in the treatment videos were responsible for part of the creative input behind the videos, but it was men who had the most input behind production. “A lot of artists have a lot of power, JLo does her own videos and producing, but like the other artists, they are done by 40-year-old white business men” (Group 6, Student 6)

Although participants’ recognition of Mulvey’s (1975) male gaze was not directly supported in the transcripts, participants understood that music videos are produced by men for men and that women artists perform what men want. Mulvey (1975) theorizes that production aesthetics tend to reproduce the heterosexual male gaze. One focus group participant said:

If these are women who don't want to be looked at as sex objects and these are their videos, then why wouldn't they, like all the guys in their videos were fully clothed, camera angles were at their faces, it is like, this is their music, do they want to be taken seriously for their music? (Group 6, Student 6)

This participant noted that camera angles tend to focus on men’s faces and women’s bodies. This participant notes that when it comes to women on screen, “the camera angles...flashing swim suits” (Group 6, Student 6). Although the present study’s

transcripts offer little direct support that participants recognized the male gaze, it could be argued that these participants do not know the media without a male gaze. Film and video production aesthetics featuring women who are to be looked at may be so culturally ingrained that most participants did not think to question it.

In the case of the male gaze, participants seemed to understand that production techniques tend to emphasize women as objects to be looked at rather than actors with agency to propel the narrative. In the case of the treatment videos featuring women in leading narrative roles, other than the participant noted above, few participants seemed to notice the gendered double standard that treats men on screen as if they drive the action and women as if they are the visual objects of narrative action. By both Condit's (1989) and Radway's (1986) ways of approaching such issues, it could be argued that the focus group participants do not have the cultural equipment to recognize the male gaze as merely one choice among many aesthetic possibilities let alone to critique it.

Summary

Even though participants in the present study identified themes akin to issues identified by critical scholars examining women in advertising and music videos, this study shows how problematic it was for the participants to make sense of gender roles in treatment music videos. This is especially interesting given that the participants as mass communications students theoretically are more media savvy than their non-mass communications peers consuming media content. According to the focus group participants, the producers of music videos are generally men who cater to the pleasure of men as audiences. In music videos, even those featuring women as artists, women as performers remain objects of heterosexual male fantasy and women as audiences are

largely ignored. I argue that because of this, the women participants in the present study had difficulty identifying with the women artists in the treatment videos. Indeed, women artists in the music videos became the targets of criticism for this study's women participants. This turned women against women in their pursuit of men's approval, not approval for talent or ability, but approval for impossible ideals of physical beauty. In sum, participants directed their dissatisfaction with representations of women on screen toward the women on screen, even as participants generally agreed that the music industry is controlled by men who target a male audience.

Although the work of scholars such as Kilbourne (2000) and Jhally (1995) is intended to promote critical media literacy, work dating back to the 1980s by both Condit (1989) and Radway (1986) suggests that audiences may locate the presence of ideological irritants without being able critically to articulate exactly what the irritants are or why they are irritants. Media scholars and educators, then, need both to promote critical media literacy and to provide people with the critical reasoning tools required to unpack paradoxical double binds and circular logics. In education, educators also ought to encourage women to go into the industry as message producers, but not to perpetuate the status quo. New generations of women and men entering media industries must be trained to recognize, deconstruct, and reconstruct new less harmful and contentious ways to represent women (and men) as well as relationships between women and men.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

MTV represents a source of cultural trends for youth culture. Cultural studies, narrative theory, and visual rhetoric are all employed in this research to theorize gender messages in music videos. Audience reception theory helped to uncover audience interpretations of gendered messages presented by MTV music videos.

After conducting focus groups in which participants viewed and discussed the treatment music videos, the researcher analyzed the participants' responses for themes predicted by critical, gender, feminist, and reception theories. The question driving this study has been: Do women view music videos critically in ways similar to that of critical scholars who have analyzed similar popular culture texts?

The participants did appear to comprehend the videos, and they did interpret the videos similarly to what prior critical research had predicted. This study built upon the base that has already been founded: music videos contain sexual content, music videos feature female body parts, and women are portrayed as objects of male fantasy and desire. This study exemplified the ironies, contradictions, and paradoxes within the participants' interpretations of the music videos, which is a new addition to the existing research.

This study is important to the field because it takes the next step from content analysis and uncovers the ironies, contradictions, and paradoxes within the audience interpretations. Studies have stated that sexism exists in music videos, but the next logical

question is what does that mean? As these images are redundantly blasted through television sets to promote popular culture, it is important to look at how audiences of women interpret such messages and images. This study asks the women of youth culture, MTV's target audience, what this gendered communication means to them personally.

The participants' statements indicated that they generally believed that the music videos were produced by men for a male audience, and that the female artists were used as sex objects. What the participants did not seem to notice was their statements were filled with contradictions. Participants tended to note that the women artists were examples of what men want, although only on a physical level. Participants observed that it is impossible for real women to live up to this standard, but at the same time participants rationalized how it could be possible to have bodies like the women artists. Some participants commented that the women artists had no talent and that they portrayed themselves in demeaning ways; yet some participants still voiced a desire to be more like the women artists. Participants generally stated that the women artists were not real women, had no talent, and were "whores," but at the same time participants clearly showed their desire to be like the women artists, particularly in terms of physical beauty whose sole function is to attract heterosexual male gaze and desire.

The strength of this research is that it demonstrates women's struggles to reconcile mediated images of what women should be with what the individual women believe they are. Participants tended to compare themselves with and idolize the women artists, and participants voiced unhappiness at their failure to measure up to the physical standards of the women artists. At the same time, participants judged the women featured in the treatment videos harshly in terms of talent, ability, and sexual promiscuity. These

ironies and contradictions are an important step toward understanding women's interpretations of mediated images of women. The methodology of this study enabled rich results and exposed the existence of gender stereotypes and participants' feelings of inadequacy in relation to their own femininity. The limitations and weaknesses of this study include the lack of demographic information about the participants, as well as a media audit, viewing habits, and history of viewing music videos. Such information may have provided further insight into the participants' comments and observations that emerged during the focus groups. It also may be a weakness that men were involved in the focus groups. It could be argued that including men in the focus groups infringed on the participation of the women. The few men who did participate, however, agreed with the women participants when the women stated that the women artists are the type of women that men want and desire.

Condit (1989), Radway (1986), Hall (1980), and Fiske (1987) all suggest that audience members may interpret the same message in different ways. Theoretically, messages may be accepted and internalized, adjusted to fit within individuals' worldviews, or resisted and rejected (Condit, 1989; Fiske, 1987; Hall, 1980). In this study, however, the participants tended to interpret a similar message from the treatment videos and music videos in general: women are used as sex objects in order to sell music. The uncertainty then occurs after the message is consumed: what the audience members do with that interpretation of the message. Results of the present study suggest that women audiences struggle to make personal sense of mediated standards of ideal feminine beauty as an impossible standard, by which women still feel compelled to judge themselves and come up lacking. By Radway's (1986) notion of "ideological seams," the

nonsocial meeting of what is portrayed (ideal feminine beauty) and what is real (real women's bodies), explains why focus group participants focused on the presence of an illogical premise but could not articulate it without contradicting themselves.

According to focus group participants, the treatment music videos demonstrated that women are sexually desirable to heterosexual men if women have an ideal female form, which, also according to focus group participants, is the message that the videos' male producers intend for women to receive. Women as audience members watch these messages and understand that this ideal feminine form is what all men want of real women. Because of their desire to be desired/desirable, women as viewers also desire to be like the women artists portrayed. This may happen despite the women viewers' understanding of another cultural message: women should not rely on sex to get what they want.

What ensues is a struggle to reconcile these two competing cultural imperatives: *I want to look like that so that men look at/desire/want me sexually, which I am shown is the only way that a man wants a woman; I do not need to rely on anything other than my looks and sexuality to be successful; all my energy should be focused on how I look in order to have male attention, which is the female goal according to the music videos. Talent, education, and other traits do not matter as long as I am attractive and display that attractiveness.*

From the focus groups, we learn that the deeper message within these music videos is it is better to be a talent-less "whore" desired by heterosexual men, than to be a successful "real woman" no man desires. This message undermines and contradicts hard-won gains of the women's movement.

Future research tracing women's history of viewing in relation to their body images would be helpful in establishing if there is any relationship between media habits and body image/self-worth. Additionally, in-depth interviews with the producers of music videos may provide insight about encoding such messages to add to the literature on music video content and audience interpretations. In addition to further study that analyzes the decoding processes of audience members, it also is important to study the intent of producers as the encoders of these mediated messages. If there is an "ideological seam" in the production/consumption of these videos, then further research also should focus on music video producers: producers, directors, musicians, editors, and music and television industry executives.

This research demonstrates the importance of teaching critical media literacy, not only to mass communications students, but to everyone, and especially before they get to college. Young audience members need to learn how to decode mediated messages critically for the ways that competing interests among various groups and agendas—economic, political, social, religious, among others—vie for individuals' acceptance, even if such messages are not always logical or in the best interest of the consumer.

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Appendix B: Music Video Lyrics

Artist: Jennifer Lopez
Song: "Get Right"

(Yeah)

[Verse 1]:

You're lookin' just a little too hard at me
Standin' just a little too close to me
You're sayin' not quite enough to me
You're sippin' just a little too slow for me
No doubt you play it real cool homie
Got me thinkin' what is it you do for me
Trippin' (trippin'), a little more than I should be
So let yourself go and get right with me

[Hook]:

I'm about to sign you up (we can get right)
Before the night is up
We can get right, we can get right (we can get right)
I'm about to fill your cup (so we can get right)
Before the night is up
We can get right, tonight (we can get right)

[Bsec]:

Here I come
Here I come
Here I come
Here I... come

[Verse 2]:

Your lips, talkin' 'bout I play too much
Can't a woman take advantage of what she wants?
My hips movin' oh so slow (so slow),
Bar tab lookin' like a car note (car note)
All I need is you here right by my side
Take whatever you want, baby let's ride
And whatever won't do let me decide
Just put your name on the dotted line

[Hook]:

I'm about to sign you up (we can get right)
Before the night is up
We can get right, we can get right (we can get right)
I'm about to fill your cup (so we can get right)
Before the night is up
We can get right, tonight (we can get right)

[Bridge]:

So much we've got to say but so little time
And if tonight ain't long enough, don't leave love behind
(Don't leave this love behind)
Baby take my hand, I'll show you why

[Hook]:

I'm about to sign you up (we can get right)
Before the night is up
We can get right, we can get right (we can get right)
I'm about to fill your cup (so we can get right)
Before the night is up
We can get right, tonight (we can get right)

[Break]:

(Yeah)

[Hook]:

I'm about to sign you up (we can get right)
Before the night is up
We can get right, we can get right (we can get right)
I'm about to fill your cup (so we can get right)
Before the night is up
We can get right, tonight (we can get right)

I'm about to sign you up (we can get right)
Before the night is up
We can get right, we can get right (we can get right)
I'm about to fill your cup (so we can get right)
Before the night is up
We can get right, tonight (we can get right)

Artist: Lindsay Lohan
Song: "Over"

I watched the walls around me crumble
But its not like I won't build them up again
So here's your last chance for redemption
So take it while it lasts because it will end
And my tears are turning into time I've wasted trying to find a reason for goodbye

[Chorus:]

I cant live without you
Can't breathe without you I dream about you honestly
Tell me that its over
Because the world is spinning and I'm still living
It wont be right if were not in it together
Tell me that it's over

And I'll be the first to go
Don't want to be the last to know

I won't be the one to chase you
But at the same time you're the heart that I call home
I'm always stuck with these emotions
And the more I try to feel the less I'm whole
My tears are turning into time
I've wasted trying to find a reason for goodbye

[Chorus]

My tears are turning into time
I've wasted trying to find a reason for goodbye

[Chorus]

Tell me that it's over
Over
Honestly tell me
Honestly tell me
Don't tell me that its over
Don't tell me that its over..

[www.azlyrics.com]

Artist: Destiny's Child (f/ T.I., Lil Wayne)
Song: "Soldier"

[First Rap: T.I. (DC)]

Hey (I want a Soldier!)
The way you got it, I'm the hottest around
They'll know it when they see you rollin' impala's around
(I got a Soldier!)
Wit the top down feeling the sounds
Quakin' and vibratin' your thighs ridin' harder than guys
Wit the chrome wheels at the bottom, white leather inside
When them flames be spittin' at you tell 'em don't even try it
To shot it wit Chelle and kick it wit Kelly or holla at B
Ya, gotta be g's you way outta your league
Please!

[First Verse: Kelly (DC)]

We like dem boys that be in them lac's leanin' (Leanin')
Open their mouth their grill gleamin' (Gleamin')
Candy paint, keep that whip clean and (Clean and)
(They always be talkin that country slang, we like)
They keep that beat that be in the back beatin' (Beatin')
Eyes be so low from that chief (chief and)
I love how he keep my body screamin' (Screamin')
A rude boy that's good to me, wit street credibility

[Hook: DC]

If your status ain't hood
I ain't checkin' for him
Betta be street if he lookin' at me
I need a soldier
That ain't scared to stand up for me
Known to carry big things
If you know what I mean
If your status ain't hood
I ain't checkin' for him
Betta be street if he looking at me
I need a soldier
That ain't scared to stand up for me
Gotta know to get dough
And he betta be street

[Second Verse: Beyonce (DC)]

We like dem boys up top from the BK (BK)
Know how to flip that money three ways (Three ways)
Always ridin' big on the freeway (Freeway)
(Wit that east coast slang that us country girls be like)
Low cut caesars wit the deep waves (deep waves)
So quick to snatch up your Beyonce (Beyonce)
Always comin down poppin our way (Our way)
(Tellin us that country girls the kinda girl they like)

[Hook: DC]

If your status ain't hood
I ain't checkin' for him
Betta be street if he lookin' at me
I need a soldier
That ain't scared to stand up for me
Known to carry big things
If you know what I mean
If your status ain't hood
I ain't checkin' for him
Betta be street if he looking at me
I need a soldier
That ain't scared to stand up for me
Gotta know to get dough
And he betta be street

[Bridge: Beyonce (DC):]

I know some soldiers in here (Where they at, where they at)
They wanna take care of me (Where they at)
I know some soldiers in here (Where they at, where they at)
Wouldn't mind takin one for me (Where they at)
I know some soldiers in here (Where they at, where they at)
They wanna spend that on me (Where they at)
I know some soldiers in here (Where they at, where they at)
Wouldn't mind puttin that on me (Where they at)

[Second Verse: T.I.]

Next to the speakers keep a toy in the trunk of the 'lac
A reformed D boy use to run into traps
Still a soldier do to war if you running your trap
About my girls ain't no thing to put you under the map
Walk the streets five deep with nothing less than a stack
And 80 carats on my chest provides a special attraction
50 G's in my jeans plus the dough from the waller
It's the reason I'm the king girl, I know what you like

[Hook: DC]

If your status ain't hood
I ain't checkin' for him
Betta be street if he lookin' at me
I need a soldier
That ain't scared to stand up for me
Known to carry big things
If you know what I mean
If your status ain't hood
I ain't checkin' for him
Betta be street if he looking at me
I need a soldier
That ain't scared to stand up for me
Gotta know to get dough
And he betta be street

[Third Verse: Michelle (DC)]

I like dem boys over there they lookin' strong tonight (Strong tonight)
Just might give one the phone tonight (Phone tonight)
Homey in the dickies in my zone tonight (Zone tonight)
He don't know it might be on tonight (On tonight)
Ooh he lookin' good and he talkin' right (Talkin' right)
He the type that might change my life (Change my life)
Everytime he look at me my girls be like (Girls be like)
(That one may be the one tonight)

[Hook: DC]

If your status ain't hood
I ain't checkin' for him
Betta be street if he lookin' at me
I need a soldier
That ain't scared to stand up for me
Known to carry big things
If you know what I mean
If your status ain't hood
I ain't checkin' for him
Betta be street if he looking at me
I need a soldier
That ain't scared to stand up for me
Gotta know to get dough
And he betta be street

[Second Rap: Lil Wayne]

Hey, see cash money is a army
I'm walkin' wit purple hearts on me

You talkin' to the sargeant
Body marked up like the subway in harlem
Call him, weezy f baby, please say the baby
If you don't see me on the block I ain't tryna hide
I blend in wit the hood, i'm camouflage
Bandana tied, so mommy join my troop
Now every time she hear my name she salute

[Bridge: Beyonce (DC):]

I know some soldiers in here (Where they at, where they at)
They wanna take care of me (Where they at)
I know some soldiers in here (Where they at, where they at)
Wouldn't mind puttin that on me (Where they at)

Appendix C: Transcripts

<u>FOCUS GROUP #1</u>	
<p><i>Would anyone like to volunteer to tell me what they wrote?</i></p> <p>I think that they would think or discuss that the women were not realistic, how realistic is that, how can the women look like that, but at the same time, they wish that they would like to look like the women in the videos.</p>	Student 3
<p>Mine said that they haven't watched MTV since they were in high school, nothing seems to be different except less videos, but they seem to be the same, women dancing around scantily clad. And then the other one had said she had noticed that as well, and thought it was interesting that the videos were all by women singers. She would have expected men singers to portray the women as sex objects, but it was frightening that women portray themselves that way. The women did the same things themselves</p>	Student 1
<p>My two were arguing over outcomes, one was advocating entertainers, pointing out her faces pretty and makeup is correct, and she looks like hookers, they are arguing about that. One is thinking, they are very pretty and I want to be like them, one is against it.</p> <p>It's called catty</p>	Student 5
<p>I went in the same direction but they were talking about shoes and purses</p>	Student 4
<p>Clothes, makeup and dancing</p>	Student 2
<p>How they didn't really get the first one</p>	Student 6
<p>The other is like, always got the outfits, dang they're skinny</p>	Student 7
<p>Like at home, you should still wear sexy clothes and makeup because dressing down is kind of like letting yourself go</p>	Student 8

<p><i>Were you all familiar with MTV before this video or those groups before?</i></p>	
<p><i>The group shows that they were not familiar? Similar or different?</i></p>	
<p>I think they are similar in the element of sex, really relying on sex. I remember the videos being more creative in storyline. Female sexuality, and older videos has that also, but it did not solely rely on it.</p>	Student 3
<p>We have to remember they are not very talented</p>	Student 5
<p>As long as they have the bling bling around them</p>	Student 9
<p>I haven't watched MTV in years, when I did, it was more diverse music, and now I feel like it is all the one type of music. It wasn't all hip-hop.</p>	Student 7
<p>Mine were conversing in the video, oh, they were talking about their men and what bums and they want them to take care of them</p>	Student 1
<p>Objectifying women, but they were objectifying men, ripped arms.</p>	Student 3
<p>I did notice that they had man arms, background as arm candy</p>	
<p>The guy in the first video was so cute or maybe I have to look like that to get a guy like that.</p>	Student 10
<p><i>Second - men talking to each other, what were they saying?</i></p>	
<p>They were talking about how all the girls did not start looking like JLo until the fifth sixth drink.</p>	Student 4
<p>Is Lindsay 18 yet, are her boobs real?</p>	Student 9
<p>All the girls in the videos were hot, I wish my next door neighbor looked like Lindsay</p>	Student 6
<p>Wished they look like Lindsay</p>	Student 2
<p>Wonder how the guy in the trailer park got the hot chick</p>	Student 5
<p>I thought it seemed like if the guys were hitting on other girls, or the implication that the guy deceived the girlfriend, that would all be forgiven as long as he seduces her correctly, satisfies her in bed, and showers her with gifts, especially jewelry</p>	Student 9
<p><i>Did the men have anything interesting to say about the videos?</i></p>	

They want to be locked in the room with Destiny's Child	Student 2
Threesomes	Student 9
Fantasizing about the women	Student 6
Good thing they are all cute or else they would be on the street begging somewhere	Student 4
They all looked the same. A lot of trashy hot looking chicks	Student 1
Women should dress in skimpy clothes to allure men, best if women are turned on by other women, especially if she would do sexual things with the other women for his entertainment. Then he hoped it would end in a threesome	Student 9
I wouldn't put it in those terms as a guy	Student 5
<i>Were sexual things were the main topic?</i>	
I used the term pedophile	Student 4
It was very sexual	Student 1
She is 18	Student 6
Mine said that you could put the sound back on, after the third one was over	Student 2
One of the guys was talking, waiting for the boobs to be seen. Her shirt was very close to being open, but it never comes off, just a tease, disappointment.	Student 10
My two guys, Lindsay is hot, not a good singer, not a good actress, but she has a nice rack	Student 7
The men didn't talk about the music at all	Student 3
All the girls were hot and they shook their asses	Student 8
<i>Third situation, where a male and a female are discussing, what are they saying?</i>	
Made the woman jealous, talked negatively about the women because she was jealous	Student 4
<i>What was she jealous of?</i>	

She didn't look like them. They were so skinny and pretty	Student 4
Trying to reassure her, those aren't real girls, they are just trying to sell records, that is what people want to see	Student 7
Did you see how hot those chicks in the video were? Please. What did you think about the music? There was music? I was just watching them shake their asses in minimal clothing. Don't you think it is weird that women singers portray themselves as sex objects? Do you think it is the male sex's fault? Who cares, they are hot.	Student 8
My guy wanted the girl to buy those outfits, walk around the house like that. No I am not a slut. They are so skinny because they don't eat, they smoke a lot and do a lot of cocaine, that kind of thing.	Student 5
Accused the male about always thinking about sex, I like the music too, it just helps that they are hot.	Student 2
My guy makes a sexist remark, about the only reason they are famous is because they banged the producer and then they get in an argument about sexist remarks.... <i>trails off</i>	Student 7
Mine had a conversation, well, I don't know, maybe we could have a drink first	Student 10
<i>Do you think a man or woman produced their videos?</i>	
It is a man, man, man, always the man	Student 1-9
Similar to each other? They all seems pretty similar, dance oriented no storyline	Student 5
JLo and Beyonce seem the same.	Student 7
High school parties, and stealing the car	Student 1
What was she crying about?	Student 3
I also thought that while all three videos are just latent with sexually graphic material, they Destiny and Jlo showed the females in a more	Student 10
	Student 9

authoritative role, everyone was huddled around, role models,	
Yeah, she called him a pendaho	Student 5
Lindsay was crying	Student 6
The women are so authoritative, they were all big and bad, with their dogs, but then they are running around in daisy dukes.	Student 2
I didn't like the nerdy girl in the JLo video? The nerdy white girl?	Student 5
I didn't like that, that is because you are a white girl?	Student 9
Several cars had messages on the license plates, discussion of the meaning of the license plates.	Student 10
What did that stand for?	
<i>Now if you had to produce a music video what do you think you would need?</i>	
Big boobs, and short skirts?	Student 2
Storyline, good song	Student 9
Big boobs, short skirts	Student 6
And then some boobs and short skirts	Student 4
I miss all the alternative videos because they don't have naked women running around	Student 1
I am so not the target audience	Student 9
Are they trying to target young males?	Student 5
That is what I would think	Student 4
Women vs. men who buy these CDs	Student 1
I would have to venture that more women buy	Student 6
Target is 15 year old girls	Student 2
The men would like the videos and women would buy it	Student 10
I like the videos with a story, where the other two were just people dancing around naked	Student 7
Baby got back was entertaining, colorful	Student 3
<i>Can you talk a little about if the videos tell a story about female sexuality, what would these videos be saying?</i>	

A man to take care of them	Student 8
Sexuality	Student 4
If you're a hoochie skank, you too can get lots of bling.	Student 9
The second one was so stereotypical to me, just flaunting their bodies around.	Student 7
Footloose and fancy free	Student 8
Good accurate description about what is going on in high school, that is what they do, go out to fool around in a trailer, accurate portrayal	Student 1
Out of control, no rational, do what I feel	Student 3
Strong sexual women, they decided. I think that is a better role model, because they decide. They have achieved that power because of their sexuality	Student 10
I want a soldier.	Student 4
Strong black women, in need of approval, protection. Look don't touch type attitude, Destiny's power, they need a soldier and they are using their sex to get it.	Student 9
I think it is sending a message that you have to dress provocatively act and dress a certain way. In order to have power, you need to dress and act a certain way.	Student 6
<i>What does this say to the audience?</i>	
How you look is the most important thing.	Student 2
Take your clothes off.	Student 5
See how much men desire those women in the videos	Student 9
<i>Any symbols?</i>	
Body parts, a lot of Stomachs	Student 2
Asses, they all shook their asses the same exact way.	Student 9
They must have had the same choreographer	Student 6

<p><u>FOCUS GROUP #2</u></p> <p><i>After watching those videos, what do you think two females would talk about?</i></p> <p>Performances, I guess</p> <p>Like the performance in the video</p> <p><i>In what sense?</i></p> <p>Like how they dance and what they wear, what their actions are</p> <p><i>Did the characters say anything about those?</i></p> <p>Well, yeah, especially in the Lindsay Lohan video</p> <p>in the first one, she big chest I think she is only 18, risqué</p> <p><i>What about all the others, did the females say anything else?</i></p> <p>Like Jennifer Lopez and stuff, she is all about dance and stuff, she looks skinnier and she sounded like Gwen Stefani a little bit</p> <p><i>Anyone else?</i></p> <p>I have some similar stuff. the conversation I had is the transformation</p> <p>wow, she really changed a lot</p> <p><i>How has she transformed?</i></p> <p>She turned into a hoe bag,</p> <p>As my wife would say, everyone is turning into a Britney. Everyone is copying the hoe bag look because sex sells</p> <p><i>So everyone is copying the hoe bag look?</i></p> <p>Skimpy clothes, dancing provocatively</p> <p><i>Do your characters discuss that the accepted or expected?</i></p> <p>More so accepted than expected, but with accepted comes expected.</p> <p>sex in the videos is nothing new</p> <p>I think what I was trying to say when I wrote this was, even though it is nothing new with sex selling, maybe now it has a younger crowd watching</p>	<p>Student 3</p> <p>Student 3</p> <p>Student 3</p> <p>Student 3</p> <p>Student 5</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 2</p> <p>Student 2</p> <p>Student 2</p> <p>Student 2</p> <p>Student 7</p>

<p>this</p> <p>The sex sells thing is what I was getting at, anyone who has self respect for themselves</p>	Student 8
<p>any mature adult notices it or has noticed it, but they are numb to it</p>	Student 5
<p>If not there is a hint of sexual innuendo, it is just blatantly there on the screen there is not doubt about it, like the Lindsay Lohan video they were doing it in the trailer, where before it was less obvious what they were doing and now it is obvious. They used to just hint at it, but now it is obvious. It is a younger audience, watching these videos and it gets younger and younger and I wonder what they are seeing.</p>	Student 6
<p>Like whoa what are they thinking. The girl comes in the corner and says yeah, my friend is legal now.</p>	Student 2
<p>We know what's going on, I don't know it is a younger audience, the get younger and younger.</p>	Student 7
<p>I just tried to put myself in those people's shoes, the people who would watch this show. I remember when I was in high school thinking I wish I could wear an outfit and look like that. That's the same thing I was saying. The people watching that are too young to have real self respect.</p>	Student 8
<p>The people are looking at those bodies and saying, I wish I could be that, I wish that I could have that.</p>	Student 6
<p>Body image is the thing if you notice with the whole sex selling, they aren't wearing many clothes and bodies are the focal point, without much clothes on.</p>	Student 4
<p>Stomach, chest, everything, oh wow, she has such a great body. She is looking really good, I want mine to look like that.</p>	Student 8
<p>I think Lindsay was a little bit self-respecting to some degree but come on, teeny bitty boy shorts. Wear a bra. I don't think she was wearing a bra.</p>	Student 3
<p>One thing I noticed it doesn't really have to do with sex, but uh, it is not a good message but in the destiny child's video the lyrics were like i need a</p>	Student 6

soldier, I'm not strong enough.	
I need a soldier, I need a man to protect me	Student 7
I need a boy to do those things, I am too dainty to pick up things carry big things if you know what I mean	
They walk around all dainty. Talking about large equipment, they are really blunt.	Student 8
Really good figures of speech	Student 2
Another thing, when I was younger I would try and related songs to real life and with those songs it is like why don't I have a boyfriend?	Student 6
Well, if you go even younger, like seven or eight, they just sing it, absorb it., they can produce a whole song after hearing it a couple of times and they don't even know what they are saying.	Student 3
I don't think the Lindsay Lohan song would make it without the video. You need the video to watch because otherwise you would be like this song sucks. You just like watch it, but it's not like you waste your time on it.	Student 2
I think the Destiny's Child is the same way.	Student 4
<i>The videos are needed because without the video the songs would flop?</i>	
<i>The songs quality was poor?</i>	
The songs were made for the video, the videos weren't made for the songs.	Student 8
The destiny's child video, they were just singing Beyonce's name, how degrading	Student 7
For the exception of maybe JLo because she actually has a voice... <i>interjections, disagreements... I don't know about that.</i>	Student 1
See, I like Lindsay Lohan but she is so young.	Student 2
<i>Any other comments? OK, now let's look at the males talking</i>	
We all know what they would be saying	Student 2
<i>You want to elaborate ?</i>	
Chances are, I don't even know if they heard the words it is one step above free low brow porn	Student 2

My little brother watches. He just stares, he wont even look away, waiting for a wardrobe malfunction	Student 5
My guys were talking about the girls, JLo earrings, comparing the outfits Brittany Spears dances like a stripper, like a strip club.	Student 4
The girls look at that and they say they wish they had that and the guys watch that and say I wish I HAD that. Not in the same sense more in a sexual appeal thing. Guys wish they could be her guy.	Student 8
Maybe even possibly in the Beyonce video, the buff guys in it, like the guys would think they are not good enough. maybe some guys get self conscious	Student 1
Basically the guy on guy conversation, wow she's got some junk in the trunk.	Student 4
Who would you chose? I would chose this one, I would chose that one	Student 3
I think I have a very good speech here, which one am I gonna have sex with	Student 2
I will read it if you want <i>Ok, if you would like</i>	Student 2
you dude, did you she Lindsay Lohan man yeah bro bitch is hot	Student 2
would you hit that, yeah of you think of all the STDs you would get <i>Is that just because you know something about their backgrounds?</i>	
I think it is the fact that they know they cannot have that, they will try and knock them to make themselves feel better	Student 2
Do you think if they had the chance they would hook up?	Student 1
Oh yea definitely	Student 2
When it comes to clothes less is more.	Student 3
<i>Ok, so the male and the female are conversing, what are they saying?</i>	
I would hope they would be agreeing, I think the boy would be defending	Student 4

the video and the girl would say they females are dressed like skanks oh yeah, do you think she's pretty. you could look just like that	Student 8
If I were a triple size zero, I could look like that Why are you so obsessed with that?	Student 6
I kind of had the same kind of thing. I had a husband and wife and the husband said, why don't you dress like that and the wife says, because any self respecting female would say because I am not the neighborhood whore. It's basically the same thing, some guys are obsessed with that Some women would argue it saying that if they got it you may as well use it. They are using what they've got to get what they want. If they are willing to do it.	Student 3
<i>What stories did these videos tell about femininity and the roles of females?</i>	
sex objects	Student 1
sex objects	Student 3
women are vulnerable	Student 5
they have nothing better to offer than their bodies images and sex, that without men we would wither and die.	Student 1
I think JLo was just showing her mid section, I think because she worked out for that video.	Student 4
her lyrics are even saying that she basically sleeps around and what is wrong with that	Student 3
It's kind of what I was getting at	Student 8
I didn't hear what they were saying, I was just watching	Student 2
If it is ok for men, why is it not ok for women	Student 3
Because she is older, she may have enough confidence to say that where if Lindsay tried to pull that off, she would look come off like mega slut	Student 5
And by doing that they may think their inner feminist side is coming out	Student 1

<p>Like that girls and guys are equals and they can get sex the same way. girls want sex just as much as guys do, but they are taught to not express it it is pretty much the same thing but now they just exploit it.</p> <p><i>Who do you think is making these videos?</i></p> <p>The writers</p> <p>Record companies. record labels</p> <p>The guys who basically wrote all the songs for Brittany</p> <p>Lou Pearlman</p> <p>That was so sad.</p> <p><i>As advertising students, can you see this industry from an advertising perspective?</i></p> <p>product placement,</p> <p>I see it from magazine perspective and I relate it to MTV like Lindsay Lohan got way skinny, like magazine</p> <p>When I see Lindsay I think of fez, since they were together for so long.</p>	<p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 3</p> <p>Student 8</p> <p>Student 2</p> <p>Student 8</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 5</p> <p>Student 8</p>
<p><u>FOCUS GROUP #3</u></p> <p><i>Can you tell me what your females are saying to each other?</i></p> <p>I'll go, since I'm a guy. I kinda didn't talk about the videos if that's ok.</p> <p>That's A, that's B.</p> <p><i>OK</i></p> <p>What is your boyfriend doing?</p> <p>I'm not sure but I can't wait to see him</p>	<p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 4</p>

<p>I know I wish I had one, but now I have to go to my shitty job.</p> <p>Well, maybe someday a guy can take care of you. Maybe someday.</p> <p><i>So, from the videos, you got that, that the females needed to be taken care of?</i></p> <p>That is what I got out of it. Guys need to take care of her</p> <p><i>They need a boyfriend?</i></p>	<p>Student 4</p>
<p>Sort of. Like the first one, I don't know. It seemed like the first one she was kind of talking about a heavy handed issue, like women in the work place, the other two seemed centered around a guy...that's what I got out of that.</p> <p><i>Anyone else feel the same about that, or different?</i></p>	<p>Student 4</p>
<p>Well, I thought being a girl myself that it was a little um, the people who made these videos weren't trying to sell their music. Sort of like they were trying to sell sex, because in all three of them, they dressed very provocatively and some women would take offense to that. And they discuss that afterwards, like they were selling themselves short</p> <p>But then again other women might talk about how they were envious of how they looked in the videos and how they wish that they could look like that.</p> <p>I just sort of summarized it, I didn't put any dialog down.</p> <p><i>What are they jealous of?</i></p>	<p>Student 2</p>
<p>Jealous of maybe how their bodies look, you know, how they're very fit and toned, and they have on all these clothes and they look good in them. When other people might put them on, you know, real world people. normal people who don't have personal trainers and stuff like that wouldn't look good in them.</p> <p><i>And you said something about sex sells?</i></p>	<p>Student 2</p>
<p>The thing is, especially in the j-lo video, I thought that it was a pretty good issue she was trying to get at, you know, like you said women in the workplace, and you know, especially if you are a single mom and you have a lot of stuff to do and you're trying to support two people, but then there</p>	<p>Student 2</p>

<p>could have been better ways to get that across than having her be a waitress or a bartender or whatever she all portrayed in that video.</p> <p>I mean.</p> <p>Yeah, I thought that was kind of strange. She's kind of going after this issue of women being objectified a little bit, then she come out in these skimpy clothes and stripper thing.</p> <p>You totally negated what you are trying to say by doing that.</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>Um, I had the two women talking about. That Destiny's Child video gets on my nerves</p> <p>I don't know when they got so ghetto, and then they encourage the guys to act like thugs. You know, and basically treat them like objects. So that was kind of my dialog.</p> <p>It just got on my nerves, you know, we want the grill and the soldier, and all that stuff.</p> <p>The whole it's played out, sorry.</p> <p><i>Was that more from the lyrics or was that from watching the video?</i></p> <p>I heard the song on the radio, I just thought it was someone doing the same old thing, but then when I saw it was Destiny's Child I was kind of appalled because they are actually talented because you know that whole ghetto gangster thing is just played out and they are encouraging the guys to act like that and treat them like objects and stuff like that.</p> <p><i>You think they were objectified in that video?</i></p> <p>Yeah, well that one what was that shirt she was wearing?</p> <p>And what was the whole pregnant belly thing?</p> <p>Yeah!</p> <p>They are all like ghetto and hanging out and she's pregnant, I mean, I don't know, it just irritates me. Because if a 12 year old girl sees this, she would think that is cool.</p> <p>If a 12 year old guy saw that, he's going to think that the only way he's</p>	<p>Student 5</p> <p>Student 2</p> <p>Student 5</p> <p>Student 5</p> <p>Student 5</p> <p>Student 2</p> <p>Student 5</p> <p>Student 6</p>
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going to get a girl is to act like a thug and have a gold tooth and be a punk and all that.	
Well, that is the age group that watches that show. The group that watches that show is primarily high schoolers and teenagers.	Student 2
<i>Any more comments?</i>	
On the JLo video, the part of it that bothered me about it, it seemed so egocentric, because why did she have to play all the characters. I always thought that about her anyway. But really, I don't think in the real world that any mom would bring her daughter to a club if she was a DJ.	Student 1
She I didn't get it, is she the mom or the sister? My friend and I were actually talking about that last night. We were confused from the beginning, is she the mom or the sister.	Student 3
That's all we were talking about	Student 1
Well, either way, why would you bring a kid into a club? In the real world, that wouldn't happen, you wouldn't be able to bring your child into the club. If you did that would be horrible.	
<i>I think that it was actually the older sister, they discuss that in the beginning.</i>	
I had them talking about the clothing, and trying to see what they were trying to talk about in the video.	Student 6
<i>What were they trying to talk about, do you think?</i>	
I'm not sure. The Lindsay Lohan video was obvious. She wanted to have a relationship with that guy and the dad wouldn't let her. But you know how it is, how old she is, like she is our age, right?	Student 6
Or at least 18, right? I thought it was a little weird with the relationship between the boy and the dad. And the j-lo about the working woman, and it being weird she played every part. Destiny's Child is out there.	
I think those two videos kind of had sort of a deeper meaning to them, you know.	Student 2
Lindsay Lohan and the J-Lo one. Well, the Lindsay Lohan one was	

<p>obviously something about a weird/bad relationship between the guy and his father and you know, they were both trying to tackle these underlying issues but they did it in a slutty sort of way to be frankly honest so, you know, there are better ways of going around that and if I was talking to another girl about this, that is exactly what I would be saying. Like why do they have to wear clothes that only cover a third of their body to get this issue across?</p>	
<p>They were all wearing high heels. No one was wearing white tennis shoes or flip flops.</p>	Student 1
<p>Yeah, the knee high boots</p>	Student 2
<p>A lot of knee high boots.</p>	Student 1
<p><i>Did your characters talk about shoes?</i></p>	
<p>No, but I noticed that.</p>	Student 1
<p>But, um, the other things about the Destiny's Child video, they wanted to be empowered, like saying what they wanted, yet they are still dressed provocatively like they were saying only look at me if you are a thug, but if you're walking down the street looking like that anyone is going to look at you.</p>	Student 3
<p><i>Alright, well we can move on to the male conversation now.</i></p>	
<p><i>What do you think two males would be discussing after watching those videos?</i></p>	
<p>How hot the women are in the videos</p>	Student 5
<p>Laughter.</p>	
<p>No, because I argue with my brother about that all the time. Because he is like yeah, that is what the guys are looking at to be honest. I can put him on a higher pedestal but you told me not to, but that is what we're looking at for real. I can't speak for the guys but.</p>	Student 5
<p>Right. I don't know what they would be thinking, but I can pretty much say for sure that my boyfriend would not listen to those songs on the radio, but</p>	Student 2

<p>he would watch them on TV. So you know, maybe there is deeper meaning, I don't know, I'm not a guy so it's hard for me to be objective about this.</p> <p>I would never watch the videos or listen to their music. I am pretty anti-MTV right now. It just seems like every single video, well at first it was kind of novel</p> <p>Like oh, hot women dancing around, like oh yeah I'm going to watch, but after so many times, it just seems like the same people are making all of the videos. All they know is sex and it's all they use to sell their videos. It just seems like it is such a closed off world.</p> <p>That they're not letting anybody else in with different opinions. And these women do what the directors say, so they say wear these clothes and dance around, and that is how it is. But I do like the women dancing around, I'll admit it.</p> <p>But also with the Destiny's Child song, about the being a soldier because I grew up in the suburbs and I'm like, ok, I don't fit that profile at all. When I think of soldier, I think of army or navy or the armed forces and they are talking about the streets, it is so far off from where I am at, it's hard to even comprehend a little bit.</p>	<p>Student 6</p>
<p><i>Why are you anti MTV?</i></p> <p>When they first came out, MTV was kind of anti establishment, anti norm, and now they have become the norm, and I am kind of anti-norm.</p> <p>Yeah, I don't have MTV either because it has turned into a big joke, when I was a kid they played music all the time. They don't even play videos any more.</p>	<p>Student 6</p>
<p>Reality TV.</p> <p>Now they just play that crap. All of those videos could have been be the same song.</p> <p>They don't even play music</p>	<p>Student 5</p> <p>Student 5</p>

<p>I think they would also talk about cars in the videos, the mustang in the Lindsay Lohan video, and the multitude of cars in Destiny's Child to get away from the women. Guys for the most part are somewhat interested in cars, so that may come up in conversation as well.</p>	<p>Student 2</p>
<p>I said they may also be interested, I know some guys are interested in the music, like the beat. They talk about the women first, but you know then they may talk about the beat, the music, and the background after that.</p> <p><i>Any other comments?</i></p>	<p>Student 3</p>
<p>I didn't even notice the cars. Well, the car was going around in circles in the Lindsay Lohan video. I may have noticed that because I love cars.</p> <p><i>What would the male and female be talking about?</i></p>	<p>Student 6</p>
<p>I think they would find something to argue about.</p> <p>For instance the guy would say, oh wow, Beyonce looks hot or whatever, maybe the girl would sit there and say, well you know it is not how they look in the video they're trying to get something across, but then the woman may say, yeah she does look hot, I wish I could look like that, so ...</p>	<p>Student 2</p>
<p>I just have them talking about you know the songs, talking about the J-Lo song and she says yeah she's a great dancer, and then the Destiny's Child... the Lindsay Lohan video, he wasn't really paying much attention to that video, but more to the Destiny's Child because they were showing more.</p>	<p>Student 5</p>
<p>I had the guy yelling at the lady, why she made him watch the video I am kind of confuse because 90% of the guys I know would watch those videos but it seems like those videos were made for guys and it's I don't know why.</p>	<p>Student 4</p>
<p><i>Did you watch music videos when you were growing up?</i></p> <p>Yeah, I watched it more then.</p>	<p>Student 4</p>

Things like that maybe mattered more.	Student 2
It seemed more about the song, now it seems more about the video than anything.	Student 4
It wasn't so like pop-oriented.	Student 1
Those songs are bad, that music is boring	Student 2
Are their voices even that good? During the video music awards, the host came out, Chris Rock was hosting or somebody and he was like, you don't even have to have a good voice, this is about the video. It's not a Grammy based on how good the song is, it is based on how good the videos are.	Student 3
Unless people like the videos now because they are sex oriented. They drive that point across, I mean you don't need to look in a nudey magazine anymore, you can just turn on MTV and watch it on MTV.	Student 2
<i>What roles of femininity would you say are portrayed in music videos?</i>	
You have to act like a hoochie to get a boyfriend. That whole Destiny's Child thing irritated me. The guy has to act like a thug, to get a girl to pay attention to him, I mean it is sending the wrong messages to both sexes. And if they're 12, it's just worse.	Student 5
<i>Do you think they are sending believable messages?</i>	
Yeah, if you're 12 or 13 boy or girl, yeah.	Student 5
To someone who would watch these videos in the younger age group, I mean you would get the impression from the J-Lo video that life is really really tough and you are going to have to act that way to make money, and that is not true. You could go to college, you could get an education, you could get a nice respectable job. Where you can wear a business suit and you know, if you grow up seeing that I mean, who is to say that you're not going to grow up thinking that is the way your going to live?	Student 2
I don't think it's acceptable I would never want that for myself	
<i>how would you draw the line internally?</i>	

I don't know if you would be able to, you see younger girls like 15, 16 years old and they wear stuff like that. My parents would have never allowed that, I am not saying that they have bad parents, but they obviously don't know how to draw the line.	Student 2
The whole thing frightens me, there are 12 13 year olds watching that all day long	Student 5
They are so easily, when they see this stuff on TV they feel like they need to do that, I have to dress like that I need a soldier, the less they have on	Student 3
That is there education, their view of the world	Student 5
<i>Who is making these videos?</i>	
Men	Student 5
young men in their 20s most of the men	Student 4
No women have ever won an Oscar for directing. and I think the film schools are graduating an equal number of men and women but there are no female directors. All the men are directors and you can kinda tell.	Student 5
Hollywood is pretty closed and I consider this a part of Hollywood in this.	Student 4
It is a pretty tight knit group. They don't let anyone else in, so it is all the ideas are the same it is all coming from one type set of person.	
I think the thing is, the artist themselves, the people who sing these songs, they don't objective because they know, they sell records.	Student 2
I think they have a lot of creative input and I don't see what you would want to represent	Student 1
JLo should not be able to represent women, she's this psycho freak that has to be married all the time, representing needy stupid woman that needs to be married all the time	Student 5
<i>So if you had children would you let them watch MTV?</i>	
My kids can watch CMT. It is all the same thing. Anymore, faith hill, they made her slutty in that video. It is getting worse everyday.	Student 5
I think it was feminist asserting women's independence, but those videos	Student 4

<p>seem like they are turning everything backward. It is different though. Instead of housewives, now they're a slutty wives It is just like that show desperate housewives, and look how popular that is. <i>Is that women catching up, and just being liberated?</i> I think they missed the mark. You don't have to dress like that and act that way to be liberated sexually, you know. I think being liberated sexually is be like you wanna be, I think they all feel that they have to be and act that way in the videos, I think if a woman was really strong, she could portray who she wanted to be, even if that was in a t-shirt and jeans. Besides some people think a t-shirt and jeans is sexy Some people don't think all that is sexy. Not just high heels and slutty clothes.</p>	<p>Student 2 Student 2 Student 3 Student 5</p>
<p><u>FOCUS GROUP #4</u></p> <p><i>Ok, now if we can flip to the females talking?</i> <i>What in general were the females talking about?</i></p> <p>Stuff about clothing, definitely, especially in some of the videos where it was the lack of clothing. More like, or maybe like, I think a lot of girls, I know I do, like talk about, I didn't get why JLo had like a million of herself in there so if I were talking to her I would probably be like why, I think like more people care about the concept of the video than anything else.</p>	<p>Student 2</p>

I put outfits, and physiques	Student 1
Absolutely, I totally agree.	Student 3
All three the women had different but very good physiques and same with the outfits.	Student 1
<i>So you like the outfits?</i>	
I mean nothing that I would wear, but yeah, I mean,	Student 1
for video purposes, yeah, it's entertaining	Student 3
<i>Different than reality?</i>	
I think so. You don't see people walking on the street with stuff like JL,	Student 4
Like their makeup was really heavy like they just walked out of a Mac catalog, or if you are out at Ybor I guess.	Student 3
And like, going back to the concept thing, what with the baby in the destiny's child video? That was random.	Student 4
What was up with the old man in the LL video coming to get the boy like I didn't get that. There were parts of the video I guess girls look at it they ask why, yeah, and guys just look at it and go what, she's hot.	Student 2
I personally think I think like a guy, because I didn't even notice any of those things.	Student 3
I was definitely more interested in what they look like and what they're wearing than the concepts of the video	
<i>What about their music, was that important?</i>	
It is just all a little anti-climatic, not very good singers	Student 1
I don't think she's a very good singer.	Student 3
<i>What your characters would say about the music as compared to the video?</i>	
I don't think the video, maybe the Destiny's Child more than the others, go along with a story line, coincide like how we are like what's up with the man, what's up with the baby.	Student 2
I think that is going to too deep, they are just music videos, like I don't	Student 1

<p>think I would carry on a conversation about a story line or how that you went rather than how they looked.</p> <p>I think each one represented their type of music, like the first one is pop, and it's teeny boppers, and they have sex. The second is like club music, and the third, hip hop, Destiny's Child, the same thing.</p> <p><i>Alright, now can we talk about what the male characters were talking about?</i></p> <p>How they look.</p> <p>They're hot</p> <p>Which ones look the best</p> <p>Especially with Destiny's Child, they have to compare, I like Michelle, no I like Beyonce.</p> <p>I put the same as if they were two females</p> <p>How hot they are, who looks the best, who has the best body.</p> <p><i>Do the guys talk about clothes at all?</i></p> <p>Um, I put the attractiveness of females, who is the hottest, who has the best body</p> <p>Ok</p> <p>I put the same thing, where my girls were talking about the same thing, with the exception of the wardrobe.</p> <p>I put the guys maybe thought that the girls dressed like, because they don't see girls like, we wouldn't dress like that. I thought they would think that was interesting how they dressed, why their clothes didn't match, or why they weren't wearing any clothes.</p> <p>I think it plays into the male fantasy of how they want women to look</p> <p>I think very few men would even discuss the song, it would be like she's hot. They would talk about the beat, maybe a few. I don't think the guys would even talk about the music, only if they are really interested in music.</p>	<p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 2</p> <p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 2</p> <p>Student 3</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 2</p>
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<p><i>Ok, well, now we can talk about what the female and male are discussing.</i></p> <p>I would say they would be saying the same as female and female and male and male, it's probably about the same thing, physiques and sex appeal. I just don't see where there would be any difference.</p>	<p>Student 3</p>
<p><i>In that conversation, how do you think the female would feel discussing those videos? Is she feeling differently, talking between females?</i></p> <p>I would say that in this conversation the female would probably be scrutinizing a little more than the male would be or maybe on some levels defensive, but that is what I put</p>	<p>Student 3</p>
<p>The male would say how they were hot and the female would talk about the lack of clothing or you know, yeah well, like she said more scrutinizing and more picking on them.</p>	<p>Student 2</p>
<p>I think it depends on what kind of people they are, because on one hand some may be reserved, holding back what they really think, but on the other hand they may be sort of outlandish and each one gets defense and they start arguing.</p>	<p>Student 4</p>
<p>It's not like they are discussing XXX pornography, but the women might call the other a hoe.</p>	<p>Student 3</p>
<p><i>What kind of stories do you think these videos are telling about gender issues or gender roles?</i></p>	
<p>I think now, like, I think in the past music videos used to portray women as maybe not as powerful as the males in the videos, or maybe a little submissive</p>	<p>Student 1</p>
<p>But now I think it has changed to where the women in each of these videos were portrayed as um, having power or having some type of authority.</p>	
<p>Not just sexual appeal</p>	<p>Student 2</p>
<p>I think the roles have reversed especially in these videos.</p>	<p>Student 1</p>
<p>Not in the Lindsay Lohan video, but in the other two videos. Wasn't she singing about how she can't live without him?</p>	<p>Student 3</p>

<p>I think that the Lohan video was probably targeting a different demographic than the other two videos, so I think that was more a teenage girl that they are focusing on so the dynamics are going to be a little bit different than, they will focus more on teenage girls.</p>	<p>Student 3</p>
<p>If you think about TRL, that is their demographic. And like, each one of those videos is totally targeting someone different.</p>	<p>Student 4</p>
<p><i>Who do you think they are targeting?</i></p>	
<p>Well they should be targeting older people, the last two were targeting older than the first, like young adults, but the Lindsay Lohan was definitely more like the Sweet Valley High.</p>	<p>Student 4</p>
<p><i>How did you feel about the videos?</i></p>	
<p>Entertaining. Not my type of music. The JLo video really annoyed me. The constant horn in the background. Seeing JLo in the video the whole time...</p>	<p>Student 1</p>
<p><i>Who do you think made those videos?</i></p>	
<p>Males</p>	<p>Student 4</p>
<p>I don't know, I would venture to say that each of those performers probably had a lot to do with the actual implementation of the video. Like I wouldn't say that it was just a man making the video.</p>	<p>Student 3</p>
<p>Well like directors and producers, because I know the industry is actually dominated by males being directors and producers. I do agree though, I think all three of those, all of those artists had the input of how the video was shot.</p>	<p>Student 1</p>
<p><i>Any final comments or reactions?</i></p>	
<p>I think it is interesting that the women are trying to portray girl power kinda like women are powerful and yet they are flaunting around with their no clothes on.</p>	<p>Student 4</p>
<p>Like an oxymoron</p>	<p>Student 5</p>

<p>It's pretty hypocritical if you think about it, yeah you want to be a strong woman and you're dancing around for a guy half naked, it's just a little strange to me.</p>	<p>Student 4</p>
<p>For years, I guess we have been told about the women's movement, you know was totally anti- showing your body to get power, or moving or whatever and now it is kind of the opposite. Now it is you can flaunt your body, and it is now not looked at as much, like they had more power in the video, before I think it would have been more like they were submissive, and now you can do that and it doesn't look like you don't have power.</p>	<p>Student 2</p>
<p>I don't know</p> <p>But, isn't that really the thing, isn't it where we are right now?</p> <p>We can be sexy, we can be strong we can show that we're sexy and that we are as sexual as the men are, and it's ok because we do have as much, I think it is a good thing.</p> <p>Before it would have been looked at as a bad thing. Now, it is just like she said, they are flaunting themselves, and it seems like an oxymoron, but I don't think society looks at it like that anymore.</p>	<p>Student 3</p>
<p>I just think for a teen audience, it is a little much. If you think demographically TRL, I mean granted culture is moving that way but I think it is a little much a little too soon. I mean, they are targeting like, 14, 15, 16 year olds, I don't think those girls should be sexual, and I don't think that they should think that being sexy should be empowering as well.</p>	<p>Student 3</p>
<p>My brother he just sits there and just watches and just says yeah, she's hot.</p> <p>I think these videos were pretty tame in comparison to some of them.</p> <p>I would say that I fall on the conservative side, and I was not offended at all by any of these videos, where some of the videos that my boyfriend watches or some of the ones on MTV, I mean I get really offended by, they were really a lot more tame than a lot of Britney videos.</p> <p>No one was imitating sex, in bikinis humping the floor.</p> <p>I was not offended at all by these videos.</p>	<p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 1</p>

like oh they look like Lindsay, I mean it was just not necessary. Maybe that is an issue that needs to be addressed, abusive parents.	
Well, her dad's abusive.	Student 4
And then, I got JLo's video was pretty good, it gave a look into one night at the club like all the different characters	Student 6
That was just boring, it was just the three of them up there singing. They usually do such cool videos, but this one was not too exciting.	
If I were a little girl, I would be like Lindsay has really big boobs, and JLo has a really flat stomach and you know all the girls in Destiny's Child are skinny and beautiful.	Student 8
Like, I thought they were too skinny. I mean I am a thin person but I don't try, like I eat McDonalds and stuff like that. Michelle in that video looked really skinny, even Lindsay Lohan she looked unusually skinny	Student 4
I thought she just looked really sweaty the whole time. Her face is all shiny.	Student 5
She looked, she got skinny or something	
Healthy	
She worked out a lot	Student 2
Her butt was really big, and now it not as big.	Student 1
Her Butt was her trademark.	
Everyone got really skinny.	Student 4
I think it is fine, they have personal trainers, I mean, they're working out all the time, that is their whole point to be an image, to be thin and beautiful and gorgeous or whatever.	Student 1
The truth of the matter is if they were up there and they weren't skinny or thin and pretty and beautiful or whatever, they wouldn't be up there making all that cash probably.	Student 7
We wouldn't idolize them anymore.	
My speech people, they weren't talking about being skinny or anything because I am a dancer	Student 1

<p>All I could see was JLo's stomach so I don't think there is much value in focusing on your stomach, while you're singing.</p> <p>Everyone is just watching, looking at what they are wearing and what they are doing and no one is really listening to the music.</p> <p>What they wear, what they look at. They were definitely three different types of videos. Like the Lohan video I was definitely spending more time focusing on what is going on in the video rather than the song. JLo's video you can identify with, I have been that girl at the club.</p> <p>Destiny's Child was like ok, she's wiggling, ok now she's wiggling; ok, now she's wiggling on his lap. They were definitely totally opposite, you know what I mean.</p>	<p>Student 5</p>
<p><i>I would like to hear what your characters discussed...</i></p> <p>Just as a side bar, I pretty much wrote about how the girls viewed the videos, I think girls may look at the videos and depict it out, well, look at what he's wearing and I want a guy, who you know, because they see Beyonce and Michelle and people they look up to, you know singing about you know, I want a guy who's a soldier, and who had rims, and he has this necklace, and gold teeth, you know and he, this is what they want, I had these two girls and they were talking about the videos and they were like, yeah girl you see his muscles, look at Beyonce dancing and I wish I could do that, and stuff like that.</p>	<p>Student 3</p>
<p><i>Is this an envious tone?</i></p> <p>Not an envious tone, but more I want to be like that.</p> <p>My little cousins, they sit in front of the TV, and they watch these videos, and they dance all, you know what I'm saying, the dancing and the language they use. Imagine an 8 year old who is singing I want a soldier, who can carry big things if you know what I mean, so.</p>	<p>Student 3</p>
<p>They memorized and they don't even know what they are saying</p> <p>I called my daughters cell phone the other day and she had a song on her voice mail that was so inappropriate. Lovers and friends, and she is</p>	<p>Student 8 Student 8</p>

<p>thinking nothing of it, and the song is saying your legs can go their separate ways, I mean, she was clueless had no idea what they were saying. She just likes the song.</p>	
<p>They have to be very careful of not only their image, but how they are portrayed.</p>	Student 3
<p>Like if I saw anyone dressed like they were walking down the street, I would be like oh my gosh, she looks like the biggest skank and that may just be me because I am more of a cover up type person, I don't know but like, in Tampa if they are walking down the street they probably be some kind of prostitute.</p>	Student 4
<p>Corner of Nebraska.</p>	
<p>Some people dress like that at school</p>	
<p>Even a movie on a Friday, what do they call them, prostitots?</p>	
<p>She is twelve, and she is wearing a top on up to here, with a shirt that says blondes are easy.</p>	
<p>They really think the whole celebrity thing is really how they need to be.....</p>	
<p><i>Did you watch MTV when you were younger?</i></p>	
<p>Oh yeah, yes.</p>	Students
<p>My parents preferred that I did not watch</p>	3,5,6
<p>When I remember watching MTV when it first came out, there were a whole lot more videos.</p>	Student 8
<p>All it was was music videos. I mean, we used to race home to watch the newest Prince video. Because it was music and it was fun and it was new.</p>	Student 8
<p>This is what I am going to do with my life.</p>	
<p>Kids are so impressionable.</p>	Student 7
<p>Go do something, get outside, go do something.</p>	
<p><i>Now to the males,</i></p>	Student 3

<p>I will share about that one. With the girls, it was like, o look at her clothes, and with the guys it was like, o you're so hot.</p> <p>They're hot.</p> <p><i>What makes them hot? Why are they considered hot?</i></p> <p>A lot of people, it's sad, but they are so superficial.</p> <p>She's hot, she' hot.</p> <p>Pretty women, attractive.</p> <p>I think she is very attractive.</p> <p>One of them said, oh yeah, she's hot.</p> <p>It is not like they want to marry her.</p> <p>I wonder if her boobs are real.</p> <p>Naturally good looking-people are on TV. You have to be attractive.</p> <p>If there are attractive people you have to respond to it.</p> <p>Physical appearance</p> <p><i>So did anyone talk about the talent of the singers?</i></p> <p>It is like, even if the talent is not there, she is still hot.</p> <p><i>We can move on to the guy and the girl,</i></p> <p>Sometimes when me and my boyfriend are watching TV, and the music video is on, I am like, why you staring at that TV, you better turn that off.</p> <p>She's up there and she's dancing, and he's just like, wow. I have the same thing and I can probably do it better than she is doing. He's just like whatever.</p> <p>It is because they are fantasies. Like, oh that's...</p> <p>Any of us could probably look like that too. We could all look like artificial trash.</p> <p>Oh yeah.</p> <p>Dancing around in bikini in public.</p> <p>If you saw a woman walking dressed, you would see her, you would be like, oh look! and whether you said she was really pretty or that she looked</p>	<p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 8</p> <p>Student 6</p> <p>Student 6</p> <p>Student 9</p> <p>Student 3</p> <p>Student 5</p> <p>Student 6</p> <p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 5</p>
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<p>like a whore is a matter of interpretation.</p> <p>...It makes you feel inadequate... You have to look like that all the time.</p> <p>I don't think that guys really expect that though. I don't think they are that shallow.</p> <p>On the surface that may be what guys talk about but I think internally they don't want to marry someone like that. they don't really want to be seen out in public with this person that some people may think looks like a slut. I just think that may be what they think of first.</p> <p>It is just for fun, it's purely entertaining. I don't think they take it seriously.</p> <p>And I guarantee that if a guy was sitting in here right now, he'd be like, uh, I don't know, I think she looked good. They don't analyze it. It's just a video.</p> <p>My guy said, I think there needs to be more skin showing and more cleavage in the video. The girl says, you don't care about me.</p> <p><i>You said this is pure entertainment?</i></p> <p>I think it is just as entertaining for men as for women. It is not everyday. I think it works both ways. It is just like pay attention to me.</p> <p>I think boys have similar insecurities.</p> <p><i>If these videos were to tell a story about femininity and the roles of the female and any kind of stereotypes, what would they be telling?</i></p> <p>The Destiny's Child was like, I need a man to take care of me.</p> <p>If there were any kind of female empowerment it would be purely sexual empowerment because it was talking about I need a soldier and this and all these material things and you know, take care of me yeah...</p> <p><i>Do you think they are contradictory, you know the lyrics, I want a soldier to take care of me and yet they have this empowering independent front?</i></p> <p>Yes, kind of because they are standing there with Dobermans and everything and trying to be all tough obviously. I think they want us to</p>	<p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 7</p> <p>Student 8</p> <p>Student 8</p> <p>Student 6</p> <p>Student 7</p> <p>Student 6</p>
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<p>look at it like we are normal girls and we need men to take care of us.</p> <p>I'm just a girl I need a man to take care of me.</p> <p>All girls just want a guy to take care of them.</p> <p>Her value system for finding boys is a little off.</p> <p>I think this is what our society is in general to some degree</p> <p>This is what people are watching this is what people want to see, this is what people come home to and watch for hours, so obviously I think it has some type of, well yeah, it is just entertainment but it is a reflection of what people really want to see. They want to see attractive people and it's you know, videos are fun and whatever.</p> <p>As far, I was not too thrilled about Lindsay, I didn't really get it, but the part that I did get, just as far as her being a younger person, you know her audience being a little younger. I think of like my daughter and stuff, just the way they portrayed her, as you know, she was like all broken up because of this guy, you know? I don't know, I am just so sick of little girls being broken up because of a guy.</p> <p>Like she talks about not wanting to walk away, why doesn't she just walk away?</p> <p>It really doesn't show anything for any kind of empowerment for her.</p> <p>Everything was all about the guy, like if I can't have him my life is over, all broken up</p> <p>I saw at the very end of it, the video got caught off when the guy was getting beat and I was like, wow, did he die? Then I realized it was just a whole different story.</p> <p>It makes her look so needy and weak, and here I am so broken hearted, and she is putting herself in these very serious situations. She is sneaking off to the trailer to go mess around with her boyfriend, going to these parties, and she is dating this guy that is obviously being beaten by her guardian or whatever, she is turning really serious stuff, and if these younger people watching these, they are going to watch and be like, woa, is that what high</p>	<p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 8</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 8</p> <p>Student 2</p> <p>Student 8</p> <p>Student 6</p> <p>Student 7</p>
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<p>school is like? Like oh my gosh, you know?</p> <p>Like that is how you should handle it, that is what should happen, right.</p> <p><i>So, reflection of reality?</i></p> <p>Exactly. Yeah.</p> <p>JLo was sheer entertainment. It was very generic. There wasn't like a story.</p> <p>It was just like you are watching it and you don't have to think or anything.</p> <p>Exactly, and I think that is what videos are supposed to be. You are supposed to watch it and say oh, that was cool versus oh my god, that pisses me off, she looks like such a whore. Ad you know I can't believe she did this.</p> <p>Or like, what just happened, I don't understand?!</p> <p>Yeah! haha</p> <p><i>Who is the target for these videos?</i></p> <p>The target audience, anyone who will watch Somewhat younger.</p> <p>I flip through it.</p> <p>They are doing too many things, it is a young show.</p> <p>My brother watches it all the time, he is fourteen.</p> <p>They watch the same videos over and over and over again, week after week.</p> <p>Who is making these videos?</p> <p>A lot of artists have a lot of power, JLo does her own videos and producing, but like the other artists, they are done by 40 year old white business men.</p> <p>They are probably being led more by the records labels.</p>	<p>Student 9</p> <p>Student 7</p> <p>Student 6</p> <p>Student 7</p> <p>Student 6</p> <p>Student 5</p> <p>Student 6</p>
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<p><u>FOCUS GROUP #6</u></p> <p><i>What are the two females talking about?</i></p> <p>I just put that Lindsay Lohan, my dad never beats up my boyfriend.</p> <p>His dad beat him up.</p> <p>Oh really? It was his dad? I thought that was just a joke.</p> <p>Maybe his dad thought that she was like, a hoochie or something. He didn't want him to date her or something.</p> <p>I wasn't paying close attention, but was she with three guys or was that the same guy?</p> <p>It was the same guy, wearing different things.</p> <p>I don't know what I was watching, I didn't see that.</p> <p>Maybe she was trashy or easy and the dad thought he could do better.</p> <p>I though that he wanted his son for himself.</p> <p>He was having a party, he comes to the party to get his son.</p> <p>That is freaky to me.</p> <p>He didn't look lustful, he was angry.</p> <p>I think it was he wanted him for himself and the boy keeps going over to her.</p> <p>Wow</p> <p>I watch a lot of Law and Order I see a lot of that stuff.</p> <p><i>Did anyone comment on the other two videos?</i></p> <p>Mine talked about the Destiny's Child, I said that two girls would say that their outfits were too revealing their bodies are anorexic looking. In Hollywood sex appeal and skinniness always sells and why can't normal average looking girls get on there and do the same thing. With JLo, I said her outfits are fashionable but always skimpy and her body like always</p>	<p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 7</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 1</p> <p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 3</p> <p>Student 7</p> <p>Student 4</p> <p>Student 7</p> <p>Student 5</p>

perfect in all of them.	
Mine is just like, I wonder what their dads think. When they are watching it, my dad would just have a fit.	Student 3
Especially when they started as a Christian group, Destiny's Child.	Student 4
Michelle still is, she came into my church and sang gospel.	Student 7
Beyonce had solo projects, but Michelle always had her gospel side projects.	
Mine says, why are they so slutty? They just talk about how slutty it is. The other says I would never dress like that. Then one of them says wanna get something to eat? Are we going to the club tonight? Cuz it kinda triggers that idea, because of the JLo video. See them in the club and stuff. And the other one says, Lohan should stick to acting. The last one says, we need to go shopping. MTV is a background. Sometimes they have MTV on in the background not to really watch it. TO just have a background just to...	Student 6
<i>But they watch it enough to comment that the girls were slutty?</i>	
Yeah. They glance at it and it is pretty easy to notice.	Student 6
My thing was the fashion, you know that's Hollywood, that's MTV, that is the whole thing and I think if you can wear it, you should wear it. And they can wear so they do. I thought everything looked really good on them. If I could wear it, I would do it.	Student 4
That is what my girl said.	Student 7
It is more of your behavior. It is not what you wear, it is how you act when you wear that.	Student 4
They don't have to exploit themselves. I think you can appreciate the fashion.	Student 7
I agree but the one Destiny's Child, she was just wearing a swimsuit and a fur coat.	Student 6
Like how is that fashionable	Student 4
I didn't notice	Student 3
I didn't notice	Student 5

<p>I didn't notice</p>	<p>Student 6</p>
<p>It is really subliminal.</p>	
<p>Wow, she just flashed us.</p>	<p>Student 6</p>
<p>Most of my conversation was around that. If these are women who don't want to be looked at as sex objects and these are their videos, then why wouldn't they, like all the guys in their videos were fully clothed, camera angles were at their faces, it is like, this is their music, do they want to be taken seriously for their music? Because Beyonce can sing, Lohan sucks, JLo's alright... but the Destiny's Child, I mean, they're amazing, but even the camera angles and flashing swim suits, I mean,</p>	
<p>I was wondering if that video was a joke, because their career has been really serious and it has been really classy, and I didn't know if it was something fun they did, like a fun project to lighten things up. It never seemed like they wanted to come across like, from the hood I guess or I don't know.</p>	<p>Student 4</p>
<p>They have come full circle.</p>	<p>Student 6</p>
<p>Like doing everything?</p>	
<p>They are appealing to all groups. Beyonce will always be classy, regardless of this video.</p>	<p>Student 7</p>
<p>I can't judge because I go to the club and I dress like that, and you're right, if you got it flaunt it. But I still don't like JLo.</p>	
<p>I think JLo should just stick to acting.</p>	<p>Student 5</p>
<p>She is not a good person.</p>	
<p>She is always for publicity, she just uses people to get where she is.</p>	<p>Student 7</p>
<p>Everyone did something to boost her career.</p>	
<p>I think she is so selfish.</p>	
<p>...</p>	
<p><i>Well, what are the males saying to each other?</i></p>	
<p>I said, they're hot, they're sexy.</p>	<p>Student 3</p>

Lindsay just goes from Disney to this, what is she? Is she a singer or an actress.	Student 4
I put I would be her soldier any day.	Student 4
I am looking for a soldier.	Student 7
You want a real soldier.	Student 7
She's got big boobs.	Student 3
I saw the boobs.	Student 4
JLo is really into herself. Everyone was her, was that a lesbian club? The women were flirting with each other.	Student 6
We never saw, I wonder if JLo was the kid too	Student 5
I didn't understand that video. There was five minutes of talking....	Student 7
What I got from it was all the different roles women take, she's a mom, and she's working but she still has to bring the kid to the club.	Student 6
That is her sister.	
Oh, never mind.	
They were all working women. ...	Student 4
I would put her hear through the dry wall.	Student 5
Hey I am a Christian.	Student 7
I'm married I am just saying, that is what my characters said.	Student 5
Lindsay Lohan sucks, change the channel	Student 7
Hey that's Beyonce's sister and she is pregnant, they just had to put that in there.	
I want these girls.	Student 5
<i>Are these regular females?</i>	
They get me horny. I am looking for a one-night, or as many nights as possible.	Student 5
You could see her chest with that t-shirt. Oh, she sucks at singing but she is pretty hot.	
So you can value her by her looks and not by her talents?	Student 4
Right. Except Destiny's Child, because they can sing and they are pretty	Student 5

good and they look pretty good. They are not as revealing as JLo.	
Mine would say, nice body, pretty face, not I want to put your head through the head board.	Student 5
He feels it in his loins.	Student 5
It's like, I am sure that Lindsay Lohan and Beyonce would not appreciate knowing that we are talking about them like this. Oh, they want to put my head through the dry wall.	
They know exactly what they are doing	Student 6
I think they know.	Student 5
I think they know.	Student 7
They mean to do that.	Student 5
They know this is what they need to do to sell records.	
I guess my question is why.	
He just said it, it sells.	
Why are they trying to target men?	
Maybe women are trying to look and be like them. They know that we like it basically.	Student 1
So that we can be desired as well?	
Yeah. That is why you wear the same Prada shoes, and all that same crap and the thing that Brittany wears like her shirts and stuff. I see it all over campus. I need a husband...	Student 5
When Britney and Christina came out, they were like I want to be role models and stuff like that and the next thing they are coming out naked	Student5
Look at Madonna, making out.	
look at who they are targeting lesbians and men	
Who are they trying to sell records to, 13, 14 year olds.	
I don't know, I think they are selling it to you. I think they are trying to sell it to guys and girls.	Student 6
My little cousin is 12 and she knows all this stuff.	
I mean the Lindsay Lohan that was clearly a teenage party.	Student 7

<p>People who know her from Disney think that it is ok.</p> <p><i>We can talk about the male and female conversation.</i></p>	Student 4
<p>Mine is a boyfriend and girlfriend and the guy says, dang baby, why can't you move and look like that? She is like, that is all for show. Do you think they always look that good? If I had someone fixing all my nails and all I had to do is sit there, and work out all day, if I had all that money, someone doing my hair and makeup I would look like that too. Whatever, why can't you look more like Densell Washington?</p>	Student 7
<p>Then when they get older, we know the real deal.</p>	Student 5
<p>All I had to do is work out, someone is fixing all my food making sure I eat just right, trainers, I could look just like they do. That is not reality. This is reality. That's not reality. If there is a man looking for that, then he is going to be looking for the rest of his life. And if this is all it takes for a relationship, why are there so many divorces in Hollywood? Why can't one person make JL happy, or she can't make this person happy. Who would divorce Hallie berry if that is all it took? You know what I mean? She's jealous, she's possessive, all of that. She's in abusive relationships, because if that's all it took, and it's more than that.</p>	Student 7
<p>Exactly, you get down to the real deal after a while.</p>	Student 5
<p>Right, right.</p>	
<p>To make your waist skinny, makeup just like Britney Spears. She looks all skinny and good in the videos but then you see her in the magazines walking in gas stations without shoes, and all that.</p>	Student 7 Student 6
<p>I heard Beyonce looks horrible without makeup. I heard that a few times. Toni Braxton went bankrupt, and they went through her budget and she spent thousands and thousands of dollars on makeup.</p>	Student 7
<p>Like Oprah too, did you ever see the part before the show where they show her getting ready? She comes on and you're like damn, that's Oprah? She looks terrible without makeup.</p>	Student 6

She knows it's just for the camera.	Student 7
We want something to look at.	Student 5
These are our fantasy women.	Student 5
It's all image for a man to want his woman to look like that, then sweetie	Student 7
I'm not the one for you.	
<i>So do men really want that?</i>	
The fakeness?	Student 1
The tons of makeup and stuff? It wouldn't hurt, but we're not going to rule anything else out.	
It would be nice.	Student 1, 5
Do you like it, of course we like it.	Student 5
As long as your natural beauty, as long as you are hot, then you don't need all that.	Student 5
As long as you are hot naturally.	
We can tell when there is a lot of makeup usually. Like that cakey face stuff.	
<i>A lot of laughing....</i>	
<i>Is your female jealous?</i>	
Yeah,	
And she is just mad that I want to take my horniness for Lindsay out on her.	
Before watching the video you weren't horny, and after you are like, yeah, come here.	Student 5
Maybe she is upset that it got him horny. I think that got her kinda upset.	Student 8
Like why aren't I good enough or anything?	
Why isn't she?	Student 5
Something different.	Student 3
Tell her to put on a wig.	Student 5
I think that really is, that sometimes happens, where you just like, you have	Student 8

to keep it fresh. I mean when you're married, you got to do different things. If my man just saw that, and then came onto me, I would be like, no way, you are not taking your frustration you are feeling for her out on me using my body.	Student 5
Or but another one would be if the girl is a little insecure, and she's a little like, am I not pretty enough?	Student 5
These girls the way they portray these girls is that they would call the guy, make the first move and totally take over.	Student 4
<i>If these videos were to tell a story about femininity, what do you think they would be telling?</i>	
Sex. sex.	Student
We have to use our bodies to get what we want in life.	1,2,5,8
If you are beautiful, and you have a great body, you can get a lot more than you know, someone who is maybe overweight or not as pretty.	Student 7
I don't think it should be like that.	Student 7
Unfortunately, it is just a sense of reality.	Student 8
Yeah, that is just how it is.	Student5
We are college educated women.	Student 7
I mean these women, maybe they'll get a better quality of man or whatever.	Student 8
And we can generalize it and say that we are in college and we are different, we are trying to better ourselves, but I know a lot of women in college who try to use sex to their advantage.	
You can tell, I mean how some of them, they roll up their shorts.	Student 4
Most of them	Student 6
Spaghetti straps and everything like that. Some of them come to class dressed ready for Ybor.	
<i>discussion trails discussing people in the program.</i>	
<i>Thank you for your time and input.</i>	

¹ MTV has changed its format since its inception. It is a common complaint about MTV that it does not play music videos anymore. There are several spin-offs, such as VH1 and MTV2 that focus more on music. One of the only programs left playing music videos is *TRL*, which is why that program was selected for this study. The citations used in the background of MTV are a reflection of the time when MTV was used to air music videos the majority of the time.

² Race was intentionally left out of this study, due to the strict focus on gender. This may be considered a limitation of this study. Race is an important factor in MTV, its history, and its impact in the music industry. More information on the history of racial discrimination on MTV can be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MTV#Racial_discrimination.

³ While men were a part of the focus groups, they did not appear to impact the results. Two groups had no men, and those responses did not differ from the groups with men. The men did substantiate what the women thought to be true: that the women artists are the ideal female form that men want. The men did voice that the women artists are sexually desirable, and that is the type of women that they want. The women participants did not appear intimidated or reserved by the male presence.

⁴ The “speech bubble” tool used within this study’s methodology was borrowed from Dr. Derina Holtzhausen, who introduced this as a way to initiate conversation within the focus groups. The “speech bubbles” allowed the participants to organize their thoughts, gave everyone a chance to speak, and also allowed for unexpected results.